

VOICES FOR HOUSING JUSTICE





Introduction

This is a community publication that aims to open a bunch of windows into grassroots struggles for housing justice. I started working on organizing, compiling and then editing this zine in the months after I was part of the organizing committee for a major gathering on housing justice organizing in Canada that took place in March 2025 at Concordia University in Montreal.

I feel strongly that taking some time to really read the voices present in this publication can be a very meaningful exercise, to slowly engage with the ideas. It is exactly for this reason that I wanted to publish this project in print format first, while also making it available as a PDF for free online. In this era of a growing corporate occupation of the Internet, through social media giants taking so much communications space, companies which in their essence are simply focused on exploiting humanity's collective desire to connect and share, rewiring is important and one small act of rebellion in directing energy toward creating projects in real life, in print format. This is also why we are launching this zine with a public gathering in Montreal at the SHIFT space at Concordia's downtown campus.

The contributions to this zine go back to a set of collective community actions that I coordinated during the fight against the proposed Loi 31 in Québec which was pushed by the extreme right wing racist CAQ government first in the summer of 2023. This struggle is important to continue to consider today, although the so-called law was passed and the devastating consequences for people securing affordable rent in Montreal are sustained until today, we still need to talk about this shift. Housing justice is one of the key points of our time in this city, but also in cities globally. So locating some of the content shared in this zine within the context of the local fight against Loi 31 is also important.

There is poetry in this zine because there is a critical role that creative text can play in really getting at the heart of the matter, the poems by Jason "Blackbird" Selman, Fenton "zLadybug" Benjamin, Anna Lee-Popham, Alejandro Saravia, G.W. Sok of The Ex and Paula Dykstra are all striking because it opens space to think about the immensity of violence that is involved in the commodification of such a basic necessity.

The rising rental rates, the gentrification and all the social / economic violence that this spells out for this city means people dying on the streets and it also means that power is making a violent push to change the inherent culture of this city to more tightly force people to live in ways that more strictly conform to the colonial capitalist system.

I am grateful for all the people who have been involved in this project, a particular thank you to Hannah Ostiguy Hopp for helping to push this project over the finish line. Also a big shout out to Nesreen Galal for your wonderful design work on this project, as well as to Jackson for the help in making sure that it is printed solidly.

I hope that you enjoy the zine, in love and solidarity.
Stefan Christoff, Tuesday, April 7, 2026.

VOICES FOR HOUSING JUSTICE

(I) POETRY

Jason "Blackbird" Selman
G.W. Sok (The Ex)
Alejandro Saravia
Paula Dykstra
Anna Lee-Popham
Fenton "zLadybug" Benjamin

(II) CONVERSATIONS AT THE HOUSING JUSTICE CONVERGENCE

Off the Hour live broadcast on housing justice movements today in Montreal and beyond

Hubert Gendron-Blais (Réverbérations d'une crise), John Clarke (Z30 Fightback), Dru Oja Jay (SEIZE), Lisa Freeman (Canadian Labour Congress), Fenton Benjamin (Poet), Alessandra Renzi (author and communications professor at Concordia)

Housing justice and anti-colonial movements

Tiro Mthembu (Regina-based community organizer), Ahmed Abu Shaban (Associate Professor of Agriculture and Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine, Al-Azhar University-Gaza), Robbie Madsen (Indigenous author)

(III) FROM CRISIS TO CONSENSUS

Housing Justice struggles today: From Crisis to Consensus

Dru Oja Jay (SEIZE), Stéphanie Barahona (FRAPRU)

Drawings in this booklet are by Naima Christoff, Dahlia Fernandes Katiya, Billy Mavreas and Maegan Tessler

Hubert Gendron-Blais (Réverbérations d'une crise), Maggie Chittspattio (Resilience Montréal), Sandra Wesley (Stella), Mostafa Henaway (Immigrant Workers Centre)

(IV) COMMUNITY VOICES

Housing justice, it is a local and global issue
By Nildeep Paul

The Intangible Heritage of Parc-Extension
By Sepideh Shahamati

Vibrer contre la séparation
par Hubert Gendron-Blais

For student life and housing over excessive security on campus
By the mobilization committee of the Arts & Science Federation of Associations (ASFA) at Concordia University

Home: housing justice + climate justice
By Juhi Sohani

(V) INTERVIEWS

Interview: Sébastien B. Gagnon
from KABANE77
Facilitated by Beau Kimpton

Housing financialization as social violence
A discussion with Fred Burrill, researcher, activist and educator, facilitated by Stefan Christoff



Poetry

HOUSES & HOMES

JASON "BLACKBIRD" SELMAN

What is your value to this world?
What will you leave behind?
How much money can you make?
How many lives can you change?

Money is being made
From the misfortune of others
What makes you care?
When you see your brother fall
Should it matter if they can't find a place to live?
Or could it simply be their fault?
For not working hard enough

When the money comes
When the money stops coming
When you lose your job
When rents increase but wages don't
Do we expect the vulnerable to just fall in line?
A line in the sidewalk
Fall into the cracks and be replaced with those with more means
Some may say this is just the way of the world
But together, we all make up this world
And we can determine which way we want it to go

Greedy has a way of getting into things
Like hearts and minds
Maybe it is naive to think
that something else like love could rule this world
But I believe that things can change
At the cost of care
Houses made into homes
Citizens who have grown tired
Of falling in line
A city that governs
That is not governed
A city that cares

At Home
June 10, 2023 – 11:31am
No music

Jason Backbird Selman has worked over many decades to mobilize poetic spaces, both on the page, but critically within the context of community performances, to speak truth about life in this city. This poem reflects this. Jason shared it first during a community speak-out during the Suoni per il Popolo festival, on a street corner outside of métro Laurier, to denounce moves by the right-wing CAQ government to cut the ability for tenants to transfer their leases in Québec, making affordable rents, for artists and many communities even more unreachable within the context of an affordability crisis in this city and beyond. – Stefan.

SQUAT!

G.W. SOK - THE EX. (AMSTERDAM)

There's plenty of room
for 50,000 people
there's 50,000 people
looking for a home

Empty buildings
 all over the city
empty buildings
 for hire and sale
empty buildings,
 it's a pity
empty buildings,
so don't sit and wait:

Squat!

Given the long history of connection between experimental music, particularly punk and post-punk groups in Amsterdam, like The Ex, I reached out to see if The Ex would like to publish the lyrics of one of their tracks in this zine, they chose these lyrics, which are included with permission. – Stefan.

METRO LAURIER

BY ALEJANDRO SARAVIA

It was like the loss of your front door keys
Or losing your bank card

Perhaps not
For the keys of a door
Or the small plastic piece that holds access to your money,
little or big money
Can always be replaced

You can call a locksmith and have your padlock changed
At the bank you provide some IDs and you get your temporary card
Until the official one comes by mail

A set of keys or a bank card are losses
That you realize physically, like the immediacy of burning toast

There's that other kind of loss, as vital and real
as summer rain that some people
Will never notice and they will die
Never realizing it

It is there
When the landlord cannot see you
As someone made of flesh and bone
Someone cooking pasta in the small kitchen
A person reading a book on the balcony of a one bedroom apartment
A man or a woman taking a shower before going to work
A man and a woman locking hands in their sleep in the happiest
apartment in Montreal

The landlord cannot see you as a person
The landlord cannot see himself as a person
Flesh, bone, dreams and hopes like you
The landlord only sees you as a tenant
A concept from which to extract money
every first of the month

Your dreams don't matter
Your hopes don't matter
Your flesh doesn't matter
Your bones don't matter
If you have a job or not doesn't matter
If your job doesn't pay enough doesn't matter
If you are a student without a loan doesn't matter
If you are a single mom doesn't matter
If you are a recent immigrant doesn't matter
You only matter if you pay your rent on time
You only matter if you accept your rent increases
without a peep
You are just someone else's source of income

Such is the invisible loss
The loan officer at the bank that sees a person that buys
An apartment building
Just as a sum of credits scores and added collaterals

The bank supervisor that sees his loan officer
As a statistical cog that has to sputter
A monthly percentage of real estate investments

The division chief that sees his bank supervisors
As efficient minions that may deserve a bonus
at the end of the quarter

The bank executive
Tight as a bolt in a rolling Panzer
Making sure that his division chiefs
Don't lose their aggressive approach
To financial growth

The bank investors, the rich capitalists
Clenching bayonets in their teeth
Grunt at their meetings chopping off here and there
Those executives that fail in the assault
Of people's pockets
The so-called tenants and landlords

The bank investors, the oil investors
the rich capitalists, the discreet donors
That keep politicians in Washington and Ottawa
in their pockets like small change
And government ministers and judges
And legislators and media parrots

You see the extent of what was lost
As the song says
The wounded forms appear:
The loss, the full extent

The difference is that here
There's no place for the humble need
Of simple human kindness

This poem was originally first read during a collective artistic speak-out on the parc benches just outside of métro Laurier in June of 2023 as the actions to oppose the proposed Loi 31 were just getting going. The speak-out took place during the cultural festival, Suoni per il Popolo. I invited a set of poets and activists to speak out, including Alejandro who shared this poem. – Stefan.

POETIC TEXTS SHARED

BY PAULA DYKSTRA

For those who come from the other side of the tracks and for those
past ones when the tracks were laid and had to budge
and for “others” where the main lane is always a peril
In my case, was the other side of the tunnel
In the span a signum crucis we were left with
The other side, the glossy unattainable reachable just in service
that in reality had no shimmer
at least less deadly scenes, no less pernicious
where transportation is a daily dire expedition
cramped up in a super-location
Toiling with the heavy limbs of consumption
funneling
moving shadows of deposit
admiring increasingly mothers
standing by their prole as they become one
because life is at the center
Bellowing against all debts
the rising inflation
the cost of living
the same wage
Even when accepting military defense
waste of the whole smelting going on

the worth more of the silt in our veins to tyrannize circulation

repeatedly, I can only hear the children's voices reverberation:

“Des territoires coulés dans nos veines
Et des amours qui valent la peine)
(Nous aurons tout ce qui nous manque
Des feux d'argent aux portes des banques
Des abattoirs de millionnaire
Des réservoirs d'années-lumière)
Et s'il n'y a pas de lune
(Nous en ferons une)”

[A part of a Richard Desjardins song Nous aurons. The whole poem
is a little québécoise :)]

“A country is a place that happens to you. History is a series of thefts, or migrations, or escapes, and along the way, new bodies are added to a lineage. Someone finds a place where they think themselves meant to be, and they stop moving.”

As we pass paths that becomes familiar
Time and space collapses
Into belonging
Fundamental values
The sanctity of space
The responsibility from receiving the gifts from that space
The guttering
eyes
it is difficult to know to what extent we are conditioned inside
and outside the cinemas
To be able to tell stories that linger...no more
Pure hauntology
Maladjusted sight
The blight
The mighty the might
That doesn't hold: - a complete moratorium
or two eyed seeing

It's "bound to the wheel"
Where the road is not a web but a dead end
And if the wind still blows our way
we are just epiphytes
You see?

Poetic texts shared by Paula Dykstra at an action, a speak-out against Law 31 in Quebec that moved at the time to block the ability of tenants to transfer leases. This move blocked the capacity of low-income tenants to have the capacity to share leases, particularly of low rent apartments. This was another move on the part of the extreme right wing government of the CAQ in Quebec to attack tenant rights. These poetic texts were shared by Paula at a speak out that I coordinated as part of the Suoni per il Popolo festival in June 2023 in collaboration with the collective project Réverbérations d'une crise : une enquête sonore sur le logement à Montréal. – Stefan Christoff.

TODAY THE CITY SAVED

ANNA LEE-POPHAM

The city plans a park since its dawn then places batons in the hands of neighbours with little dogs. The city is in the drone of its attendance and twenty-year-olds become a city's blunt edge and people within homes become people without homes then people in prison. When people start bleeding in a park it is the only way the body knows to respond to a less than lethal weapon hitting a skull, then hitting a skull again. The sirens of the city say, Your blood, your blood, is ruining our lawn. Perhaps you resort to panic, or you don't and someone reminds you of its importance, perhaps you lose me here, perhaps I am lost in this scuffle, perhaps you are now alone.

THE CITY SAVES YOU FROM SHELTERS

ANNA LEE-POPHAM

The city says, *Look! A man built a box for people to live in. Look. Boxes of people all ready to die. The news hiccups, Look. The city*

saved you from the boxes this man built. Look, says the news, at the city saving us from this man, these shelters, these shells. Look,

says the city, look at us, says the news, look at what we are saving you from, we are all the city, saving you from that man building

shelters, from those shells, from that hell of a box on your walk through the park.

I have included two poems by Anna Lee-Popham in this zine after having reached out to Anna to see if she wanted to include poetic work in this collective zine on housing justice. I met Anna many years ago on a rooftop in the East Village of New York City. I was down in that neighbourhood to paste up large silk-screen posters for the Montreal Anarchist Bookfair, the second edition, so I have held that connection since that time in the spring of 2001. – Stefan.

LE LANDLORD EST CHEAP

FENTON "ZLADYBUG" BENJAMIN

Le loyer est assez Cher , par contre Le landlord est cheap.
/ Il y a des réparations à faire: il crie ST beep beep! / la
neige est pelté seulement à le heure de midi / . Mais
demanded Le landlord d'être plus polit il prefer de reagir
comme si il veut ecrasser un petion dans son 4x4
jeep on repeat!

Growing up I've always had my privacy and my chores
completed. / so when Mom asked me to move out the
discussion wasn't heated. / she needed her space and I
had to grow. So I became accustomed to reaping doe to
cover my shelltour / though a non francophone
comme langue maternal j'ai l'agilité de clouer la pointe
finale , oui ca fait mal, when the translation isn't factual,
intentional efforts to disguise their evil / . Yo this is
housing, this is your castle! And all that stress crumbles
the mental & affects the sleep cycle . C'est une bail qui a
été signée et non une demande de l'expérience d'être
emprisonnée / Plus en plus de gentrification et les
authorities manque l'education / donc les stereotypes
sont suivie comme la loi de la nation! / though see here:
voici ma question : if housing is essential why when on
solitary ils dissent non! Donc même si on trouve une
place c'est plus d'1/3 de l'income !
[Ça fait du sens dans quel plan?!] (*2)

Les lumières est sur congé i guess 'cause elle fonctions
quand ça les tantes / nous juste viens d'expulser les
bedbugs maintenant il y a un rodent / ça a pris quatre
ans pour qu'ils acceptent qu'on avait besoin un nouvel
planche dan la cuisine / plus les trois jours pour la
travaille à deux heures et demi t' imagine! / yo le
concierge nettoie une fois par mois avant la collect de
loyer. / c'est comme si ils crois que nous paient pour
cette service hors santé/. Car lorsque le sujet est adressé /
ta l'impression qu'il veulent plus de monnaie / Ou c'est
dans votre intérêt de déménager cars ça va pas changer!
Ah ouais!
Appel la ville, un avocat et envoie une lettre enregistrée
pour le blé! J'en ai aucune idée de
si Santa va rentrer mais nous aurons notre holiday!

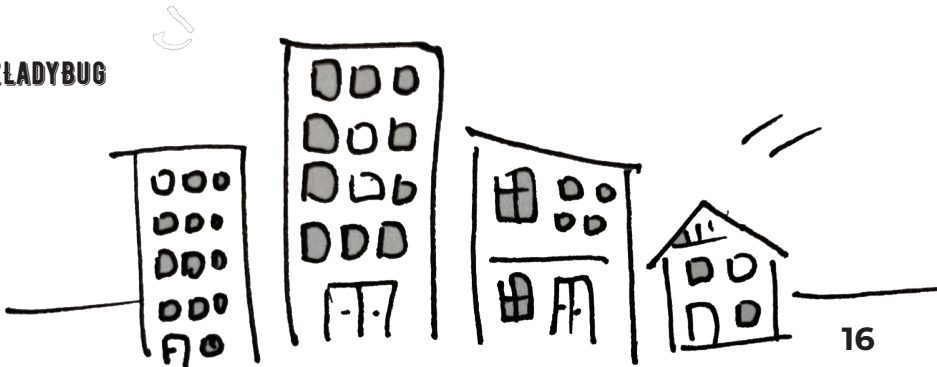
HOUSING POEM

May 7, 2025

Dear audience ,

It was just yesterday that it was raining in the morning before the afternoon sun came out. Outside the roads were drying just a few odd puddles here and there which sporadically lay about . My rain coat , worn for precaution, was quickly removed, as the sun spoke of warmth much more than I had presumed . In my possession was a rain check which is about to be eagerly cashed. With a home at last I can save by cooking making healthier choices as thee mobility in my life last. Walking heals the body by identifying the tightness which needs to be removed. Walking heals the mind giving chimes to solutions from issues all intertwined now soothed. Walking joins us to the planet in management of energy . With eyes on the goal energy efficient not lazy. In other words when does one getting somewhere quickly justify someone else never seeing it permanently. Well it shouldn't unless it's an evil which is detoured! my attention now on the dust being kicked up by the on coming autobus' s engine roar. I'm to the left of the side walk put my head down so the era cap's bill will keep the dust out of my eyes when splash I'm covered in non drinkable water from a small puddle near by. What the hell!! Go the number of the bus and texted myself for a reminder it was the 90 just after 4pm and now I smelt like a sewer. Patrolling made a u turn when I flagged them down they affirmed that if it was on purpose it's punishable, however that they wouldn't be able to catch the bus now. It's less than five minutes after the incident and he's content alls "well" because I'm almost dry. 4am this morning and my laundry is almost dry. Yesterday I came home cooked some of what I picked up, ate then fell asleep. Nightmares is what I would be should there no access to showers be. Lost most of my appetite by this officer stating I wet myself in the bathroom is as feasible an explanation for how my splashed garments be. I'm an eighty's baby black man and homelessness is the city's statement we don't want you on our Sesame "same as me" Street. So instead of the elephant and the bird hanging out because they ear well they painted the mammoth extra drowsy next to the middle finger extremely big thus disrespectful so the overseer had to take a swing. The " grouches" are grouchy but you only give whatever you don't want. They're missing a home not your taste for quality and such. They're not so different should you take a moment to let the spirit touch. An acknowledgment instead of ignorance let's us know humanity hasn't gone to dust.

ZLADYBUG



MORE LOVE, FOR MY HONEYW

FENTON "ZLADYBUG" BENJAMIN

More love, for my honey
More hugs keep me comfy
More clean energy to fill my belly
Clean armpits, yes so We can get funky
Why should we destroy nature, to create wealth?
When we stigmatize each other, it affects health.
When we communicate together, we create a community
Being loved by one another is the greatest wealth there is to be
More love, for my honey
More hugs keep me comfy
More clean energy to fill my belly
Clean armpits, yes so We can get funky.
Why should we destroy nature, to create wealth?
When we stigmatize each other, it affects health.
When we communicate together, we create a community
Being loved by one another is the greatest wealth there is to be

And with that said I'm still trying to get it through my head
Why the tar sands is where the government is investing bread.
Why the deforestation when with no trees we would be dead
Why they pollute the water? What! Aren't they thinking ahead.
There's no love man! Only instant gratification
It doesn't take that much meditation to see what our actions
have us facing.
We need more love man! More water purification
Less contamination, from lower down the food chain feed the
nation.
See I would have a dream but recently I can't sleep
They sell you tap water but dumped in the St Lawrence the
other week
Lakes by the airport don't freeze cause of what they dump in
the creek
Will I have kids that grow up and still have salmon to eat? /
I don't know but I do know what we can do about it /we can
stand up United and denounce this riot / Not get distracted
by the cash and take back our planet / Sustainability is the
key to what our future inherits /

More love, for my honey
More hugs keep me comfy
More clean energy to fill my belly
Clean armpits, yes so We can get funky

Why should we destroy nature, to create wealth?
When we stigmatize each other, it affects health.
When we communicate together, we create a community
Being loved by one another is the greatest wealth there is to be
More love, for my honey
More hugs keep me comfy
More clean energy to fill my belly
Clean armpits, yes so We can get funky.
Why should we destroy nature, to create wealth?
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When we communicate together, we create a community
Being loved by one another is the greatest wealth there is to be

Further more, beauty is in the intertwined balance / Of
combined positives, through which we advance / Dropped
negatives that formed resistance / Do you show love to all
do you give love a chance? / I'd dance, but first we must
include everybody / Address each other with self respect and
use creativity / To find the right solutions for inclusion,
through empathy / Spread more education and less confusion
in our society / Less assumption in the function of
understanding you and me. / More progression in the
communication highlighting positivity. / We should help
each other improve cause we're a team / And if my brother
's truly doing well then so am I, na'mean? / Well listen
up, how can you appreciate another vision with a closed mind?
/ What do you get out of war and alienation besides lost time
/ Be efficient, use love to share your dimes / For
mislove in this world, is a true crime!

More love, for my honey
More hugs keep me comfy
More clean energy to fill my belly
Clean armpits, yes so We can get funky
Why should we destroy nature, to create wealth?
When we stigmatize each other, it affects health.
When we communicate together, we create a community
Being loved by one another is the greatest wealth there is to be
More love, for my honey
More hugs keep me comfy
More clean energy to fill my belly

Clean armpits, yes so We can get funky.
Why should we destroy nature, to create wealth?
When we stigmatize each other, it affects health.
When we communicate together, we create a community

Being loved by one another is the greatest wealth there is to be
Say it with me
More love, for my honey
More love, for my honey

More hugs keep me comfy
More hugs keep me comfy

More clean energy to fill my belly
More clean energy to fill my belly

Clean armpits, yes so We can get funky.
Clean armpits, yes so We can get funky.

Stop destroying nature! That doesn't create wealth!
Stop destroying nature! That doesn't create wealth!

When we stigmatize each other, it affects our health.
When we stigmatize each other, it affects our health.

When we communicate together, we create a community
When we communicate together, we create a community

Being loved by one another is what the world needs to see!
Being loved by one another is what the world needs to see!

I got to know Fenton in the context of early morning broadcasts at CKUT 90.3 FM in Montreal. I was working the night shift as a doorman in an upper scale building right beside métro Atwater, I would read at night, tend to bad behavior from some of the wealthy tenants and also have to clean the lobby entrance.

After my shift ended at 6am I would go over to CKUT to join the morning magazine program a couple of times a week. One of the regular guests on the Tuesday morning show was Fenton. On the broadcast Fenton would share commentary, sometimes poems and also just generally participate in the group effort on air, we would all be in the studio together.

After the program, sometimes we would walk to the métro station together, McGill métro, afterward we would go different directions on the green line, those early morning conversations were meaningful. Some years later I had kept in touch with Fenton and learned that Fenton was struggling with finding sustainable housing, having gone through periods of being without a roof over his head at night.

I have invited Fenton to participate in a couple of community speak outs for housing justice, including a radio broadcast during the housing justice gathering in spring 2025. I am really happy and honoured that Fenton has submitted these poems for this zine project on housing justice. – Stefan.

CONVERSATIONS at the housing Justice convergence

OFF THE HOUR LIVE BROADCAST ON HOUSING JUSTICE MOVEMENTS TODAY IN MONTREAL AND BEYOND

This round-table discussion took place during the housing justice convergence at Concordia University in Montreal in March 2025. I wanted to include this discussion because I think that it points to a wide range of perspectives but also organizing experiences from people involved in different facets of the larger housing justice movement.

The discussion was also recorded as a live to air transmission so that very much drove a high energy during the exchange which also occurred in one of the main conference rooms where people had gathered to discuss organizing tactics and strategies of the housing justice movement, so there was a specific and meaningful energy present during the exchange informed by that context as well. I am happy to include this transcript in the zine.

Thank you to Adrianna Teal for the support also in the transcription process that informed this text, also edited for length and clarity afterward, for this zine. – Stefan.

Stefan Christoff: Today, we are live on CKUT 90.3 FM in Montreal. This is Off the Hour, CKUT's campus community news program, broadcasting weekly 5 to 6 p.m. at 90.3 FM, streaming globally at ckut.ca. Thanks for tuning in. I'm Stefan Christoff, and we are live from the spring 2025 convergence on housing justice, which is taking place at Concordia University in downtown Montreal. This gathering is bringing together activists, researchers, and frontline community organizers to address the housing crisis that the entire continent is facing, but of course here particularly in Montreal.

It's really cool that CKUT can be live here at the gathering, and I think we are live, and yes, we are live. Alright, great. Respect. Thank you so much to Jack Solar for all the technical support and bringing all the gear for this live broadcast down to Concordia. So there's a lovely group of people here sitting around a table, right here, all of whom are connected to housing justice movements in different ways. So maybe we'll just do a circle, a go-around first. I would ask you to first introduce yourself and maybe talk about why and how housing justice movements mean something to you all.

Everyone here is connected to frontline community organizing around this issue, or collective artistic expression on the housing crisis, all efforts to bring forth the urgency of the necessity of a very broad housing justice movement right now. Why is that important to you, and why are politicians and policymakers not making the cut? Why are they failing to address the housing crisis in a serious way, and how does that speak to you?

Hubert Gendron-Blais: Hi, my name is Hubert Gendron-Blais, so I'm a musician and activist and researcher from Tiohtià:ke Montreal. I'm the coordinator of the project Réverberation d'une crise, or Sounding the Housing Crisis. This project is basically a sound inquiry on the housing crisis in Montreal, so using the means of sound art and music to try to understand and make some aspects of this crisis more perceptible.

So quickly to answer your question, Stefan, because we're many people around the table. Well, I would say I worked as a community organizer in a housing committee for many years, at the Association des Locataires de Villeray, and the situation that people are facing around housing really touched me deeply. I mean, this topic is really connected with our state of being, our feelings, our well-being and mental health. I've seen that this city where I'm from, Montreal, has changed a lot due to gentrification.

And so that connection with, like, deep singular stories, that I learned about as an organizer, but also like, the collective life of the city, the ambience of this place rapidly changing, because of the larger gentrification dynamics in many ways, impacts us all and drove me as an artist to decide that I needed to act on it. And so art is one means, among many others, to act collectively, this is one of the means that I am focused on these days through projects like Réverberation d'une crise.

John Clarke: Hi, I'm with 230 Fightback, which is an organization in Toronto that is taking up a fight against a particular condo development that is going to be very destructive in a poor neighbourhood, and we're fighting to stop that condo and instead to win social housing at the location. So being involved in that kind of a struggle, this seems to me to be a really critical moment for this convergence to take place and for a movement for housing justice to take off.

The accumulating effects of an agenda that rewards greed and speculation, but denies the social need for housing to so many people at such cost has reached an impossible situation. I'd just finally make the point that right now, with the economic fallout of Trump's tariffs coming down, we're being told we're all in this together and we've got to work in the national interest. And if that's true, then the needs of people who desperately need housing in this situation are going to be put at the forefront. And we're not going to leave it up to Mark Carney. We're going to insist that that be the case.

Dru Oja Jay: Hi, I'm with SEIZE. And in terms of housing justice this is the key issue right now, clearly housing is something that obviously is essential for everyone. But I think that specifically the affordability of housing and the ability to have housing that doesn't take up your entire paycheck, you know, it's not just a question of budget. This is a larger question of whether in your life you can, you know, volunteer, whether you can, you know, if you get laid off work, whether you can take a few months to reassess and you know try and find other work or, like, wait for a better job offer to come along instead of just being desperate to take the first thing that comes along.

Extremely expensive housing is bad, and bad quality lower income housing is bad, because it is dangerous and toxic, it just destabilizes so many people. Like, not having access to, you know, accessible housing really destabilizes, I think, it impacts people's lives in a of myriad ways. And I would extend that to movement building as well. I mean, obviously, we're trying to build a movement to make housing more accessible. But, really, I think that one of the big challenges that we're dealing with today in this city is that people don't have time, they have less time to be involved in their communities, because the rent is so high, or because their housing is unsafe. People just don't have the space that they had before. You know, they're living under the constant threat of rent increases, the constant threat of eviction, and so on.

And to John's point, I think, we see the editorialists at the Financial Post, the National Post and The Globe and Mail, like, you know, they're seeing this sort of trade war coming down and they're saying, look, you know, we don't want to repeat what happened under COVID, which was obviously just a massive redistribution of wealth toward the ultra-wealthy, but there were some small exceptions. Even the little bit of redistribution, or the little bit of support that people got through CERB and projects like that was too much, according to them, financial columnists, tied to Bay Street. And so, they want to use this trade crisis in the US to have a policy excuse to impose top down fiscal discipline on the most marginalized, an austerity framework, on a public that's already at the breaking point, on populations that are already at the breaking point. So, I think it's a vital moment for housing justice movements to rise. And I think that's why I'm here to try to help build that.

Lisa Freeman: Thanks, I'm a union researcher with the Canadian Labour Congress. And I do think I agree with what everyone's been saying here, and it is a critical moment for multiple communities to come together. And this is work that I've been doing in many different ways over, I guess, a couple of decades now.

And I just remembered when I was working in a group home in the late '90s, there was one kid who just couldn't find housing. He was, you know, kicked out of his house. He didn't have much money. He was on some financial support. And he had to live in a senior's nursing home because that was the only option that he could afford. And he was 18, and he wanted to go out and have fun, so it didn't match. And so when I saw that situation and others that just didn't add up, while working at a group home, I started to do more and more organizing and activism and grassroots work locally. It's great to be on a panel with John, you inspired a lot of what I did as an activist.

I then went to academia, I did some community-engaged research, and you know, supported people doing work around rooming houses in Toronto. And at each point, I'm like, oh, this is the critical moment because it seems like things just can't get worse. But now, we're seeing every single part of the housing question come together, the pieces are falling apart, this is a critical moment in so many ways. We're seeing tenants who are being kicked out of their homes, they just can't afford to get into any housing market, people can't even get into temporary shelter housing at times. There's so much going on.

And when I started doing work around unions and doing union research work, we kept hearing from members in different contexts, facing housing issues. The members consistently wanted their unions to do something about housing. Everyone feels it. I was living in Vancouver in the Lower Mainland, people who'd be, you know, working in hospitals, making maybe \$25 to \$20 an hour, couldn't afford to live close to where they worked. Young workers couldn't afford to live in the region where they worked, and were commuting two or even three hours a day for work and paying so much for the transit. And so, a part of my work today, being a union researcher, it's listening to the members, listening to the national unions, to the locals, and trying to make connections between what's happening now between struggles for housing justice and also for workplace justice. And I think, especially in the wake of the tariffs, so many workers are going to be impacted. So today, there's so many different parts of this picture around housing that we need to fight for, so it's just great to be here today to have these conversations with people, here on air, but also at the gathering.

Fenton Benjamin: Good day, yes, my name is Fenton Benjamin. I'm an artist and currently looking for housing. I actually had a meeting today concerning one of my housing opportunities. So I'll be getting a callback next week about that, so I'm really excited about that, but we will see as there are many attempts like this to try to get housing.

The things that you were all saying have hit me so hard because I guess I'm in that exact position right now, as someone who is looking for housing and as someone who does not have one.

Not having a home really does affect not only your regular life, things that you would normally do from the time that you were growing up, like having a meal, but it also has wider implications. It changes everything in the aspects of how you're able to carry on your life.

And today, seeing that it's going on right across Canada, and especially with what's going on in the States as well, I know that my situation is tied to this larger story. I do find that coming to this convergence is meaningful because I would like to see how I can help to make sure that other people also don't find themselves in the same position as I am in right now as these challenges unfold in the future.

Alessandra Renzi: I'm Alessandra Renzi. I'm a professor in communication studies at Concordia University, and I'm also a media activist. So, I came to focusing on housing through an intersectional lens because housing is the basis for being able to fight any other kind of precarity. And also housing is a site where there is a lot of discrimination. I have been doing research through academia on how to basically identify some of the points of intervention. And I work through community-led projects with activists around different tenant organizations.

As a media activist, I've been working with a variety of organizers, artists and researchers on mapping the impact of especially tech-led gentrification. So, the AI-led industry and various forms of innovations in Montreal and how that impacts housing access, but also generally, doing work to visualize data around housing discrimination, but also to illustrate power, community power, and the work that different organizations are doing to fight back against an incredibly violent wave of evictions and rent hikes that has hit Montreal, and especially in the last five years.

Stefan Christoff: Thank you so much to everybody for sharing a little window into the work that you do. And I would encourage people who are hearing this in the city live on CKUT 90.3 FM to go to housingjustice.now, and through that page you can get more information about a lot of the different initiatives that you've heard about. People are gathering here at Concordia over this weekend to talk about how these many projects for housing justice can connect.

Alessandra, we'll kind of go back this way, in a circle starting with you. I think given that we're all on a panel, all sitting around the table, we'll now circle in the other direction. Your research has really identified something critical and interesting points, I mention this because I think a lot of people might not understand, just in terms of the ways government discourse addresses quote-unquote innovation and

how that discourse actually erases the impacts, let's say, on working-class communities like Park Extension in Montreal, particularly in regards to the AI sector, as it's called, a deeply corporate sector that is eating up territory, literally and is directly involved in displacing working-class people and immigrant communities.

We were messaging recently, and I wrote to you after seeing all the tech giants sitting at Trump's inauguration, as part of this whole fascist disaster south of the colonial borderline, and Mark Zuckerberg was just sitting there, along with Tim Cook of Apple and also the Google CEO, Sundar Pichai, and I messaged you after this visual in relation to fascism, tech giants and AI. I asked you about the Facebook office in Montreal and of course, you actually had specific information on this point and generally about the corporate AI infrastructure in the city. So can you speak about why these companies are related to the housing crisis, locally and globally, how are these things connected?

Renzi: Well, I mean, for a million and one reasons, including the fact that now a lot of these tech giants are really sitting at the decision-making tables, locally and globally, they are becoming more powerful than politicians.

At at the more local level, in the context of Parc Ex, Mile-Ex and the neighbourhoods around there we can see the impacts of a major amount of funding coming from both the federal and provincial levels to redevelop the areas, this is framed, or justified, as these areas being quote-unquote underdeveloped, or poor, or even under-inhabited. And so this means that right next to Parc Ex, at the border between Parc Ex and another neighbourhood, the Université de Montréal built a really high-tech campus that functions as a hub, a public sector research and design innovation hub which is connected to a variety of different organizations that are private but also government-funded that are focused on research into AI innovation, which, according to the people who run this so-called ecosystem, the AI ecosystem in Montreal, it's AI for good, ethical AI, but we can see another implication just in terms of how the space has impacted low-income residents in regards to gentrification, at a very local level.

More broadly the definitions of ethics in the context of AI is pretty contentious. So the first effect has simply meant that the rent and housing in the neighbourhoods near these companies have just skyrocketed and people are being evicted, this is happening locally, but is also mirrored in other communities globally. There is a change in the culture of the neighbourhood, and Parc Ex is a very tight-knit community, with a lot of working-class immigrants and specifically a lot undocumented families, so it's been really hard—even though community groups have been doing great work—it's been really hard to organize people who are precarious for a variety of different reasons and so don't necessarily want to be in the frontlines of the fight.

So locally these are some of the main most visible impacts. The other impact is that Montreal, like many other cities where AI innovation is being, you know, hyped up, are the processes of trying to make use of the incredible wealth

of data that is now being produced in so-called digital economy, the platform economy, and this data in fact is really being used to create a variety of different services that are AI-based around real estate. The most famous, you know, the best known projects are companies that are able to establish rental rates in relation to property value, based on algorithms, that have been proven and are directly resulting in an increase in the rents.

Also there are a variety of other apps that, you know, have a huge impact, including tenant management apps where there are huge breaches of privacy, so through these apps a lot of data collection takes place that really has an impact on the ability of people to access housing, to be able to access affordable housing, this process really creates a huge separation between tenants and landlords.

And then finally there are even other apps that have been touted as new innovative apps that are basically gentrification apps. They use all sorts of data taken from social media and public data to identify which are going to be the quote-unquote up-and-coming neighbourhood, you know, the areas where people can go and buy property and then flip it relatively quickly to make a profit. These apps are being used by real estate agents and are also now tied to the process through which municipal value for property is established, and so this information is then downloaded and used in discriminatory fashion against low-income renters.

Stefan: Thanks so much for highlighting those points. Can you mention any websites for these projects?

Alessandra: Totally, so the Park Extension Anti-Eviction Mapping project has some of the mapping work that is done, just look it up by that name. There is also a report that we published called the Digital Divides that is available in French and English and it specifically addresses the AI impact on Park Extension as well as the other forms of organizing that have been happening there.

Stefan: Thank you so much. This is Off the Hour on CKUT 90.3 FM, live at Concordia University at the spring 2025 Housing Justice Convergence, visit housingjustice.now if you'd like more information. Fenton, over the last year we've been exchanging and also speaking in person about how housing precarity affects you as an artist, you know, and we have also talked about your struggle. Given that you've been working to find housing and in that context fighting to find time to also keep up your poetry and music.

I wanted to hear about that in the context of your efforts to seek sustainable and permanent housing, which for yourself along with many others in this city and beyond, is a reality that doesn't exist. Can you share a bit about what you're facing personally, whatever you'd like to share, and also your struggle to continue to express yourself artistically in this context?

Fenton: Yes, thank you for the opportunity to join you on CKUT.

Regarding that, housing is something that gives you the opportunity to have your own space, your own schedule, your own ability to produce whenever you are in the vibe to be doing, in the moment, and I like to express myself that way, through the arts. I have the opportunity to do it sometimes, but because I don't have my own space, it's difficult because there are interruptions. Finding space to create is very difficult because I am never in my own space, given I don't have steady housing right now.

I can't just do whatever I want. I have to keep in mind very closely the others within the four walls. It's not like having neighbours where there's a little buffer in between you, you are crowded into a small shared space just to have shelter.

Stefan: On this point you're talking about shelter spaces as shared spaces.

Fenton: Shelter spaces, yes. Shared spaces, yes. Because, like, today, that's where I do most of my art. I don't normally go out to, like, to a different locale to do my art unless it's to record. Most of that was done within my home before. So without having that, a home, for the past year, it's been more difficult to find space as an artist.

I have gone to visit my parents in Toronto to help out as a caregiver for my family, and when I've done that, it's given me a bit more time to create, and that's where I've done most of the creating over the past year.

But generally, as we were just hearing about before, these tech companies that I see, online and also physically in the city, have so much access, they take up so much space and thinking about this makes me question, what type of city do we wish to have? Who should be able to live in the city fairly?

Now on this point we can't really just think about Monreal, we have to think about Canada as a whole. Like, who are the people that we're favouring to have access and space in the city. Are these companies really going to breathe life into the city for those actually trying to survive here? And, again, as an artist, not having a home makes it very hard, without a place to live, a place to work, to create, while this city keeps saying that it is a cultural hub.

Stefan: Totally, the movement and this city needs artists, and it is unjust that cultural workers like you are struggling to just have housing at all. Thank you for sharing your experience, Fenton.

Lisa, you're working to connect housing justice organizing with labour organization through the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC). The CLC is a serious organization with a long history. Why is this important to you, in relation to what you've just heard, to make those connections? And, I ask that because as you know very well, it's a complicated endeavour to try to mobilize the power of the labour movement to support housing justice. I would love to hear your thoughts on this point, thank you.



Lisa: Thanks Stefan, yeah, that is quite a big point. I think part of the bigness comes from the multiple ways that people in different unions, from locals to national unions, to labour councils and to federations of labour, including the CLC, have all been doing this kind of work in different ways.

I think now is a time for all of us to come together and actually really work, building on the long history of unions supporting housing justice, to help to build co-ops and non-market housing. Some unions are now building housing above their headquarters even. Some are doing ongoing support and financial donations. I think right now is a time for all of this to be connected and for us to skill-share the different opportunities and efforts that we are now dealing with around making solutions to the housing crisis a real thing.

I think working with the CLC gives me a great way to connect with so many different unions and so many different people across Canada to find ways to come together for that goal, housing justice. I was recently at a conference in Vancouver and it was this big housing conference that they have every single year. During that event, for example, I'd go and sit at a table with people I don't know and introduce myself and the fact that I am with the Canadian Labour Congress. Sometimes people, like a housing provider in Kamloops that I remember, would ask why as a labour representative I was there. I would outline that workers also need housing and like so many others, members of unions, are struggling also to find sustainable housing and are bringing up this issue with their unions. So in these conversations within the housing movement connections are made and links between different struggles are made.

Also at these types of gatherings I hear stories, I remember one person, who worked for a shelter in the downtown east side of Vancouver, you know, what used to be called the poorest postal code in Canada, a situation that is still very intense but also the area is facing gentrification. And this person said he was doing this ad hoc research which involved counting how many people were in line every day at their shelter. And he would also ask those people what they did and through

this process he said at least one third of the people accessing that shelter every night were residential labourers in the construction sector. And I remember this person saying, these people are literally building homes they'll never be able to live in. And they're there at the shelter every single day and having to do work to build condo towers that certainly don't address the housing crisis in the ways that we need to right now.

And so in doing this work to try to bring labour movements and housing movements together in different ways, I think it is very really meaningful for everyone in this equation, for unions, for organized labour, to hear from housing activists and advocates about the work that they're doing and for that to shape and inform our points of shared history of struggle.

Today at the housing justice gathering we had a labour caucus, and approximately 30 people showed up to talk about their work and also to hear stories about tenant organizing and also to share ideas around working with their union locals to build labour strategies around housing justice. In this space and others we, as organized labour, are talking about and learning from the tenant organizing that people are doing, and specifically the ways that tenant unions are using rent strikes as a form of tenant power.

I think that it is important to find ways to bring union locals into these spaces of community actions. I think, for example, it would be important for autoworkers and other unions, to bring like 40 people from their locals to come to support tenant strikes. These are ideas that we need to build out together.

In the wake of economic uncertainty, you know, with the Trump tariffs and the ways that they'll impact areas like the auto sector, many people who have owned homes for a long time, those dynamics might change around the ability to pay mortgages, but also generally around the consistency of work in the future.

I think that people really need to come together to think about what type of housing do we really need in this context? What type of housing do people in Canada need? Clearly non-market housing is one key part of responding to that. I think that also we need to find more ways, as I have outlined, for organized labour and housing advocates and activists to come together to do this work.

Stefan: Lisa Freeman from the Canadian Labour Congress, live here on Off the Hour, CKUT 90.3 FM's weekday news and current affairs program, live on campus community radio. Thanks for tuning in. Today we are live at a gathering for housing justice here at Concordia University in downtown Montreal. I'm Stefan Christoff, and I'm joined by a great panel. And this is just a small window into all the awesome people here.

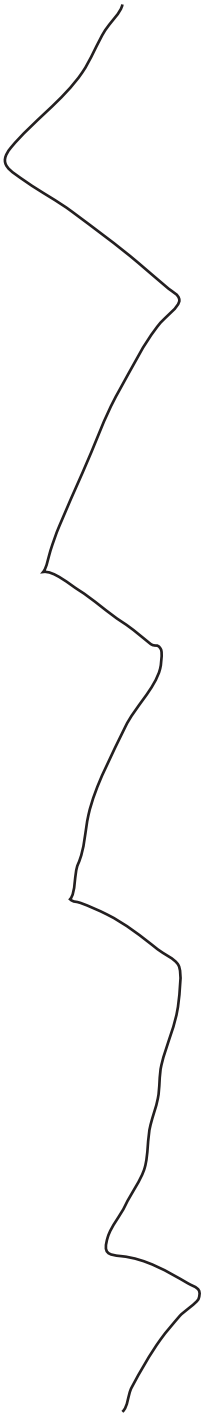
Dru, so in terms of this gathering we are at today, you are one of the people who had the idea to put this gathering together. So can you talk about that point, why it was important for you to be involved and the reasons why this is happening from your perspective?

Dru: I mean, this gathering really came out of a report that we did called From Crisis to Consensus. And the idea behind the report was basically to survey many grassroots housing justice groups across the country that were into the idea. And it was, you know, imperfect, but I think what we really came across, from the 60 or so groups that responded, was how clear everybody was about what the solutions are. On this point, you know, none of the groups, zero, liked the idea of handing a bunch of money over to private developers, this whole idea of creating incentives for private developers will not solve the crisis. It's really building a lot of public and cooperative nonprofit social housing that we need. That is the solution. And this has to be done on a massive scale.

This gathering is about two things. Like, the first one is realizing, collectively, the sort of situation we're in and collectively, not just individually or within small groups, but as a big network of just housing advocates and finding ways to leverage the experience from people across Canada, to first say, look, this is our situation, then this is our experience and finally here are our proposed solutions.

In this context, as Pierre Poilievre and the Conservatives, along with the Carney Liberals, both say that they are going to build more supply, and that's somehow going to address the housing crisis, we know that's not true, it will not address the crisis. When Carney says, for example, that the government is going to leverage AI to, you know, somehow improve people's lives, that's not true. All that's going to happen through that process is optimizing the amount of rent they can extract from everybody, from the tenants. That's what they're going to do with AI. Until now also, the NDP hasn't proposed any bold solutions as well, which really address the scale of the crisis.

And so, in this context, what we're really left with are movements, and the ability of people who are confronted by this situation to organize on the ground, to find ways to come together and to form common points of a collective agenda. To find ways to put their heads together to both understand the ways that the differences across their experiences, but also the similarities, can both be strengths in building a movement, to find points of



interconnection. This can allow us to test and challenge the lies that we are being sold at the federal and provincial levels, also at the municipal level, that private housing developers can address this crisis, they will not. Collectively, we need to find ways to make demands together, to support solutions together, to push for bold non-market housing solutions, this can start to work toward turning the tide on finding ways to improve people's lives when it comes to their access to housing, which is obviously a key point for everyone.

Stefan: I remember during the pandemic lockdowns, you along with a few others had initiated a project, RentStrike.ca, where you were trying to bring together a bunch of tenant organizers, to connect their local efforts across Canada, to organize collectively across communities against evictions during the pandemic. I remember speaking with you then for the community radio program that I host, Free City Radio and thinking that it was a great project, but also how much a project like that could be deepened if and when those movements had the capacity to gather together, which today they are, here in Montreal, so that is great. For anyone hearing this visit housingjustice.now

John Clarke, for a lot of activists from my generation in Canada, millennials and of course others, we are aware of your long standing work to bring different struggles together and to vocalize those struggles on the streets. I have always looked to you for ideas as to the directions that grassroots social activists should consider. In this context it would be lovely to hear about your thoughts on the ways to orient our conversations today around housing justice, to get a sense of our organizing and where we are at, but also the potential directions that we can take, moving forward.

John: Thanks, yes, before the trade war emerged, we were already seeing the accumulating effects of a housing approach that is based on rewarding speculation as opposed to meeting people's needs starting to spiral out of control. The Association of Municipalities of Ontario, for example, talks about an explosion of homelessness that's happening in the province where I live, and projects it to absolutely skyrocket in the coming period. And then all of a sudden you have the economic giant to the south of us deciding to take a protectionist turn and the implications of that for this country are absolutely unbelievable. Whatever approaches people take, everyone from the Bank of Canada, to people who actually want to fight for a decent society, are all taking, all recognize, the enormity of what's happening.

I think what we're going to see is sustained shockwaves across some years. We're going to see a deterioration in the situation that's already absolutely dramatic. In that context, such a shock also opens up an incredible amount of possibilities, possibilities for resistance, possibilities for mobilization, possibilities for actual challenge. I think a series of fighting demands that are articulated by a united movement in this situation can make an enormous difference, points that actually speak to people's needs.

The incredible amount of federal money that is put into providing rewards to developers and investors, if that were, for example, put into non-profit solutions to housing that actually met people's needs and that were rational, coherent and work to respond to the specific housing needs of communities, that would be a dramatic change of circumstances. If the federal government were to step in and say that there are going to be rent freezes, that there are going to be real serious rent controls, that there will be a moratorium on economic evictions, so I am talking about these kinds of measures, that would actually all make real differences in many lives in concrete terms.

At a time when the powerful are still speaking a rhetoric of inclusiveness as being in the national interest, I think there's a real possibility of really hammering them on those points. And so I think that housing is of such importance in this regard because it is one of the most fundamental basic human needs that there are. And to have housing today in this situation, that places so many people in a state of precarity, and in that context to continue policies that allows for the political justification of a mass social abandonment is not only unconscionable, it's not viable.

I think there's a real anger that exists out there across this country today for these systemic reasons. And I think this is a moment where we can really tap into that anger and we can think in terms of a housing movement that is focused, clear, decisive, powerful, and actually takes on mass dimensions. I think we can actually mobilize people in all the myriad of fights: rent strikes, challenging developers' agendas, preventing destructive condo developments when social housing is needed. We could actually build a movement that has a daily life that shakes this country up, and that creates, for those in power, a political crisis that they must respond to. I think that's the sort of goal that we have to set ourselves in this context.

Stefan: John, thank you so much for those thoughts and powerful reflections. That's John Clarke, longtime community organizer based in Toronto. Hubert, the thing that comes to my mind about your work now and this is just one reference point of course, given that your work as an artist and cultural worker is awesome, particularly around housing. Right now I am also thinking about when we first encountered each other, which was in the context of student strike organizing at the Association pour une solidarité syndicale étudiante (ASSÉ). I think that this is still a very important reference point for organizing here locally, the ASSÉ as a political force.

There was a very interesting balance in the student movement history of Quebec between popular mass democratic political decision-making, through general assemblies, with also an openness to autonomy and direct actions. I think that this is something that is important for people to know more about. In the context of that fluid framework of organizing the ASSÉ created a total political crisis in Québec through collective strike action in 2012, and actually won the principal demand of shutting down an attempt to hike post-secondary education. Of course, in many ways, some of the ideas and the organizing frameworks can relate to housing because it is at the end about collective power.

Hubert: Exactly, well said. I mean, one of the strategic elements to the ASSÉ was the discussions around planning campaigns that allowed for a diversity of tactics which surrounded those debates. And at some point, the strength of the federation of student unions was based on that, well, the assumption we're open, in fact, to many, many different types of tactics as long as we try to coordinate.

And I mean, this political context, the housing movement, this could create very intense debates, you know, but I do think that combining mass movement union style organizing, that includes more like lobbying style actions and protests, plus direct action tactics and the specific targeting of the interests of some landlords, or some companies, exactly, could really move things. I think these are the questions we should be considering in relation to the challenges that we face today in the housing justice movement. We have to be, I think, more organized in terms of tactics and also more open to difference.

I think that sometimes, within social movements, one of the problems that we face is that we spend more time criticizing each other, each different perspective, while what would be more interesting is finding ways to coordinate across political differences. I mean the situation is clear, as illustrated by the people who spoke before me, the housing crisis is becoming deeper and deeper, we need to find ways to act collectively at a large political level. Let's talk about this and understand that we must develop many different options. We will need many different tactics to try to change the balance of power on the question of housing. So I think that yes, that example of a specific student organization, which you mentioned, ASSÉ, that lasted more than 12 years with that unique mixture of tactics is something for us to consider in regards to finding organizational frameworks to inspire the housing justice movement, moving forward.

Stefan: When you mention the organization, ASSÉ, you're also talking about mass collective power that balances general assemblies and representative frameworks, along with lifting up the power of autonomous direct action as well?

Hubert: Exactly, of course. And I think that in the case of ASSÉ and the 2012 strike in Quebec, what made this strike so powerful was exactly that mixture of massive, huge demonstrations and direct actions that were happening basically everyday and as the strike went on, they were really getting more and more radical. Given that, we must understand, in our historical reading, that it was the combination of the two elements that brought the strength to that movement, because without a big mass movement, as well as the direct actions, the movement could have been more easily repressed and have been pushed back more quickly, but it was that diversity of tactics that helped the political dynamic. But at the same time, I must underline that we can have a huge demonstration and feel like nothing really changed like the day after, if that mass protest doesn't occur within an active dynamic. But the combination of the two, autonomous regular actions, along with larger political symbolic demonstrations of collective power, that's what makes power tremble.

Stefan: Thank you Hubert, so, time check? Alright, yes we are live, thank you so much Jack, holding down the production side of this broadcast, it is 5:37 on CKUT 90.3 FM in Montreal. This is Off the Hour and we are live and the Housing Justice Convergence. We have a wonderful panel discussion today on our community news program. Also thanks again to Jack for all the technical hustling today to bring all the material down from the radio station to Concordia University downtown where hundreds of activists and community organizers are gathering around housing justice, visit housingjustice.now for more info.

Now we'll go around in one more circle at this table, so now going back to you, Hubert, as you are working on housing justice, but specifically expressed through the arts these days. And as a part of this gathering on housing justice, on Sunday, there will be a procession around gentrification and also this will address many other elements to the crisis, including the commodification of territory, and property speculation in the city, which of course is rooted in a framework of colonial economics and land occupation, the basis of political power structure in colonial North America.

Can you talk about this upcoming outdoor walking event in the city and the process around it, the ideas behind it?

Hubert: In fact, this project was basically an idea that came from the collective process around Réverbérations d'une crise : une enquête sonore sur le logement à Montréal, a group sound art project on the housing crisis, which you were also involved in. Coming out of that we wanted to do a procession in the city to show people, like, good examples of housing justice, the co-ops that are existing right now in Montreal, but also some the spaces that have disappeared due to gentrification, to listen to voices working to find ways to address the crisis of gentrification in Montréal.

I would say that we're lucky to have a lot of co-ops in the city, but also I want to say that movements fought for these co-ops. The walk that we are organizing will stop at different places where people have struggled collectively for housing, and won in the case of some co-ops like the Milton-Parc ones, but also the ways that gentrification has resulted in many cultural venues being closed and many neighbourhoods becoming out of reach for low-income people, for cultural workers, for new immigrants. There will be music, speeches and it will be outdoors to close the housing justice gathering, info at housingjustice.now

Stefan: Thank you, Hubert. John, so you've recently been involved in 230 Fightback in Toronto, but of course you have been involved in many other struggles, so I just wanted to create an opening for us to hear from you and about what you have been doing lately, can you speak to this?

John: Well, yes, in this context we're confronting a particular developer, KingSett Capital, that stepped in and outbid the city of Toronto for ownership of a plot of land between 214-230 Sherbourne, a location that's right in the heart of a very poor community, and this company wants to build a luxury condo tower. So we stepped in and challenged that and 230 Fightback got underway.

And our key demand is, of course, for social housing to be created on the spot. This struggle has gone quite well, in the sense that we have developed a real political momentum. We've put the developer on the rope somewhat. This company happens to be a face of compassionate capitalism in the city, in terms of their public language, so confronting them is relatively easy.

Today what we have uncovered, through our movement research, in the context of our organizing is that the company, KingSett Capital, is now trying to sell the property back to the city at a price that is clearly unacceptable. So at the moment the development is blocked in a way, but the struggle continues, as I say.

I think that the key context is to understand that this campaign in Toronto occurs in opposition to the twin violence of a mainstream political establishment that folds together an austerity framework with an acceptance of accepting the financialization of housing as a consensus, while in fact these points are deeply contested. It is exactly this agenda that mixes a destructive upscale redevelopment, along with the commodification and financialization of housing that we are fighting.

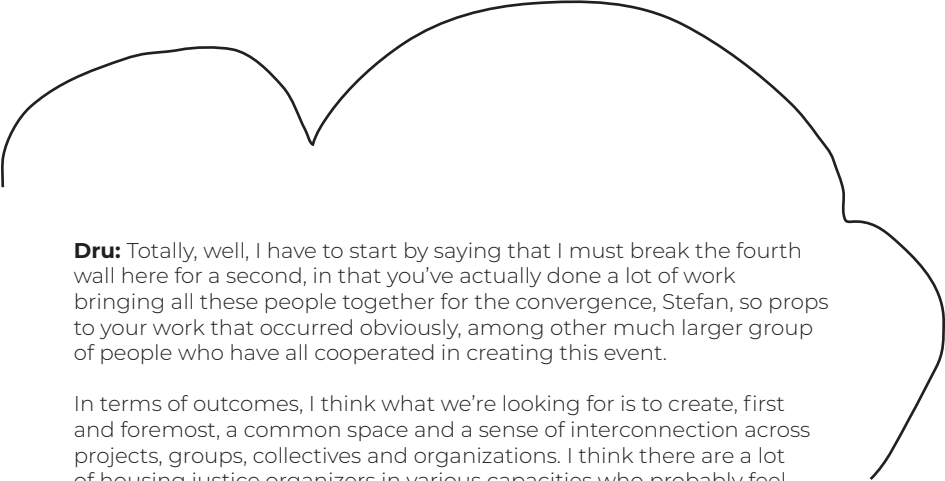
In Toronto we are seeing the relentless greed of the developers and how horribly destructive they are for the city, the fact that they are diametrically opposed to providing for people's housing needs, when we are talking about low-income and working class communities. At City Hall in Toronto, along with provincial and federal levels of power, we are dealing with an incapacity to understand that developers and speculators are basically parasites. The notion that you can give incentives to these groups and get anything in return that really addresses the crisis points that people face is absurd.

In Toronto today we are dealing with the fact that the supposed progressive administration, under Mayor Olivia Chow, is basically giving in to these people, the parasite developers and this means basically just accepting this overall state of affairs, the massive housing crisis, with a sad sense of inevitability. That's what's got to be challenged, we've got to break that sense of inevitability. And it is clear that the political shift needed is not going to come from political decision makers at the city level. It's going to have to come from the communities and 230 Fightback is a modest contribution to doing just that.

Stefan: Thank you so much for outlining all of that, John. So as part of this broadcast I'd really encourage people to check out all of the projects that are being mentioned, go to housingjustice.now for information.

So now to you, Dru, I think that in creating this gathering space, this convergence, there are some larger political ideas at play. The term convergence is a specific word used for specific reasons, it of course evokes the gatherings of the global justice movement. But I wanted to ask you about some of the things that you're hoping will come out of this process of gathering, can you share your thoughts on this?





Dru: Totally, well, I have to start by saying that I must break the fourth wall here for a second, in that you've actually done a lot of work bringing all these people together for the convergence, Stefan, so props to your work that occurred obviously, among other much larger group of people who have all cooperated in creating this event.

In terms of outcomes, I think what we're looking for is to create, first and foremost, a common space and a sense of interconnection across projects, groups, collectives and organizations. I think there are a lot of housing justice organizers in various capacities who probably feel pretty lonely out there in the wasteland of alienation that defines a lot of mainstream political space in this country. And so I think, first of all, to create some comfort and feeling of solidarity between organizers to really feel that they're not alone in what they're trying to do locally.

Also, I think, as Bruno Dobrusin said in the closing panel today about organizing, it's not actually that mysterious, the organizing process that needs to take place at a coordinated level nationally. It's just knocking on a lot of doors, it's bringing people together and then finding ways to act for their collective interests. And this is something that anybody can do. I think that there is a sense that this can be done. And as John was just outlining, you know, it's about building together, it's about creating a movement that has the potential to have a mass character because the housing crisis is so past the boiling point.

So, you know, SEIZE [Solidarity Economy Incubation for Zero Emissions], the group that I am a part of, our approach to movement building is very much one of trying to bring together complementary sorts of parts within progressive sectors. So in the housing sector, I think that means that we invited people who are involved in frontline tenant organizing, community organizers, along with people who are doing direct actions, tenant unions, as well as people who are working to actually build cooperative housing and even those trying to finance new nonprofit housing, bringing all of these folks together in a space. This also includes people who are working on policy and people working on research. I think if we can bring all those people together and I think we have done that in this space, we can now start to think about finding a way to have a big tent coalition that can also express some collective demands.

It is key to not water down the demands, but also we are working to bring as many different people and acknowledge the sort of multiplicity of roles that can play a part in a movement, as you heard about earlier in the point raised by Hubert regarding the 2012 student strike. You know, this movement needs people directly challenging policymakers at government conferences, but it also needs people directly knocking on doors in buildings owned by real estate investment trusts, like, we also need people dropping banners and blockading buildings. And I must say that we also need people who are, you know, pouring over hours of transcripts of interviews for research projects that can create data sets for the movement. And to the extent that we can have all of those sorts of different people connected to each other and working together in a loose way, I think that the conditions for a successful movement are here right now.

I think, what we're here to try to do. I mean, in terms of SEIZE's role, we've really tried to play more of a facilitation role. We're not interested in becoming, like, a public leader in the housing advocacy space. We're more interested in creating additional movement capacity, and seeing if we can hand that off to housing justice movement spaces that through a coordinated process can hopefully get stronger by the day, and resonate with, you know, thousands and hopefully soon millions of people.

Stefan: So, just for people listening now, or reading this, can you explain a little bit about what SEIZE means and the baseline ideas of the group?

Dru: SEIZE is the Solidarity Economy Incubator for Zero Emissions. So basically, you know, there are business incubators that try to incubate businesses, we try to incubate movements while also having roots in the climate justice movement. We basically try to provide the sort of care, the feeding and connective processes, along with research that supports the development of movements. This happens from the mindset that understands that a movement has many important and different elements that are an important part of making up a larger process.

Stefan: Thanks for sharing that, Dru. For those who are interested in learning about the speakers, the organizations and networks that are a part of this gathering visit housingjustice.now This is CKUT 90.3 FM live from Concordia University.

And now to you, Lisa, in thinking about the sorts of organizing involved in creating a larger movement, I'm now thinking about a bunch of things, but I guess it is important to ask you about the possibility of unions being a vehicle for mass action, right? Given you are now with the Canadian Labour Congress.

And, as you know very well, given what you shared earlier, there is this need for mass action around housing. I wanted to address and ask you about a point that you mentioned earlier, when you highlighted that recently people have asked you, have inquired, honestly, to try to understand why a union would have someone working on housing. The answer might be obvious to people around this table, but I think that it is an important point to talk about, can you address this?

Lisa: Cool. I think part of the way that this connection is important is around the multiple levels that unions can be involved in the housing game. So, I was just thinking about how important it is to organize from the local level, within unions, all the way to the national federations, including of course the CLC.

A key part of this is sharing the knowledge that workers have created through mass workers movements, the tactics, but also the organizational process, the institution building. I think about tactics like picket lines, also the process around collective bargaining, how do we find ways to share that knowledge between the labour sphere and the housing justice sphere, while also understanding that there are already interconnections in these struggles, clearly.

In the context of the on-the-ground experience of tenant unions, with people advocating and fighting to control their rent, you can see a parallel to when workers are at the table bargaining and arguing for an increase for our wages, we need them to go from, you know, two, three, four per cent over a specific period of time, you know, to the low game. That is bargaining collectively, which reflects in some ways the work of tenant unions acting together to block rental increases and evictions.

Today, I think that unions can also offer insights around how to bargain collectively around cost-of-living allowances, around how we bargain to see what rent increases are in each province and how that can be incorporated into our bargaining, to really address the ways that the housing crunch impacts workers. I think there's a lot of strategies that unions can do at multiple levels. This is at the local level, it is at the bargaining table, or even whether it's in the research that researchers like me and unions can do in providing critical information on housing struggles for all of the unions that are doing the work in Canada.

Also there's that advocacy level where unions, you know, can really push, there is a power in a union! There is

power in labour, there is a voice there and we have a big voice. And a lot of people are talking about housing right now, and talking about how unions can do that fighting for non market housing, fighting for workers rights who will be building that housing, and really talking to politicians as well, while trying to build at the community based level.

Also I would underline that all the different unions are important because each sector has such different needs for housing, and given that there are such different ways to advocate for it. So yeah, I think this is a big moment for the intersection of labour and housing justice movements. And I think a lot of people in labour are on side and supportive of finding connections at this intersection. There are also a lot of workers who are asking their locals, asking their national unions to support them and to do that work. I also think that to a good extent, a lot of people within the national offices of unions, but also within locals, are listening.

Stefan: Cool. Thanks for sharing that, Lisa. Now in this panel I'm gonna just turn to the media as a space for connecting and organizing.

Fenton, we first met at CKUT radio, we were both involved in a morning magazine show, I remember that clearly, it was always great to spend time with you in the on air studio at CKUT with that group of morning community broadcasters. I have been thinking about how alternative media creates a totally different space in terms of what can be said, how things can be talked about, for example, if we are speaking about the housing crisis, if we tune-in to mainstream news, you know, we're going to hear politicians, or academics and researchers first, but rarely from people directly living the issues being discussed in an intense way.

It's cliché to say it, but it's a fact, you know, on CBC for example in a spot about housing you might hear a clip from a professor at McGill University, or even Concordia, which is fine, but you rarely hear is from people who are trying to organize together in relation to their lived circumstances, right?

In this context I wanted to ask you about your experiences as both an artist, as someone who has been involved in community radio, about the struggles you have been facing in terms of accessing sustainable housing. Can you share any thoughts about the role of community radio and alternative media in creating a space for you to share your poetry and also your experiences?

Fenton: Well, CKUT is a very important outlet, because it allows normal people, like me, to participate and through that to understand that we are not alone. Right now in facing the difficulties that I have been facing around housing, that feeling of isolation is real, sometimes you can feel that this type of situation is only happening to you and just a few others, so it is important to be reminded that it is happening to many people.

Also you can feel, as someone dealing with homelessness, that you are in this situation because of something you have done, you can feel that it is your fault. Clearly this reality is impacting many thousands of

people across Quebec and Canada, of course many in this city. This underlines why us getting together to really talk about the housing crisis is something important.

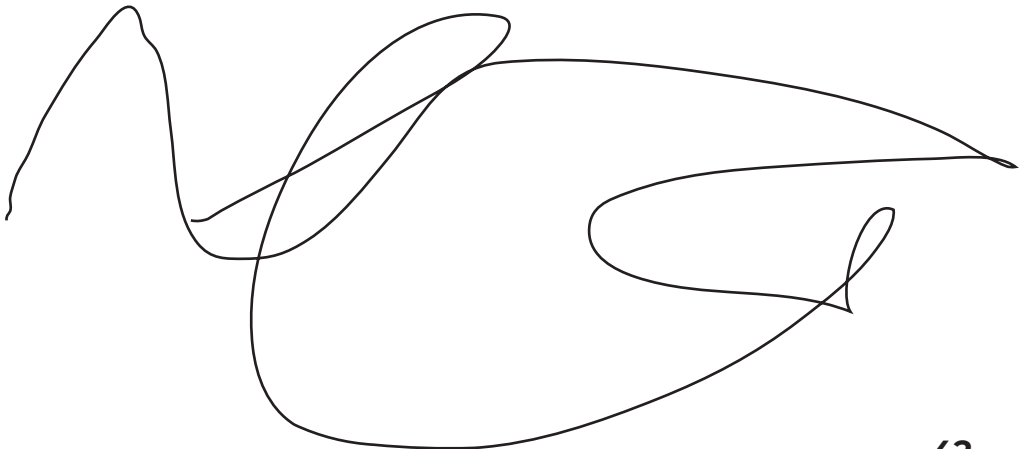
In terms of music and poetry, when I want to listen to my music, to hip-hop, I need to listen to community radio, to CKUT and CISM, to listen to a bunch of independent hip-hop. This is where you need to tune-in on the radio. Also on these stations you can listen to emerging artists, to younger poets finding their voice. On these stations you can listen to emerging things, what's really happening in the community as opposed to what people with power are trying to feed communities, this is a key difference and underlines why community radio is really important for these issues and also for community artists.

Stefan: Respect. As you were speaking I was also thinking about how hip hop, and spoken word poetry are also mediums to tell these stories to share these stories.

Fenton: Yes.

Stefan: Poetry as a medium to really talk about a lot of these issues in a direct way, right?

Fenton: Yes, it's a medium for letting people know, for sharing our stories from the ground, I guess it goes back to, like, picking cotton, to making up songs and lyrics in that context of enslavement I guess. It can start with just humming, it just being in a rhythm and then building out from that.



I also think about the COVID lockdowns which really allowed people to see that we are all in this together, this is an important point. Certainly, even from the grassroots, we all have different angles of seeing the situation, but I think that this is our strength and can help us find a solution together. This is how I see it, that process of finding ways to address the issues, to make a collective voice but that includes many voices pushing for a solution, as difficult as it may be.

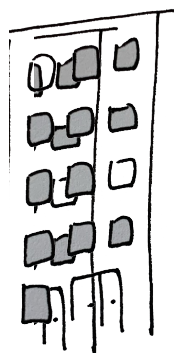
Stefan: Thanks so much for sharing that, Fenton.

Alessandra, so at this gathering today and also tomorrow, which we are live from right now on the radio, there is a lot of interconnection between different themes and voices, but also to underline that there are many different voices.

Here at Concordia yesterday there was a discussion with the Palestinian professor Ahmed Abu Shaban, who's currently living in Toronto, and he'll be speaking at the gathering tomorrow. I bring up Ahmed because at the gathering yesterday, which was an event to support Palestinian life and to stand against genocide at Concordia University, I remember Ahmed speaking about universities not simply being four walls, but it being a social space, a community a network.

Ahmed was also talking about how in Gaza the professors have continued to sustain universities, theoretically in a sense, because the buildings have been destroyed by the Israeli state military, but they have worked to sustain the communities around the post-secondary institutions. Ahmed was saying that the universities still exist, because as professors, as students, Palestinians in Gaza continue to make them exist, even though there are no walls remaining.

I bring this comment up because it can be considered in regards to the collective space and power that universities can hold, as networks, as organizing spaces, that are physically located in most cases, but also there is a project that is larger than the physical space. I wanted to ask you about the ways that university spaces can be and also the ways that they are connected in meaningful ways to housing justice struggles and how that connects to larger questions about universities and other questions of justice, like that key question right now about justice in Palestine.





Alessandra: Alright, yes, so this is a great question. It's really interesting to think about what Dr. Shaban said, because so much of how the university works, especially here, is within the walls. And it's really often, at an administrative level, focused on keeping those walls going and keeping things contained within the walls. Still I see a lot of political research that is really about going outside of these walls and ignoring them, but also using them if they're holding, you know, important infrastructure that can support movements.

I think that if we think about universities as spaces for critical thinking, spaces for learning and political organizing, then it doesn't really matter where we are, actually it is even better if we're outside of the university at key moments, because there is so much knowledge that doesn't make it into academia, and that knowledge space, those insights are really fundamental to understand how things are really working and specifically what kind of solutions we can develop around crisis points like the housing crisis.

And so if we think about the mandate of a university as a place for collaborative thinking and learning, and universities as spaces for people to learn rather than just locations for basic teacher and student narratives, top down knowledge production, instead we can expand our understanding about developing other options that bridge different political, social and community spaces as also valuable areas where extremely insightful knowledge production happens.

Stefan: Alessandra, thank you, that's a great series of points to share right here and now, given we are at a campus space in downtown Montreal, at Concordia and that's where this gathering on housing justice is taking place today, tonight and tomorrow. This includes the Montreal launch for the book *Abolish Rent* that is launching tonight at the SHIFT space, also on Sunday there is the anti-gentrification walk that Hubert mentioned earlier, starting at Co-op Bar Milton-Parc [BMP] on Sunday at 11am. Look up all the details at housingjustice.now Also on Sunday we will be at the cultural venue P'tit Ours for a cultural event around housing justice that will include a film screening.

Over the last hour you have been tuned in to a special edition of Off the Hour live on CKUT 90.3 FM here in Montreal. Thank you to Hubert, John, Dru, Lisa, Fenton, and Alessandra for being on this panel and again to Jack Solar for all the technical support and everybody at the station. Keep it locked on people powered radio at 90.3 FM, take care.

Housing Justice and anti-colonial movements

HOUSING JUSTICE AND ANTI-COLONIAL MOVEMENTS

This is an edited transcription of a panel that took place at a national housing justice gathering in Montreal (March 2025) at Concordia University.

An audio edition of this panel aired on CTR 101.9 FM in Vancouver, Tuesday, June 17, 2025 at 12pm PST (www.citr.ca) and also on CKUT 90.3 FM in Montreal on Friday, June 13 at 6pm (www.ckut.ca).

The specific panel being highlighted in this zine is "Housing justice and anti-colonial movements," a discussion moderated by Stefan Christoff which featured Robbie Madsen, writer and ethnobotanical healer, Ahmed Abu Shaban, Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine, Al-Azhar University, Gaza and Tiro Mthembu, grassroots community organizer with Good Trouble Network YQR (Regina, Saskatchewan).

The panel was described in this way in the original housing justice gathering program:

"This panel examines the deep intersections between the fight for housing justice and the ongoing struggles against colonialism. Featuring Indigenous voices from Turtle Island to Palestine, the discussion will illuminate how displacement, land theft, and housing insecurity are not isolated crises but systemic tools of colonial capitalism. Panellists will explore the ways communities resist the commodification of housing and land, reclaim sovereignty, and build collective alternatives rooted in justice and self-determination. This session aims to foster cross-movement solidarity, recognizing that the struggle for a home is inseparable from the broader fight for liberation."

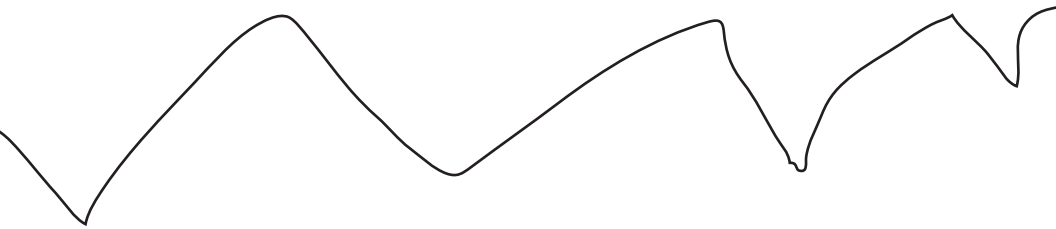
Stefan Christoff: Hi everyone, I am one of the coordinators of this gathering. The conversation today is a very important one; clearly, all the intersecting discussions around housing justice are critically important. I think that this panel and the insights that you will hear this morning are particularly key. This is a broad set of voices before you today.

Robbie, I first met you at OBORO gallery, where we were having a panel on housing justice. I connected with you during the conversation after the presentation, after you had shared some insights about your own experience, writing and work. There were a lot of folks who live around the Milton Parc area who were present, and I recall that you really shared some important context to the lived realities of Indigenous folks experiencing extreme housing precarity around Milton Parc and beyond.

Also for those people from out of town, it is important to underline that Milton Parc is a very intense example of colonialism today; right beside McGill University, you can witness a very extreme illustration of Canadian colonialism in your face. In a way, McGill University remains one of the edifices of colonial power in the city, which is literally a few blocks away from this location. I look forward to hearing from you on this and also about your upcoming book more generally on the Sixties Scoop.

Ahmed, you have been sharing your voice and insights at Concordia University over the last days. You have been in Canada for more than a year now, arriving here from Gaza, a place that you left during the genocide that is being perpetuated by the Israeli state. Ahmed is a professor and educator from Gaza who has been teaching many students in Gaza online. In hearing your insights spoken recently, Ahmed, I really wanted to underline your reflections about a university not only being four walls, but also being a living community of people, one which can survive the destruction of the walls, as we have seen taking place recently in Gaza.

I also wanted to underline the point that Ahmed has helped to maintain online classes for thousands of students in Gaza, while here in Canada, organizing teaching schedules and also facilitating work with students, including online office hours with students in Gaza living within displacement camps. It is probably hard to imagine what that entails, organizing these online classes for so many students in Gaza, so hearing from Ahmed today is very important. Also, this voice, and all those on the panel, allow us to both connect and understand more deeply that housing justice is inherently connected to land. It is inherently connected to deconstructing the entire colonial edifice, a power structure that is enacting genocidal violence in Palestine right now and that also has enacted genocide against Indigenous communities here in Canada; a process that works to commodify housing, territories, the land and broadly our relationship to the Earth.




Tiro, you are coming from Regina. Thank you for being here. In the build-up to this conference, I was reaching out to grassroots organizers in different cities in Canada to get a sense of the important voices that we should try to have represented at this housing justice convergence. A lot of different folks in both Regina and Saskatoon suggested that I reach out to you, Tiro, and make sure to find a way to make sure that you are present.

Trio has been doing frontline support for a lot of communities struggling with housing precarity in Regina, and you have a particular focus on supporting Indigenous folks. Also, it is critical to underline, although I am very sure that some of you are aware of these dynamics, but that Saskatchewan is a context where the realities of contemporary colonialism are manifested in housing injustice and wealth inequality is very extreme ways, particularly when you look at the ways that Indigenous communities line up statistically as compared to others. Also, you have brought a lot of personal connection to struggle to these issues, with your familial ties to South Africa, a point that is awesome and something to underline. I also look forward to hearing more about that point.

So that was a brief introduction on context for the voices you will hear from now. I thought that it would be better to give a more personal reflection as context rather than just share official style biographies.

The first question revolves around housing justice and anti-colonial movements. This is key to underline. This isn't a panel about decolonizing institutions, it is about hearing from frontline anti-colonial voices. This distinction is made with intention around the move to centre voices of inter-generational anti-colonial struggles, rather than centring institutions which are making gestures around decolonizing themselves and the self-involved manner within which such mainstream problematic frameworks around addressing points unfold within.

I thought it is important to bring up that legacy of struggle that you all carry, the anti-colonial struggle that weaves across all your organizing work, in your writing, in your words. Can you introduce yourselves a bit and share a message with the people gathered here today on how anti-colonial struggles must be connected and understood as connected to housing justice movements. Tiro, let's start with you.



Tiro Mthembu: I am from Regina, Treaty 4 territory. I am the son of a Pan-Africanist, South African from Soweto. Often in Canada, when we are focused on our colonial history, we are focused on John A. Macdonald. I know that it is important, and there are movements across the country around critiquing this person. In Regina however, we speak about Edgar Dewdney, who was the Indian commissioner and a colonial politician in Canada who was born in Devonshire, England, and based in Regina under John A. Macdonald. There was the Cypress Hills massacre in 1873 that took place in the grasslands of Saskatchewan, a prime buffalo territory for Indigenous communities. At the time, settlers wanted to settle there to make triple-A grade beef. Edgar Dewdney is connected to that event, that massacre, and what Dewdney was part of more generally was creating the dynamics for Canadian apartheid, as a power structure, as it was taking shape in this region.

As we can see, there is a connection in regards to government policy around displacing Indigenous communities, driving settlers to commit massacres and in some cases supporting them. There are clear links from South Africa to Palestine within these dynamics, but I want to underline that many of them first emerged in Canada. There is a collective responsibility to address this and to uproot the systems of settler colonial violence driven by the state in different contexts, including Canada, of course.

The RCMP are all trained in Regina, at the RCMP Training Academy, and there have been some push to dismantle that, but there has been so much pushback from state interests in Saskatchewan and also from some in Ottawa to maintain this. So when we are thinking about local histories, looking into the present colonial infrastructure in Regina is key, making these connections is important.

Often, when we talk about housing rights, it becomes hard for many communities to even fathom something like tenant unions or a rent strike, when we are on the streets day in and day out in Indigenous communities, working with them to survive. Indigenous people make up almost 90% of the unhoused population in Saskatchewan and around 14% of the general population. Also around 80% of the incarcerated population are Indigenous folks in Saskatchewan. So today, when we talk about housing rights, if we want to get at the roots of the crisis, we need to address these structural colonial infrastructures and talk about dismantling things like the RCMP, dismantling the colonial state pressures overall, so that there is space for our communities to heal from the trauma and then grow and create new things, new institutions.

Ahmed Abu Shaban: Thank you very much for the invitation and also for the opportunity to be a part of this event that is building connections between struggles. In this sense, it can be meaningful to link different movements against settler colonialism. On this panel, we are three voices from different but deeply connected movements.

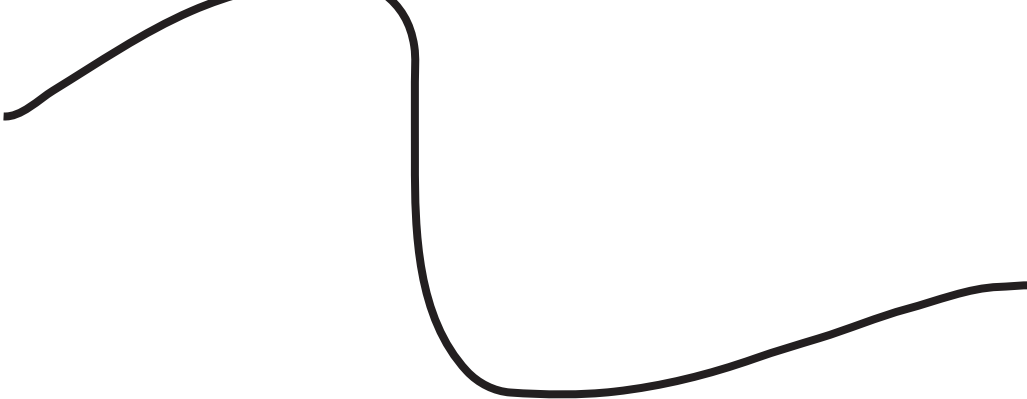
Indigenous people in Canada have faced the violence of settler colonialism, as well as South African people under the framework of apartheid. Today in Palestine, we are living with a relatively early stage of settler colonialism in a sense, because the Israeli state is still trying to force us off our land in a massive way, but they have not succeeded in removing us from our land entirely; that is what we are resisting today in Palestine.

Since arriving in Canada, I learned about the new tradition of doing land acknowledgements before events. I am still trying to understand this in a way. I wonder what the added value is of these acknowledgments? Really. The land was taken, many Indigenous people were massacred and killed, today many Indigenous people who survived this genocide are here, but instead of returning land, giving back land, these acknowledgements are basically an apology, an admittance that the land will not be returned. There is a lot of hypocrisy there.

These land acknowledgements in Canada can be seen in a cynical way, but they can also be considered in deeper ways, as they point to the importance of really learning lessons as humanity on the ways that words alone do not equal justice. At the time of the intense genocide that took place in Canada, it wasn't being streamed live online; it was another time. Today, we see the Indigenous survivors literally digging into the land, into their culture, to learn about their language, their history and also what their past relatives experienced during these genocidal events. A part of looking back into this history, which we are seeing so many Indigenous people here in Canada doing today, is linked to work to reclaim culture and language. This is so important and inspiring.

The key thing to underline is that there many Canadian institutions are now doing land acknowledgement about the theft of Indigenous land and, intrinsically, about the genocide that happened here, who are also silent or directly complicit in the genocide that is taking place in Palestine today, right now. This says a lot.

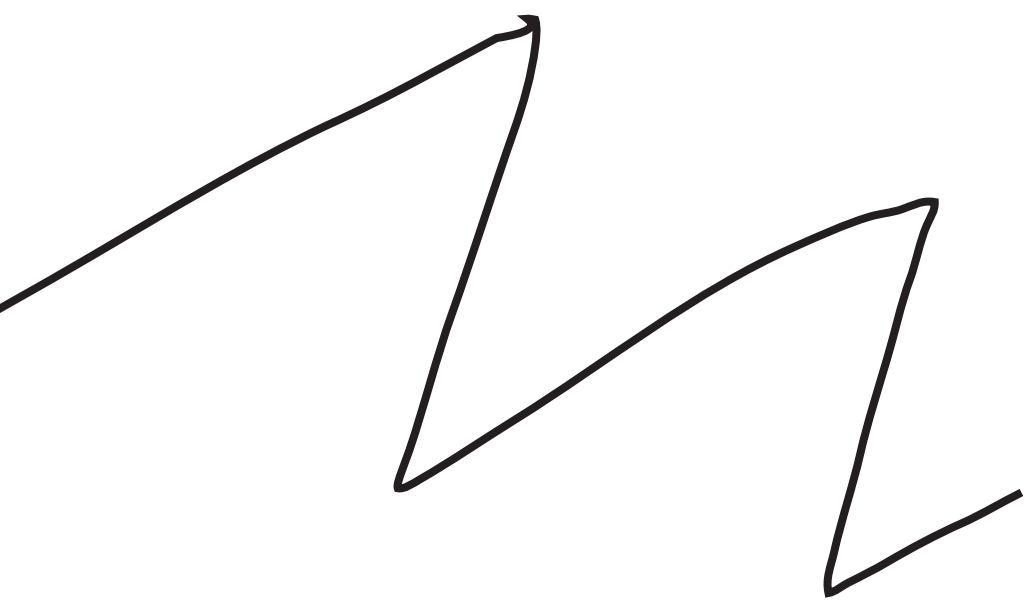
Today, the housing crisis that is taking place embodies the same land occupation system that displaced Indigenous people in the past. The government is putting for-profit corporate developers before the people; this is an extension of the same mentality that justified the displacement of Indigenous people for the economic interests of settler franchises in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, with the extension of French and British business interests into Indigenous lands. A profit before people framework of power and economics.



A key element to genocide, as we can understand from the Canadian context, is not only the attempt to eliminate the people, but also erasing the identity and culture of those who did survive, so this means that a key part of resisting genocide is holding up both culture and identity. I recently heard Ellen Gabriel speaking, who started the presentation in her own Indigenous language, which I found very moving.

Right now in Palestine, we are facing similar realities. One of the things that the Israeli state continues to target is the Palestinian archive, so they are targeting our heritage and collective history through these actions. I remember after a presentation here in Canada, a student was asking me about this, and they were honestly confused about why the Israeli forces would target an archival space that hosts Palestinian embroidery and traditional dresses, this student was actually wondering. It was a good question. This student also asked about why Palestinian archives, including books, artwork and films, were also targeted. I responded by sharing that this is the native language, this is Palestinian cultural identity and protecting it from the settler colonial Israeli attacks is important. It is being targeted because the Israeli state is trying to wipe us out as Indigenous people to Palestine.

I think that it is important to see these systems of settler colonialism unfolding in different parts of the world in related ways. Each context is different, but there are critical political and economic connections between the forces enacting settler colonial violence. All of us need to stand together against this systemic violence, not particularly, or only for the Palestinians, the Indigenous people, or for South Africans, but for all of humanity. This systemic violence is a threat to all of humankind.



Robbie Madsen: Hi everyone, I am a two-spirit Cree originally from Alberta. I grew up in Ontario, and now I live here. In Cree, my assigned name is *epetak peeskwow mostos*, which in English is *They who hear the voice of the buffalo*. I always acknowledge the Ojibway way of saying it also, because when I went to the traditional Ojibway ceremony, the name came out in that language, in those ceremonies, you are paired up with a seer who does not know you, who then receives the name. For anyone who is familiar with Indigenous languages, you might know this, but for those who don't, in around 150 different Indigenous languages, the Buffalo is considered a powerful figure that represents female medicinal knowledge and healing power.

I am an author and also a singer. I have received radio airplay as a singer before. Today, I am mainly an author. I am a survivor of the Sixties Scoop, so for anyone who isn't familiar with the Sixties Scoop, we are talking about a period of around 50-60 years, when some of the Indian Residential Schools were starting to close. The Canadian government needed a new system, an administrative framework, to forcibly assimilate Indigenous children, so what they started to do is to scoop children from their original territories, from their families and place Indigenous children with white families. The Federal government will admit today to having done this to at least 20,000 Indigenous children, but many Indigenous records indicate that the number could be as high as 40,000 and maybe even higher. I am one of those children, but I didn't find out until I was around 45 years old that the truth was that I wasn't born in a hospital in Grand Prairie, but in an Indian Residential School in Saint Paul, 600 kilometres outside of Grand Prairie. This was hidden from me.

My book is called *Insanity & Lies – Goodbye, Sixties Scoop*, the cover is orange because we are talking about the many children who were impacted, through the lens of my story. There are many ways to prevent people from accessing their culture, or to separate them from their culture, to ensure that in the long term they can never fully return to it. One way that this happens is through official colonial records; which is even clear in my own documents, in which it was claimed that both of my birth parents are Métis, or mixed race. For anyone here who has some knowledge about what Métis means, you should be able to tell just by my appearance that this claim about my parents is improbable. I grew up in a system that did not really acknowledge my real experience or my background. I had no idea where I was born, what had happened to me and also what I was experiencing.

At 14 years old I was looking through my adoption records with my mother and saw these really odd notes. One note was that the children in my bloodline have a really long history of tuberculosis and also broken eardrums. Today, we know about tuberculosis in Indian residential schools, and that the broken eardrums were from strikes to the head that my family members were getting from the religious clergy and staff who were running the schools.

Over time, I learned that I am actually full-blooded Cree and that I was in the Indian residential school system at a very young age, that I was possibly born there. This was where the lie about me being Métis most likely started. In Alberta, the Métis children were largely expunged from the schools around 1910 and on because they did not have any status, and the federal government was not giving

funding for Métis children in the schools. So it is a lie to say that both of my parents are Métis, and in that system, because they were in those schools in the 1970s.

The system of lies extends way beyond my specific story as a foster child. In Canada and in the United States, we have a whole system that has been doing this for a very long time.

This is some context on my background. Now on to the point that you raised, Stefan, about how colonialism is related to housing and how the issues speak to my perspective and experience.

I think that a key question to ask is why Indigenous people even have problems at all with accessing housing, on our own land?

The first point to raise is that colonial government regulations block me from living in what my traditional Indigenous home would and could be. How it would function, and how it would be constructed? I look out the window here, toward downtown Montreal and see a lot of places that I should be able to access as an Indigenous person, but I am simply not allowed to go there because we have a colonial system that occupies the land.

Given all of that, we could be housed in apartments and homes, built in the colonial style, but even those resources, framed by their system, which would be drawn from an economy based on harvesting resources from our land, are also blocked from us. As an alternative, I could imagine Indigenous people setting up teepees, or other styles of traditional homes, in city centres, but we are simply not allowed to be doing that. Or, for example, the idea of having

regular pow-wows in traditional gathering spaces, like this island, where this city is now, a highly regulated location, and most of the time, Indigenous people are not allowed to have the permits to do full scale pow-wows on their own land. It is important to underline this because this current reality and how things are organized is something that many of us, as Indigenous people, will never get fully comfortable with, because we are not allowed to fully express our culture here in this place, this country.

Today, I have to ask permission to practice my culture, to have a pow-wow with Indigenous folks, for example. Things like the compensation offered to Indian residential schools system survivors, to the Sixties Scoop survivors, like me, was money only, cash, offered in one-time payments, like thousands, and then there is an apology, but nothing changes in regards to being stuck under the same colonial system, or in terms of our culture being suppressed overall. This is bullshit, and it doesn't work for Indigenous people. You can see that directly by the conditions that many Indigenous people are living under within this system. Apologies and one time cash payments address the systemic issues that we face.

Stefan: I wanted to ask you all a bit more about the specifics of the work that you do, just so that people can understand the full scope of the awesome efforts that you are all making.

Tiro, I will start with your work to go full circle, so building up to this gathering on housing justice, I remember speaking on the phone with you, and you were sharing some details about the frontline support work that you are doing in the city of Regina and how that plays out with urban Indigenous communities and unhoused people. Also, Tiro, you have been doing some serious

efforts within public schools in Regina around setting up meal programs for low-income students. Can you talk about this work, these efforts and how they connect to a broader vision of housing justice organizing? Also, how are these efforts connected to a broader struggle against colonization?

Tiro: Thank you, yes, in Regina, I work on and help direct an organization called Good Trouble YQR, which is a Black and Indigenous-led coalition. We often work with other local groups and projects. In this project, we try to get into good trouble. This phrase comes from a reference to John Lewis and the civil rights movement in the U.S., it says that when we see something unjust, something wrong, that saying something, doing something, getting in good trouble in the process of trying to change and flip that injustice is a good thing.

I am a cook, so after some time of making efforts to get city hall in Regina to address the nutrition and housing crisis facing street-involved communities in the city, we moved to take action. Our first big gathering was to hold a huge meal in a park in downtown Regina. I ended up going home that night, and my younger brother, Mandla, who was also present, was talking with folks at the meal who had shown up with their belongings, street-involved folks, some with their tents. Building on the energy of the mass collective action, they said that they wanted to go to the city hall to set up tents there. I woke up the next morning and found that there were sixty tents in front of city hall, and we held space there for 49 days, working on a daily meal program and many other activities, like popular education.

Currently, we are doing a meal program in an inner-city school, inspired by the Black Panther Party. There are many Indigenous kids at this school. Also, we have a set-up for meal kits, so we prepare all the materials and can move around the city to set up and then provide up to 250 sandwiches to vulnerable unhoused and low-income communities. This means that we are also working with local food banks for this food infrastructure. Also, sometimes we go to trap houses, so places where low-income and street-involved folks are using drugs, so our teams go into those houses and engage with folks, with the goal of feeding folks in there also, who might need nutritional support.

Also, every week we have been doing big community meals called the Sunday Funday, which is a big gathering which involves a lot of folks. Local labour councils have supported this effort, which is a good thing. Also, Students for Justice in Palestine has been involved and helped cook a meal with Palestinian food recently. So this process has also been a really good way to build community through food.

Other work that has come out in this context is addressing the violent colonial legacy present in Saskatchewan. This includes addressing the violent legacy of Edgar Dewdney, who used starvation tactics against Indigenous folks in the 19th century, forcing, in one example, Indigenous folks to walk hundreds of miles without food rations in an effort to enforce and coerce Indigenous folks into recognizing Canadian colonial authority over their lands. In this example, we can see that food is a weapon, colonial forces use it in that way. Just look at Palestine right now and the forced starvation of the Palestinians in Gaza.

In Regina, we can see that the vulnerable situation that street-involved people face, with a lack of good quality nutrition, leaves people more vulnerable to police violence and an even more precarious situation, for example.

One action we did to highlight the contradictions of wealth within the city, as police are very well paid to do work that is often violent toward Indigenous and street-involved people and communities, we did an action to protest this reality, by handing out free donuts and vegan pulled pork sandwiches to folks on the street. So in this process, we addressed the realities people face, the needs of people on the streets, supporting people while also agitating and educating people every step of the way. Also, we try to be responsive to situations in the city as they arise, to use our platform, to get into good trouble.

In regards to housing specifically, there are around 500 vacant social housing units in Regina that are just sitting empty. There are many open spaces in the city centre where social housing units could be built, but the political will is not there. This means that we move to make people in power uncomfortable, to challenge the settler colonial infrastructure that sustains so much injustice.

For example, we are launching a campaign called People over Pickleball and aim to bring that critique to the suburbs in real terms, to show people out there, through protests, how there are so many people struggling, really struggling downtown and addressing that as a priority.

In Regina, we find ways to tell white privileged communities that they need to get used to being uncomfortable, also saying that there is a difference between being truly scared and being uncomfortable, there is a difference there and an important one. There is no way that we can make the systemic changes that we need without more privileged people being uncomfortable. We need to empower empathy and enact real change by asking real and difficult questions that are uncomfortable for many people.

Also, we are doing some storytelling projects that speak to Regina and Canada's colonial history. One project is called We Invented Apartheid and that speaks to the legacy of colonial violence against Indigenous people. Also, it is important to celebrate vulnerability and meet people where they are at, when they really want to address this stuff, to create space for people in power, or who hold power, to admit to mistakes and to acknowledge injustices. This can allow us to grow our movement and find ways to fight these injustices together. There are easy solutions in Regina. There are resources there in the city to support people on the street. It is really just a question of mobilizing the political will needed.

Hearing from others at this gathering in Montreal has been really meaningful, to hear about the creativity of different actions, to learn about the organizing of different tenant unions. Right now in Regina, we are really focused on

challenging the local system, which is literally blocking access to empty social housing units. We need to flip that and make sure that unhoused people have access to those units now.

Also, there are many open houses, unused houses, so taking those houses, squatting them is also an important action, a tactic that can address the housing crisis. It really comes down to being brave, to being creative and also really being aware of the reality that we face, while also being vulnerable and human in response to the crisis that a lot of people are living in.

Stefan: There is really so much for people to reflect on in what you shared, Tiro. Thank you for offering a little window into the organizing work that you are doing in Regina. I think that one meaningful thing about this panel and also the gathering generally is that we can get a bit of a picture of the terrain of struggle in different places in Canada. It is meaningful to hear from folks doing frontline work in a place like Regina, as often in these spaces we hear only from folks from specific cities, Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver, so widening the picture is important. It is lovely that you could take the time to be here Tiro, thank you. I know you have a young child at home, so it is great you could be present, as it is always a lot of logistics to get away while making sure that the little one is supported, so much respect to you!

Ahmed, when you spoke recently at Concordia, I listened carefully to what you were sharing. Many points in your talk struck me, like I am sure was the case for the others who had gathered. One point that remains with me is the care that you show toward your students, the follow-up,

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Ahmed, when you spoke recently at Concordia, I listened carefully to what you were sharing. Many points in your talk struck me, like I am sure was the case for the others who had gathered. One point that remains with me is the care that you show toward your students, the follow-up, the backing, despite the extreme conditions of the Israeli genocide in Gaza. On this point I can highlight the ongoing online classes that you have been sustaining for many, many months now, while I am sure there are many other layers. So there is this current specific context in Gaza, but of course, the struggle to sustain the Palestinian post-secondary education system, while under siege spans out over many years, in contexts of displacement and in exile, a struggle that has sustained across generations.

On this point, I wanted to speak with you about what this genocidal war against the Palestinians in Gaza has meant for students, both their own capacity to study and sustain, but also how to hold space together in a context where the Israeli military and by extension the Israeli government has moved to literally blow up the entire university system in Gaza.

Can you talk about university students in Gaza fighting to sustain their studies despite their homes being destroyed, while most are living in displacement camps, while the campuses have literally been blown up totally. Can you speak about this? I imagine that you're online a lot with students in Palestine, both giving classes and also speaking with your students. Can you talk about all of this?

Ahmed: Thank you for this question. To start, I wanted to speak about the map of Palestine.

If we think about the demographic change in Palestine over time, it forces us to address one of the key points of Israeli propaganda, which is the false claim that the story of Palestine started on October 7th, 2023.

Actually, this is an old story across generations. Israel is a long-term settler colonial project that aims to expel the Indigenous Palestinians from their land. This process has used a wide range of policies, on the part of the Israeli state, including the genocide as we see today in Gaza. However, we also must underline that the so-called peace process has been used as cover by Israeli authorities to expand their colonial control over Palestine and the Palestinian people. Also I must say that the goal of the peace process, on the part of the Israeli government, has been to stall and stall some more, to build settlements, colonies. Previous governments in Israel have claimed that they are committed to peace, but have rarely taken any tangible

steps in that direction, while always taking steps in the opposite direction of peace, like sustaining the military occupation and expanding Israeli settlements, illegal colonies that keep growing and growing.

All means of life for the Palestinian people are and have been targeted by the Israeli state in different ways, since 1948 and even before that.

To speak about my own story, I started my journey in higher education thirty-two years ago in the same faculty that I am leading right now, the Faculty of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine at Al-Azhar University. Over those thirty-two years, the building of my specific faculty was destroyed three times, and it was destroyed a fourth time during this war. So the concept of scholasticide is not a new concept, we have been speaking about scholasticide in Palestine for many years in regards to the systematic targeting of the education system. This is the case of Israeli policy in many areas, including for example, our food system in Gaza, the systematic targeting of the health sector. This process, this attack on the part of Israel, works to ensure that even if functioning during times of so-called peace, which for us in Gaza still means military siege, that the Israeli colonial state can literally attack and shutdown our systems quickly at any time. This is all part of the context for genocidal intent that has been made clear by Israeli officials.

At the start of the genocide, in October 2023, Israeli officials made it clear to everyone what the intent was. They openly talked about cutting off water, food, electricity, energy supplies, and they started right away with the attacks on post-secondary institutions in the first days. This is settler colonialism, they want to attack and dispossess Indigenous people from determining their own futures over their own land. It is ugly

and disturbing, but this is what is happening in Palestine.

From the beginning, the Israeli state manipulated many European Jews, working very hard to convince them that the response to racism and the genocide against Jews during World War II, in Europe, needed to be a settler colonial project far away in Palestine. That somehow, by dispossessing Palestinians, on a totally different continent and very different political context, would bring justice for the unspeakable injustice that Jewish communities faced in Europe during the Holocaust, this makes no sense and is a profoundly unjust political manipulation that is intentional on the part of the Israeli state.

Also, I wanted to take a moment to speak about what it means to be a Palestinian. Is it a religious question? No, not at all. Palestinian is a nationality, and it is a collective culture. Palestinians are the Indigenous people of Palestine. My name is Ahmed, I am Muslim, yes, but I am Palestinian; those are two points of my identity, among many. Jesus, of course, was an Indigenous person to historic Palestine. Also, there are Jewish Palestinians, like the Samaritan community, that includes the well known Palestinian political prisoner and resistance fighter Nader Saleh Sadaqa.

Of course, there are so many Palestinian Christians, from different denominations, who were killed in Gaza during this war. For example, my dentist in Gaza, a Palestinian Christian, was killed during this war along with members of his family; who were killed while taking sanctuary in a church in Gaza.

This genocide in Palestine is about making a push to force Palestinians literally from some of their remaining land, Gaza, which is a relatively tiny territory, but the Israeli state also wants full control even over our lands in Gaza,

full control, and they have been pushing to expel us, forced displacement and annihilation, the terms of genocide. This has all taken place with the open and brutal military support from successive US governments. Trump has been more brash about it, but also the Biden administration supported this course of action toward genocide. This is what is happening.

The Israeli government has been trying to kill the people and also the idea of Palestine as a place, as a country, for a long time, and until now, they haven't succeeded, so now the Israeli government is taking extreme genocidal measures to literally erase us. They have literally blown up all 11 major university spaces in Gaza, they have killed hundreds of professors, and three university presidents in Gaza have been specifically targeted, blown up. Of course, thousands of young students were erased, blown up, murdered. In fact, today we have no physical universities. This is the violent edge, the more obvious side of genocide against the people of Gaza. Also, the Israeli government and allies have been working tirelessly to block any support that academic institutions have been able to mobilize outside of Gaza over the last couple of years.

One message that we got, which is the claim that academic institutions in Gaza are over, is a very dangerous message. We got this message, sometimes between the lines, sometimes openly, as academic faculty and administrators trying to mobilize support outside for academic rebuilding in Gaza, or even to sustain online classes, at times facilitated by us professors from Gaza who are outside and are supporting students inside. Sometimes, western academic departments and even universities were open to supporting professors and some students, but most often, last year, these same institutions were totally closed to supporting Palestinian academic institutions in Gaza. But this is exactly the type of support that we need, tangible support for specific post-secondary effort, so I

wanted to address this.

This shift away from formally supporting any Gazan academic institutions in Palestine, from western academic institutions, is very threatening and alarming for us as Palestinian faculty and academics. In response to this, we needed to act, we knew that action, and rapid action, was needed. Quickly, we organized a statement by academics from Gaza, many who are still in Gaza during the genocide, stating together a clear message. In this statement, we acknowledged that yes, the Israeli government, the Israeli military, did destroy our academic buildings, yes, they destroyed many research spaces, laboratories and also literally annihilated many academic faculty, and of course, many of our students were murdered, but that our universities are still present. This is because universities are not just buildings or physical spaces; this is important, but first, universities are communities, and many of us are still here.

This is when we launched into serious online courses, online teaching, for thousands and thousands of students. I really advocated for this, as a professor, but also as a broad member of one of the major universities in Gaza, Al-Azhar University. Although some of us, faculty, were accused by Israel of being terrorists, it was very important that we keep trying to sustain our educational system. Many professors have been doing this while living in tents, while most of our students are also living in tents, facing starvation, bombings, little clear water, sometimes no clean water, facing death, but both students and teachers kept working to sustain classes, departments and our academic community.

This was very difficult at times to keep online classes going, because of the Internet being cut off by Israel, but we could sometimes find workarounds, satellite Internet, for example. I think that it is hard for people here to conceptualize going to university online while you are under

bombardment every day, while you are experiencing mass killing in your communities and you are directly under lethal threat, while facing genocide, but Gazan students are still showing up to class in big numbers.

Also, it must be said that there are Palestinian students and faculty who were murdered and their bodies have been sitting in destroyed university buildings for months, in many cases it was very dangerous for search and recovery teams to go into the destroyed buildings, because even the search and recovery teams, the civil defense units, were also targeted and are still being targeted.

Both primary and higher education are under threat in Gaza, but still both sectors keep struggling to sustain. Even if a single student is able to graduate in this context, we will keep it going. Many students have been graduating, despite the odds, but this illustrates the resilience of the Palestinian people; we keep going despite these horrifying realities faced in Gaza under Israeli bombardment and genocide.

Keeping the Palestinian academic institutions going in Gaza is a key part of our struggle to survive, for us to make sure that we stay on our land. I believe that this is a vital part of our struggle to stay alive, to keep our universities going, to sustain our culture and our academic practices, despite all the efforts to annihilate it.

When we launched online classes, I dreamt of just having a handful of students showing up regularly. Out of the 14,000 students at Al-Azhar University, I thought that would be great. Today, 10,000 Palestinian students signed up for online classes at Al-Azhar University despite the genocide, very difficult courses in all faculties, courses that require a very high commitment of academic focus.

I will share one story about my student Salim, a story that I will never forget. This was during the midterm exams last year. Salim was studying, while having a serious injury, his family home was destroyed so the whole surviving direct family was living with him in a hospital hallway, and he was taking the midterms. During this time, I was in touch with Salim. One night, there were Israeli tanks surrounding the hospital, Al-Shifa Hospital. The Israeli army was on loud speakers yelling at civilians to leave the hospital to accept their displacement to the south of Gaza, to Rafah.

Salim, along with his family, had nowhere to go in Rafah and little financial means to get there, to go south in Gaza, so like many families, they were staying at the hospital, as the Israeli military was threatening everyone with death. Salim was doing midterms in this context, and we were in touch. I remember Salim texting me on WhatsApp about the second lecture of the semester, bringing up specific points from my slides, as he was studying in the hallway. I remember Salim asking me about other content that I had shared during the class. I was shocked. I also got a very bad feeling. I was also laughing, but I was also literally crying while responding to the texts from Salim. What I learned from this and other related stories from Gaza

is that resilience is the key. We must keep going, to fight for a future, to fight together as a community, to refuse attempts to shut us down, to erase us as a people.

It is in this context, we at Al-Azhar University, have sustained multiple semesters completely online, with thousands and thousands of students. As time has gone on, more and more students are finding ways to join the classes. Actually, each semester I am so excited to find that we have many new students joining us from displacement camps. Salim graduated during the genocide and then signed up to do a master's degree. This type of resilience speaks to the Palestinian story. I find that as a teacher, as a professor, I am also learning from my students about how to be strong together, as a community. This is what I think Palestine can offer the world, as a lesson, that despite the odds, we can keep going, even in such extreme circumstances. This also points to the resilience of food systems, the ones that we care for together, even as homes are being destroyed and people are living in tents. I just conducted research with women in Gaza working to sustain food production in the territory, again against terrible odds. Gazan women are working on big meals for collective kitchens and improvising on traditional Palestinian recipes, often including foraged plants, to provide for the community. This is just incredible. These meals are about holding up communities, holding up families and through that holding up Palestine more generally.

It is critical to think about this, from Palestine to this context. Communities have a capacity to resist, to be strong together, to be resilient and also to find ways, despite very challenging circumstances, to support the most vulnerable, living in tents, to keep building in the face of death. This is how we fight against the evils of colonialism and overcome such atrocities together, these lessons can resonate around the world.

Stefan: Thank you, Ahmed, for sharing all of this. Robbie, one thing that comes to my mind in relation to your work, your writing, your journey, is the process of flipping the script. When we think about a lot of discourses, a lot of language that is used around the need for social housing, the need to support people who are in precarious situations, who are struggling with housing, including Indigenous people.

I wanted to bring up this idea of flipping the script. I am sure that many of those who are gathered here have been part of political campaigns and organizing that have successfully flipped the script on key issues, challenged the framework of political discourse on the part of the powerful and aim to reinforce the power structures that create this injustice at home and abroad.

Right now we are sitting in a post-secondary institution, Concordia University, that has largely not flipped the script, but has, despite certain points of progressive discourse, chosen to sustain the narrative of the powerful in the west when it comes to Palestine, when it comes to the daily interactions with unhoused communities, who often try to interact with campus buildings for warmth, for the library, but who are often turned away by private security guards often, or even the security guards of the university. This point might seem basic, but I think that it is worth underlining.

Robbie, you have really made an effort to be present in a lot of different spaces and events to both share your own story and through that, underline the need for people to listen, to learn about the Indigenous experience directly, to centre Indigenous voice in the telling of Indigenous histories. This, of course, takes place also in the present in this city, where many Indigenous people are facing housing precarity and also in a context where many key frontline organizations supporting unhoused communities involve key Indigenous leadership and community workers, like Resilience Montréal, or Projets Autochtones du Québec.

In this context, I wanted to speak with you about the importance of flipping the framework of charity toward a framework of solidarity and why that is important in this context?

Robbie: Well, we have been talking about genocide in Palestine, and I first wanted to extend the discussion a bit into what that means for Canada. I have a good section in my book, *Insanity & Lies – Goodbye, Sixties Scoop*, that I have researched on this topic. One section in my book is called *A Different Spin on the Genocide of First Nations Peoples and How to Interpret it*. I worked on this section because a lot of Canadian adults don't even know that there is a description of what genocide is in our Canadian criminal code, and underlining this is important. I think that if we really want to address this question of genocide, here in Canada, or globally, we need to directly understand what genocide is and who has been a victim of it.

I think that when people hear the term genocide a lot of them immediately think of Adolph Hitler and start imagining scenes that relate to what they have seen on television, dramatization of the old Nazi Germany and the communities targeted, Jewish people, also Polish people, Black people and homosexuals, all being dragged around by their hair, stripped naked, forced into gas chambers where they are immediately put to death by carbon monoxide poisoning. It is true that these genocidal atrocities happened. But dragging people around by their hair, stripping them naked and forcing them into gas chambers all require movement, and so does closing the chamber door, locking it to make sure that no one can escape and flicking the switch to get the gas fumes flowing. So what am I talking about when I speak of genocide without movement in Canada? But first, it is important for people to understand what genocide is and articulate this in a way that people in Canada can grasp.

There is a section in Canada's criminal code that articulates a description of genocide that is legally binding for all Canadians, including all of those people employed within our provincial and federal governments. At this point, I would bet that most Canadians don't even know that there is a legal description of genocide readily available in the criminal code because genocide is generally considered, within Canada, as something foreign that goes on in other countries. Right? Wrong.

In Canada's criminal code, it is outlined that genocide is a process shaped by actions that are done with the intention to destroy, partially or totally, any identifiable group, and it goes on to say that such actions could include killing members of the group. I think that every body

already knows this to a degree, but the part that most people in Canada don't understand is that acts of genocide also include acts that deliberately inflict on the groups conditions of life that are calculated to bring about their physical destruction. In section 318, in sections A and B of the Canadian criminal code, this is all outlined. I draw on these points to define what genocide without movement is, within the Canadian context. Also, I should say that an identifiable group is anyone distinguished by colour, race and ethnic origin. There doesn't need to be an actual act of violence, or mass murder outright, for it to count as genocide. As even in the Canadian criminal code, directly, it says that it can be done without movement. This means inflicting conditions on the group calculated to bring about its physical destruction.

For example, in 1907, a doctor named Peter Bryce went to the federal government in Ottawa after doing a tour of all the Indian residential schools and was very adamant, articulating blatantly and clearly to government officials about the tuberculosis problem in the schools, and that it was clearly the government's fault that the students were dying from tuberculosis. I say this because I ask, what did the Canadian federal government do to address this crisis? Absolutely nothing.

In fact, the government didn't implement any of the measures that were recommended by Dr. Bryce at all, which would have helped in either slowing, or stopping the spread of deadly tuberculosis outbreaks. The argument at the time, in 1907 and in the years just after, was that any implementation of the recommended changes would be overly costly.

Guess what, all these discussions were happening around 1907 and I went into the federal budgets for the year 1906/07, the time right around when that report by Dr. Bryce came out and it is a fact that the federal government

then had around half a billion dollars, in contemporary currency, left over in surplus and even more left over the following fiscal year. But they claimed that there was no money to put ventilation shafts in the federally supported Indian residential schools. The federal government deciding to not put those ventilation systems into the schools made it a virtual certainty that many Indigenous children would keep dying from tuberculosis infections within the residential school system.

What can we conclude when we look at the Canadian criminal code definition of genocide, a definition that includes this specific wording about genocide as being policies that "deliberately inflict on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction." We can see that this was a genocidal policy, enforced without movement. All the federal government had to do was decide not to act on addressing and working to prevent the tuberculosis infection that was going around within the residential school system, which they controlled on many policy levels.

It is important to underline that genocide as a process is much broader than what people think; cultural genocide is practiced against me in all sorts of ways that might be invisible to the mainstream. I am not allowed to live in the ways of my traditional ancestors on these lands, Indigenous lands, those ways of life are deemed illegal by the colonial administration of

Canada, which occupies my natural homeland as an Indigenous person. Indigenous housing conceptions and also the frameworks that we organized and now organize our communities don't measure up to what the Canadian colonial system has defined as legitimate. Where is my culture today? It has largely been deemed illegal by the colonial system of the Canadian government, which finds roots in western European colonial empires. Today, as Indigenous

people, we are still living under conditions of cultural genocide; this is a genocide without movement, it is administrative and policy-based.

I think that it is very important for people in Canada to really understand what genocide is. It is in the criminal code, and you can examine that definition in relation to the actions of the Canadian government toward Indigenous people and draw your own conclusions.

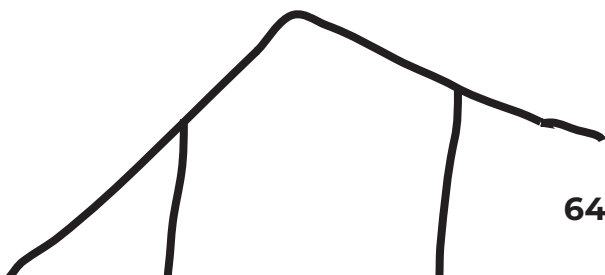
Today, we are talking about genocide, that is important, but also we need to understand the different ways that genocide takes place. Genocide is not only swords slashing around, people being obviously slaughtered in the bombings in Gaza, that can be and is also certainly genocide, now we are clearly seeing in a contemporary sense, with modern warfare, carried out against the Palestinian people. This is also genocide. However, it is also important to understand, as stated in Canada's own criminal code, that genocide is also other things that aren't as obvious, these conditions also count as genocide and speak to our experience as Indigenous people here.

Stefan: Thank you so much for sharing this, Robbie. I will share a question with you all in the context of this gathering, which is focused on the housing crisis. In organizing this gathering, we thought that it would be super important to have a meaningful discussion, to ground our presence here on the first big day of discussions of the convergence, in an understanding of the connections between anti-colonial struggles and housing justice struggles.

This is important because, beyond something like a land acknowledgment, we wanted to really hear from people who are directly engaged in anti-colonial struggles and hear from you about the ways that the struggle for housing justice is inherently part of a larger anti-colonial lineage and movement.

So hearing from you all, given that you embody in your specific work, writing in your case Robbie, or educational work to lift up the post-secondary system in Gaza, in your case Ahmed, or the frontline work that you do in Regina, Tiro, with communities who are experiencing the intersecting points of contemporary colonial violence. The work that you all do really embodies a lineage of anti-colonial struggle, of anti-colonial history. So the space is open to you all to share a bit about that connection between anti-colonial movements and particular struggles, as inherently linked to the fight for housing justice.

A lot can be gathered on this point from the responses that you have already shared, but I thought that it would be good to ask you to share your general reflections, directly, as they can help to orient the examples of what you shared in relation to this connection between the fight for housing justice and linkages with anti-colonial struggles you are connected to, in the past and present.



Robbie: I will point to the obvious, the current system isn't working. It is as simple as that. I would also say that people in power know that the system doesn't work for those struggling with housing precarity, and they are invested in the system working in the way that it does to ensure our collective housing precarity, or in extreme cases, being without homes. So it is clear for us that the system needs to change.

There are so many people on the street, here in Montreal, in Toronto, and of course in Ottawa, right beside the halls of power; they are on the streets because the colonial mindset that informs the current system doesn't work for so many people. This is why so many people are unhoused. I think that this is obvious, which seems clear to me, and maybe this is not obvious to many people, but I find that surprising. So I am saying this today, as I have said many times, the system is not working for so many people, particularly Indigenous people, but also many others.

I spent 15 years on and off the street, by the way. I think that it is important to underline this; I hadn't mentioned it before, so I am highlighting this now. I was homeless in my homeland. I am not sure how that works, but they were calling me homeless at the time. Today, we are still not working together, Indigenous people and the Canadian system, we are at odds in so many ways. First Nations people are still, for the large part, treated like a problem, this is obviously deeply racist. I also think that there needs to be more understanding of Indigenous people, also on the part of new immigrants, there is a distance, and this needs to be addressed.

Also, I am saying this in the context of people who are studying social work at places like McGill. I speak at many events where there are students who are studying social work because they want to find ways to help. A lot of folks studying in such departments, like the School of Social Work at McGill, need to find ways to understand the realities and histories of Indigenous people. It is important that such students come to events like this, grassroots events focused on housing justice and also other specific issues, like those focused on the problems with policing. Listening to the voices of people from Indigenous communities who survived genocide is important because the mainstream Canadian narrative, although it mentions Indigenous people, it does not offer the full story. This is also the case at places like McGill University, as we see with the Mohawk Mothers.

For those who are planning to work in social services or even with community organizations, it is very important that people arriving in those positions really develop a deeper understanding of what Indigenous people are facing today and what they have faced across generations of genocide. Knowing what actually happened and how it impacts people in the present is very important.

Really trying to understand the stories of Sixties Scoop survivors is important. I have a friend in Toronto, a Sixties Scoop survivor, his grandmother was receiving a monthly stipend of around \$600, this was around 2008, for injuries sustained in a residential school. It is possible that my

friend's grandmother probably passed away now, but anyway, she was getting that check, partially connected to violent experiences she had as a child at an Indian Residential School as she was fighting to speak her own language, she faced physically abusive punishment by the school staff for speaking an Indigenous language. How many people in this room have heard about these types of details before?

There are lots of events and experiences like this one that shape Indigenous experiences at Residential Schools, or in the Sixties Scoop. Many people in Canada today are really ignorant of these histories, so it is important to inform yourself. Even if your intentions are good, you must do the work and learn more about what Indigenous people have truly experienced in Canada, in the context of genocide. Listening to survivors is important but also will deepen your understanding.

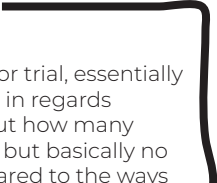
[One example is the case of Lloyd Courtoreille, who lost his leg as a child at a residential school and fought for years to be compensated, but that never happened. Look up the APTN report "Man continues compensation fight over leg lost in residential school."]

A lot of Indigenous people who are unhoused are coming from such violent contexts, these types of family lineages. Even if the scars aren't immediately apparent on the outside, they can be on the inside. Don't you think that really understanding such histories is important if you are aiming to work with Indigenous unhoused or low income communities?

Ahmed: I agree with the questions that Robbie has been sharing. Thank you for this.

It is essential to expose the lies and hidden facts of what colonized people and communities have really gone through. Seeing through media narratives is important. For example, if we look at the media conversation around the hostages that have been released from Gaza, the Israeli hostages, and how those stories have been covered. I do want to say here that I don't support in any way taking civilians as hostages, and I do feel for Israeli civilian hostages, despite everything that we have gone through in Gaza, as Palestinians.

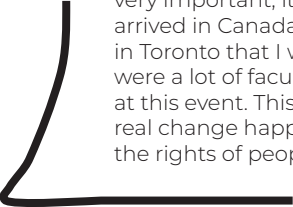
I want to underline that there has been so much racism in the media around the ways that the Israeli hostages experiences, and the details of what they went through, were explored with so much depth, as compared to Palestinian prisoner experiences. There is micro coverage of the Israeli stories in many international media outlets, particularly western ones, that look at their specific experiences, their stories, their families, their communities, a real examination of how they suffered. This is fine, but when you contrast this coverage with the fact that there has been basically no such coverage about the experiences of Palestinian people detained, often tortured and maimed in prison, you can see the realities of systemic racism at play in the media. Often, the only details that are shared about Palestinian prisoners, or the many



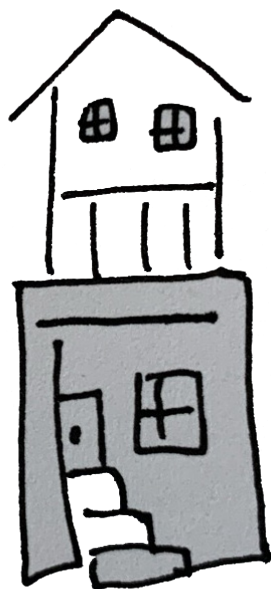
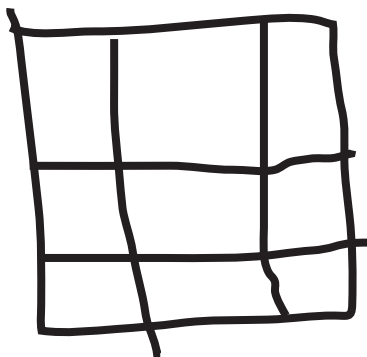
thousands of Palestinians detained without charge or trial, essentially Palestinians kidnapped, are basically their numbers, in regards to a headcount at best. There is some coverage about how many Palestinians have been released, the date of release, but basically no detailed coverage about their experiences, as compared to the ways that the Israeli stories are covered.

Also, as part of the hostage release agreements, many Palestinian children were released from Israeli jails, including kids as young as 10/11 years old. No one is really asking, within the western media, why those Palestinian kids were detained in the first place. There is little coverage of the torture, the abuse and starvation that many Palestinian prisoners experienced. There is little coverage about the Israeli use of torture. All the horrible stories that Palestinian prisoners have been sharing about their detention are largely not covered in the western press in any detail. There is no systematic coverage like we see about the experiences of Israeli hostages.

Nobody knows about the humanity of Palestinian detainees, of Palestinian prisoners, because those stories are not often told. So it is important to spread the word, to learn about such stories, to educate yourself. All the facts that we have been sharing here today are very important to look at directly and then to work to understand what Indigenous people here have gone through all around the world. Vulnerable communities here in Canada and in Palestine need more representation. Today, we need to work quickly to ensure that there is media education taking place all over, and here in Montreal, of course.



Also, I wanted to underline that the strength of community spirit is very important; it allows us to do great things. For example, after I first arrived in Canada, during the genocide, I expressed to my colleagues in Toronto that I wanted to go to a demonstration for Palestine. There were a lot of faculty that I had just started working with who joined me at this event. This speaks to a feeling of community power. This is when real change happens, when communities come together and push for the rights of people in need.



[It is important to process the details and analysis shared by these speakers in the context of building a broader understanding of the housing justice struggle as an intersectional fight. This means developing an understanding as to the contexts that brought people to individualized points of ongoing housing precarity in their lives as rooted in systemic violence. This relates of course to housing but also to many other layers of their lives. Additionally it is key to understand that systems of financial and state power, from the Canadian state to the Israeli government, are driven, locally and internationally, by policy goals to disempower whole communities, economically and politically. This translates into housing because it has meant that the necessary financial resources and political focus isn't afforded to address the housing needs of such communities, particularly communities dealing with inter-generational impacts of colonialism. In the case of Palestine, where the territorial displacement is active and present, as we have seen in the unfolding genocide in Gaza, the active Israeli state policy has literally been to destroy people's homes at a large scale. Housing has been a focus of both the Israeli war on Gaza and in the policies shaping the occupation of the West Bank, as the goal is literally to drive people from their homes and then in many cases to destroy those homes and communities with the goal of occupying new territories, blocking Palestinians access to their lands and constructing Israeli settlements. Beyond stories of hardship and suffering, the speakers on this panel also offer perspectives that speak to the ways people can work together to push back, to build alternatives and to fight collectively against the systemic violence that weaponizes housing as part of a larger process of colonial violence and dispossession. – Stefan Christoff]



From Crisis to Consensus

HOUSING JUSTICE STRUGGLES TODAY: FROM CRISIS TO CONSENSUS

Talks at the media launch of the report, From Crisis to Consensus: A survey of 60 housing groups from across Canada, at Casa del Popolo. The report was first published in June 2024.

These voices were featured at a media event that I helped to coordinate in late June, 2024, which addressed the housing crisis in Québec and Canada. It was a public launch for a report looking at the housing crisis and grassroots organizing to address it that was authored with support from Solidarity Economy Incubation for Zero Emissions (SEIZE).

The voices in this press event, which took place on the back terrace of Casa del Popolo in Montréal, speak to a wide view on the struggle for housing justice as a key part of building a larger social movement infrastructure in Canada as both connected to the daily needs to communities dealing with housing precarity and larger frameworks of systemic injustice.

Thank you to Hannah Ostiguy Hopp and Raida Hussain for helping out with the transcription of the audio from this media event for this housing justice focused zine. I have edited the final transcription for length and clarity, based on the audio recorded for CKUT 90.3 FM at the original community press event. – Stefan Christoff, March 2026.

DRU OJA JAY

SEIZE, SOLIDARITY ECONOMY INCUBATION FOR ZERO EMISSIONS

« Donc, merci d'être venue. On est là pour lancer le rapport "From Crisis to Consensus," il s'agit d'un sondage des groupes qui militent pour le logement abordable partout dans le pays. Une soixantaine de groupes ont répondu à notre sondage et ont donné leur avis sur plein de choses sur les politiques de logements et également les moyens de les achevés. »

"So we're here in part to launch the report From Crisis to Consensus. It's a report that's based on a survey of over sixty groups in Canada from coast to coast, who are fighting for affordable housing across the country. The basis of why SEIZE, Solidarity Economy Incubation for Zero Emissions, is supporting this project, is because when we're trying to build a more democratic economy, we can see that housing is at the core of it, not just because of costs, but because that's the basic security that people have, both as individuals and as a collective.

The stability of people's housing is what enables them to stay in the same place, to be connected to their community, and to be able to do things in common. Affordability of housing is what allows people to be able to take time between jobs, it's what enables them to leave relationships that are bad for them, that are unhealthy. It's what allows them to try new things like starting cooperatives, or launching community initiatives. All these things are made possible at the base level by having access to stable and affordable housing. That's precisely what the housing crisis has been taking away from people."

« Donc, pour le rapport et les conclusions principales, je ne vais pas entrer dans les détails. Mais, dans les conclusions principales, il y a un consensus des groupes partout au Canada pour un investissement massif dans un logement social et en plus financer par l'État. »

“So, the consensus we found among the sixty groups we surveyed across Canada, is that there's a very strong desire to push for finding solutions to the housing crisis that are driven by a massive investment in social housing across Canada. And specifically, non-profit housing, whether that's public housing, or whether that's cooperatives. That's what people [involved in housing justice organizing on a daily basis, coast to coast] see as a solution to the crisis, and I think that diverges pretty significantly from most political parties in Canada. Some of them, like the NDP, will for example, encourage some investment in public housing, but that's framed as a policy shaped by tax incentives and different things that are focused on for profit developers, as on the side projects and this is simply not at the scale needed. I think most from the groups we surveyed would agree that it's not at a scale that actually addresses the housing crisis.

A few other key things, there's a lot of groups that want serious changes to Airbnb regulations. I think a lot of the groups understand that element of the housing crisis, especially in places like Montreal, as driven by short-term rentals. Specifically, this takes long-term rental units of stable housing off the market in favor of short-term rentals. A majority of the groups agree that there should either be a ban or strong regulations on short-term rentals. Then finally, a very strong majority of these groups are under-funded. On this point we are talking about groups who are fighting for affordable housing across Canada and who are in contact with and are organizing tenants that are directly affected

by the housing crisis to the largest extent, so these are groups on the frontlines of this crisis and need organizational support. These groups in favor of greater funding for tenant organizing and housing advocacy. Finally, I just wanted to add a few comments on Pierre Poilievre and the Conservative Party.”

« Donc, Pierre Poilievre vient de terminer son tour à Québec. Un des enjeux principaux dont il parle, c'est le logement. Je pense qu'on peut voir que Poilievre a eu beaucoup d'appui à cause de ses prises de position sur le logement. On constate donc que Poilievre excelle à imiter la colère que beaucoup ressentent face aux problèmes de logement, aux expulsions et aux fortes hausses de loyer. Il imite très bien la colère, mais je pense qu'on doit se souvenir qu'il est lui-même un propriétaire. Puis, il est un propriétaire qui loue à des locataires. Donc, il a des intérêts personnels très différents, et au niveau global aussi. Il a fait beaucoup d'événements avec des lobbyistes dans le secteur de l'investissement du logement. Ce sont des gens qui sont à la base de la crise du logement. Je pense qu'il faut souligner qu'il y a beaucoup de colère, et il n'y a vraiment pas un parti politique pour l'instant qui répond aux besoins actuels sur le logement. »

“So, Pierre Poilievre is just finishing up his tour of Quebec. He has been able to imitate the anger that people feel about the housing crisis. The housing crisis means that many people are obviously going through renoictions, through massive increases in rent, and all the layers that are making housing inaccessible. This reality is causing a lot of anger, a lot of strife in people's lives, and a lot of suffering. Pierre Poilievre is the politician who has been able to imitate that

anger and really has gotten a lot of support as a result. But I think it's important to understand and to remember that he is also a landlord who rents the tenants. Also we need to think about this point not just at the level of him being a landlord and having those interests, but he's also a person who heads a political party which is holding fundraisers with some of the biggest lobbyists for the people and financial institutions which are causing the housing crisis. Such as the investors, the big corporate money pools that are pouring money into housing, treating it as a commodity, speculating on it and raising the price for everybody. I think it's important at this point to understand that Pierre Poilievre is the person who has been able to get the most support from the public around the housing crisis, but there is no political party that is actually responding to the housing crisis at this moment, at any level close to what would actually address the housing crisis. I think that's a huge opportunity for any political party that wants to step into the fray there, and actually stand with sixty housing groups across Canada who are unified in demanding a massive investment in public housing because that is what created affordable housing in the past in Canada, and it's probably the only thing that will create affordable housing in the future. I think that's really the takeaway from the report, and I'll leave to my co-speakers to talk about the actual effects that are happening right now as a result. Thank you so much."

STÉPHANIE BARAHONA **FRONT D'ACTION POPULAIRE EN RÉAMÉNAGEMENT URBAIN** **(FRAPRU)**

« Bonjour, donc oui, c'est Stéphanie Barahona du Front d'action populaire en réaménagement urbain (FRAPRU). On est un regroupement national qui regroupe des associations locataires et des comités de logements de partout au Québec dont la priorité d'action est le logement social. Donc, à la faveur de chaque recensement, le FRAPRU émet un dossier noir sur la pauvreté. Je vais vous faire part de quelques données qui date donc du dernier recensement de 2021. Il faut savoir qu'ils sont basés sur les revenus de 2020. Évidemment, ce sont des revenus qui sont dopés pas des prestations pandémiques qu'il y avait eu en 2020. Donc, on peut bien sûr présumer que la situation actuelle est bien pire que les chiffres que je vais vous donner. Selon le recensement de 2021, le quart des locataires du Québec, soit 373 000 ménages, consacrent plus de la norme de 30% de leurs revenus pour se loger. Avec un revenu médian de moins de 24 000\$ par année. Autrement dit, ils ne peuvent pas se payer le logement actuellement disponible. De ce nombre-là, 128 000 consacrait plus de la moitié de leur revenu pour se loger avec un revenu annuel médian de 16 800\$. Et 49 000 d'entre eux, sont dans la situation extrême où il consacre plus de 80% de leur revenu au loyer. Autrement dit, sont à un pépin près de perdre leur logement.

Évidemment, toujours selon les données commandées à Statistique Canada, on sait que les populations les plus impactées sont les locataires seuls, les familles monoparentales, les aînées, les jeunes, les femmes, les personnes handicapées, les personnes des communautés

autochtones et Inuits. Ces derniers, je vais en parler brièvement parce que vous en parler dans votre rapport, sont aux prises avec le problème de surpeuplement dans leur communauté. Surpeuplement, qui on sait augmente les risques de tensions familiales et de violence. Il y a un exode d'acté de ces populations vers les grands centres urbains, là où on sait qu'elles vont vivre de la discrimination et du racisme. Ces personnes sont plus à risque de se retrouver en situation d'itinérance. Autrement dit, le cas d'itinérance des Inuits, particulièrement à Montréal, est en fait directement lié à la crise du logement au Nunavik.

J'en profite pour faire une parenthèse, parce que j'en profite à toutes les occasions de pouvoir le faire sur l'amalgame discursif entre immigration et logement. Parce que, en janvier 2024, donc par issue d'une étude de la Banque National qui prétendait que le niveau de vie des Canadiens étaient compromis par la croissance démographique, qui était imputable à l'immigration. Je vous invite à lire l'étude qui a été menée par l'observatoire des inégalités raciales et les risques qui est sortie récemment qui explique bien comment historiquement, le Québec perçoit l'immigration comme une potentielle menace à la francophonie et un outil d'effacement de sa spécificité culturel par le fédéral.

D'abord, chaque statut migratoire mérite son analyse particulière, mais pour les deux catégories à qui on l'impute la crise, soit les travailleurs temporaires et les demandeurs d'asile. Je voudrais rappeler qu'ils sont plus à risque aussi de vivre du surpeuplement. Le cas des travailleurs agricoles logés par leurs employeurs, souvent dans des conditions insalubres. Certains se retrouve dans une situation « quasi-esclavage », selon un rapport de l'expert de l'ONU. Les personnes avec un statut précaire, sont abusées par les propriétaires qui profitent de leur absence de droits. Bref, loin de voler des logements, ils s'occupent des logements que personne ne veut. Victime avant tout de la crise, les ressources en itinérance de Montréal, nous disent aussi voir une forte hausse de personnes migrantes parmi leur population. Ce qui n'était pas le cas il y a quelques années.

Je rappelle aussi que la régularisation des personnes sans statut ne générerait aucune pression supplémentaire sur le marché locatif puisque ce sont des gens qui occupent déjà un logement. C'est le même principe pour le cas des réunifications familiales, qu'on a pourtant vu baisser dans les dernières années. En plus de ça, la causalité entre taux d'immigrant et taux d'inoccupation n'est tout simplement pas avérée. Les régions qui accueillent une proportion minime d'immigrants affichent aussi des taux d'occupation faméliques. Le risque principal de cet amalgame est de conduire à de très mauvaises solutions sur les politiques migratoires d'abord, mais aussi sur les initiatives de construction pure et simple comme solution ultime sans égard à l'abordabilité réelle. Construire pour construire sans égard à la nature des logements construits, c'est un cul-de-sac. Il y a aussi un rapport récent à cet effet-là qui en témoigne sur l'industrie florissante de l'immobilier ces dernières années.

À Montréal, les nouveaux logements étaient deux fois plus souvent vacants que la moyenne du marché. Notamment, à cause de leur cherté. Donc, la crise du logement n'est pas réductible à l'offre, c'est une crise d'abordabilité. Freiner l'entrée des demandeurs d'asile ne soulagerait en rien les besoins des personnes en attente de logement subventionné, parce que ces derniers n'y sont pas admissibles. Bref, les besoins en matière de logements répondant à la capacité de payer des gens dépasse de loin la pression induite par l'immigration.

En plus du fait que le cas des demandeurs d'asile ne répond pas aux impératifs économiques quand c'est une responsabilité humanitaire du Canada, notamment envers des pays qui participent en tant que puissance économique à appauvrir, déstabiliser et détériorer. Les demandeurs d'asile, ce n'est pas de la charité accordée, c'est des droits internationaux reconnus. Le Canada est dans la Convention de Genève et il doit recevoir les demandeurs d'asile. Au lieu de revoir les seuils, il faudrait repenser le choix de la composition privilégiée au Québec qui est axée sur l'immigration temporaire, on le sait, les personnes qui sont donc, non protégées par des traités internationaux. Le choix du Québec de privilégier les travailleurs temporaires et de sommer le Canada de freiner les demandeurs d'asile répond surtout à une logique d'immigration dictée par le Patronat. Alors, bien sûr qu'un meilleur encadrement du marché locatif privé est souhaitable et important, mais les loyers ne descendent pas. On peut, au mieux, freiner la hausse.

Le rapport le plus récent du marché locatif de la Société canadienne d'hypothèques et de logement (SCHL) révélait que tous les centres urbains de 10 000 personnes et plus du Québec, affichaient des taux de logements inoccupés de 1.5% et moins, ce qui est bien en dessous du seuil d'équilibre qui est fixé à 3%. La pénurie de logements affecte dorénavant toutes les régions du Québec. En plus de l'acuité et de l'étendue de la pénurie, l'explosion des loyers se confirme au point où la SCHL est arrivée à la conclusion que l'augmentation des loyers avait dépassé à la fois l'inflation et la progression des salaires. On voit aussi des taux de rotation moins importants. C'est signe que les ménages locataires endurent des conditions de logement intolérables, faute de trouver à se reloger, ils déménagent moins. Le manque de logements familiaux qui répondent à la capacité de payer des familles aussi, est encore plus criant. Donc, les taux d'inoccupation des logements de trois chambres et plus est encore plus famélique. La crise, on le sait, a des conséquences avérées sur les enfants, leur développement affectif et cognitif. Il y a aussi un rapport de l'Observatoire des tout-petits à cet effet-là.



Donc, j'en viens aux solutions. Il faut une alternative au logement locatif privé et le privé n'a pas d'autre visée que le retour sur investissement. Ce ne sera pas là qu'il y aura la solution. C'est pourquoi on considère que la socialisation du parc est la seule avenue pour une sortie de crise durable. Les principaux paliers d'où proviennent l'argent, le provincial et le fédéral ont des responsabilités respectives. Et si on veut éviter que de plus en plus de locataires tombent dans le mal logement, la précarité ou l'itinérance, il faut investir massivement dans le logement social et communautaire sous différentes formes. Il faut planifier son développement sur plusieurs années.

Le FRAPRU réclame de doubler la part de logements sociaux sur l'ensemble des logements locatifs du Québec en quinze ans. C'est un objectif qui est réaliste. Si on exige un accroissement des investissements du gouvernement fédéral et québécois, la perspective de le faire monter à 20 %, donc de doubler le pourcentage de logements sociaux et communautaires, est atteignable. On a une cible claire de dix mille logements sociaux par année sous forme de OSBL, de coopératives d'habitation et de HLM. Autant en construction neuve, en recyclage de bâtiments que par l'acquisition de bâtiments locatifs existants. Donc, c'est les mesures qu'on peut atteindre en ayant des mesures fiscales progressives au Québec et des fonds provenant du gouvernement fédéral destinés au logement. C'est comme ça qu'on va mettre en œuvre le droit au logement. Merci.

HUBERT GENDRON-BLAIS RÉVERBÉRATIONS D'UNE CRISE: UNE ENQUÊTE SONORE SUR LE LOGEMENT À MONTRÉAL

Bonjour tout le monde! Donc je vous parle au nom du collectif Réverbération d'une crise: Une enquête sonore sur le logement à Montréal. Rapidement, Réverbération d'une crise, est un collectif qui a été formé par des artistes locataires de Montréal en 2022. Le collectif, en fait, vise essentiellement à faire entendre des dimensions souvent moins perçues de la crise du logement. Stéphanie du FRAPRU nous montrait plusieurs statistiques, les études sont là, les faits sont là. La crise du logement est bien documentée de manière objective. Or, ces statistiques-là, même si elles sont absolument essentielles.

En même temps, il y a plusieurs dimensions de la crise qui passent sous silence, notamment des dimensions plus existentielles, affectives, mais aussi liées à l'ambiance. Par exemple, qu'est-ce que c'est que vivre à Montréal? Pourquoi Montréal est une ville où les gens veulent venir passer du temps? Pourquoi la vitalité culturelle et artistique de la ville est aussi importante. Donc nous, on a fait un processus d'enquête sonore essentiellement durant l'année 2022, mais c'est un processus qui continue encore une fois, et ça a donné lieu à un album de musique, un podcast et un court métrage. Tout ça est disponible sur Internet. Donc ça, c'est ce qu'on a fait à travers ce projet-là.

Essentiellement, ce que le projet a fait ressortir, c'est que les dimensions collectives et affectives de la crise du logement sont extrêmement importantes. On a aussi pu voir que cet impact-là, donc affectif, qui se situe sincèrement au niveau des modes de vie, s'est rendu de plus en plus difficile à Montréal d'avoir un mode de vie qui n'est pas essentiellement tourné vers la productivité économique. C'est rendu difficile à Montréal d'avoir un mode de vie qui est plus tourné vers les rencontres, vers la création, vers un temps plus en suspens, quelque chose qui fait la qualité et la beauté de la vie. À cause de la crise du logement à Montréal, ça pousse tous et toutes à faire des choix qui sont parfois difficiles et qui laissent moins de temps pour ce mode de vie là. Au niveau des artistes en particulier, comme on disait plus tôt, on est parmi les populations les plus impactées par la crise du logement.

Quelques éléments qui malheureusement ne ressortent pas toujours dans le discours officiel. D'abord, on a pu voir la fermeture de plusieurs lieux de diffusion, que ce soit à cause des hausses de loyer ou à cause des plaintes de bruit, qui sont des enjeux souvent liés. Pensons à la coop des Katakombes et au Divan Orange. Il y a moins de lieux pour partager l'art. Et ça, ça touche autant les artistes, évidemment que le public. On a aussi entendu parler des espaces de création des ateliers d'artistes qui étaient menacés par la crise du logement. Plusieurs ateliers ont fermé pour être transformés en lofts luxueux, où les artistes même ne peuvent plus vivre, mais aussi des studios de musique. Encore là, à cause des plaintes de bruit et ainsi de suite.

Finalement, la dimension qui peut être la plus insidieuse, c'est le fait que la hausse de loyer pousse les gens à consacrer une part croissante de leur temps au travail. Est-ce qu'on a vraiment envie de devenir comme Vancouver ou Toronto, où les gens ont besoin d'avoir environ trois emplois pour arriver à payer un loyer qui, justement, va dépasser nettement leur capacité de payer? Pas nécessairement. Et en fait, le problème, c'est que non seulement ça donne moins de temps pour créer, mais ça rajoute aussi un stress qui, la plupart des artistes vont le dire. Qui dit stress, qui dit préoccupation économique, dit aussi bien souvent moins d'inspiration. C'est donc un mode de vie qui est menacé. Mais c'est aussi dans un sens, la vitalité artistique et culturelle de Montréal qui est menacée. Ça pourrait être un levier qui pourrait justement faire que la crise du logement devrait peut-être un peu plus toucher les pouvoirs publics dans la mesure où la mairesse Plante, en fait, tous les paliers de gouvernement sont très fiers de la réputation artistique de Montréal. Et bien, il ne faut pas prendre ça pour acquis.



On offre des funérailles nationales à Jean-Pierre Ferland, soit. Mais il faut comprendre que les conditions socio-économiques qui ont permis de produire quelqu'un comme Jean-Pierre Ferland ne sont pas réunies en ce moment, à Montréal. On surf sur des investissements, sur une situation qui était profitable jusqu'à peut-être au début des années 2010, mais là, c'est complètement en train de s'écrouler. Alors, je ne sais pas ce qu'on attend, mais c'est quelque chose qui impacte des groupes, notamment des succès dont on est fier, comme The Arcade Fire ou ainsi de suite. Ce ne serait plus possible en ce moment de produire ça, ou au prix d'énormes sacrifices qui peuvent avoir des impacts psychologiques sur la santé. Donc, c'est ce que j'avais à vous dire aujourd'hui. Il y a plusieurs autres populations, évidemment, qui sont impactées par la crise du logement, mais il ne faut pas oublier les artistes qui sont une partie extrêmement importante de la vie à Montréal. Merci.

MAGGIE CHITSPATIO **RESILIENCE MONTREAL**

Today, when it comes to July 1st, moving day, there have been a lot of people, especially elderly people, couples or singles, who have literally been kicked out of their apartments due to the increase of rent. On this point, I want to say that sometimes low-income tenants really don't understand how regulations work, they don't know how to go to the Régie du logement du Québec. They don't have any clear information or support, particularly more vulnerable people, like Indigenous folks, so they just walk out because they're asked to leave. In these cases the amount of money they receive, to compensate them in some cases, doesn't cover their rent and the new leases that are being signed, so, a lot of them always end up on the streets, it is as simple as that. Until now many folks have thought that they can get another cheaper place, but they can't today because it's impossible.

Today, the average rent for single units, even low quality places, has risen to more than \$800-900 for a person in the downtown area, and to get into low-cost housing takes forever, the application process is complicated for most street involved and low-income people, while in most cases it takes almost a decade to get in there. And today, there's not enough cooperative or social housing that is accessible, or being built around the city, which is what is really needed for most people that I see walking into our shelter, Resilience Montreal.

It is very sad, I have a lot of people coming into our shelter stating that they want to have a home, but then again, how will their income, or social assistance, cover it? It doesn't add up, it is as simple as that. So, what is important for us today is to have the help and support that we need for our people who walk into our shelter because they are struggling to find housing and really need help.

As an intervention worker I often have to beg landlords to not evict people, Indigenous people often, but most of the time this doesn't work and most of them just end up on the streets. Also it is sad to say, but it is the truth, some of them just end up dying on the streets.

In the last two years, more than 30 people have passed away due to living on the streets and they are probably more that have gone unreported. Clearly we need more help. The city needs to offer more help for housing and not just temporary housing to address the immediate needs of our shelter, but systemic solutions.

At Resilience Montreal we see people arriving at our door as a last resort and of course we welcome people, although we know and they also know that we can't offer the full support that is needed, so we try to bring in other organizations to help, but it often feels like putting a bunch of small bandages on a large wound that needs a more systemic approach.

Today for us as street workers, frontline workers, we certainly need all the help we can get to address this crisis. It's sad to see people coming into our space all the time and sharing heartbreaking stories, sometimes they are very well dressed and they had a job, they had a home, and they've been living over 20 years in an apartment, but they got evicted and are now homeless. A lot of these people have been coming out to describe being kicked out of their apartment because the landlord increased the rent to a level that they can't afford. This is something that is very hard to deal with because today you're not going to find another cheaper option, so people end up on the streets.

Like I have said many times, I think us all working together, groups supporting tenants and unhoused communities, need to work together to try to get our voice out there more powerfully and through that push for real change that can address this crisis.

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SANDRA WESLEY STELLA MONTRÉAL

« Bonjour, Stella est un organisme par et pour les travailleuses du sexe. On fait des milliers de contacts à chaque année avec des travailleuses du sexe de tous les milieux. Donc on voit le spectre des problèmes de logement de tous les côtés. Donc, on voit les femmes en situation d'itinérance dont les conditions de vie se détériorent constamment. On voit des femmes qui sont en logement, mais qui se sentent prises en otage par des propriétaires qui peuvent les mettre dehors à tout moment et augmenter les loyers qui ne se sentent jamais stables dans un logement.

On voit même des personnes qui sont dans des situations avec un revenu, avec une vie qui devrait être confortable, mais qui se retrouvent constamment à risque également. Dans nos autres mouvements desquels on fait partie, que ce soit le mouvement

féministe, la table des groupes de femmes de Montréal, la Fédération des femmes du Québec, tout ce dont les femmes parlent, c'est le logement à tous les niveaux. On voit une augmentation de la violence envers les femmes à travers cette crise de logement, où on se retrouve souvent dans des situations où on est obligé de se mettre en couple pour être capable de payer nos factures, et on ne peut pas quitter une situation dangereuse parce que c'est impossible de trouver un autre endroit à habiter. Si on a des enfants, c'est encore pire, parce que se retrouver à la rue avec nos enfants, ça veut dire perdre nos enfants également.

Dans les milieux VIH, dont nous sommes membres également, c'est le sujet de conversation partout au niveau de comment avoir un accès au traitement, comment garder les gens en santé, comment même avoir accès à du dépistage. Tout ça passe par le besoin de base qui est le logement. Même chose dans les milieux pour les femmes migrantes, sans statut ou avec statut. Le logement est également une crise qui vient éclipser beaucoup d'autres enjeux et causer beaucoup d'autres enjeux. Donc, pour nous, on est au-delà de simplement la crise du logement. On est vraiment très loin dans un processus de transformation sociale profonde qui vient. Si on ne fait pas quelque chose rapidement, on va détériorer à long terme les conditions de vie des personnes et va venir faire un recul de plus de 60 ans de progrès social au Québec.

De victoires qu'on a gagnées avec des batailles très longues et ardues au niveau des droits des femmes aussi, au niveau de toutes sortes d'enjeux, même au niveau du droit du travail. Quand nos employeurs savent qu'on peut perdre notre logement à tout moment, si on fait juste un chèque de paie, on devient dépendant de nos employeurs. Quand les proprios savent que notre vie dépend de leur bonne volonté, ça lance un message à tous les proprios qui peuvent être violents envers nous, qui peuvent nous menacer, qui peuvent nous extorquer. Et c'est quelque chose que nous, les travailleuses du sexe, on est sur les premières lignes de cette violence qui va éventuellement toucher beaucoup d'autres personnes également. »

There's been several reports that have been published recently besides the one that we're launching today, there's also a new report from the INSPQ, the National Public Health Institute here in Quebec, called Logement et santé : développement d'un cadre conceptuel. So, we are at the point now in public health where we have an analysis framework for the way that the housing crisis is harming the health of the population, and it is becoming more and more a central factor in all spheres of public health. Have we learned nothing from the HIV crisis, we've been in for forty years, but also the COVID crisis that we've been in for four years now that we will not do something to prevent further deterioration of our health.

There is also a report that was published today actually from the Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing as well as the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights. So, this is two UN special rapporteurs calling to break the cycle, to end criminalization of homelessness and poverty, where they say, in these reports, that the ways states are increasing criminaliza-

tion of homelessness is compounding the crisis. In face of this, all the life-sustaining practices and activities that we do to survive homelessness and poverty, must be underlined, this includes people collective bottles, people engaging in sex work, or just trying to hold low income jobs that simply don't pay the rent and still ending up on the street.

There are massive violations of human rights taking place. The criminalization of drugs, the criminalization of sex work, and the criminalization of everything, you know, just being out in the public in parks at night can land you in jail for a long time depending on the context. So, this has been reported by human rights figures today, but it was also reported to the Ville de Montréal all the way back in 2017 through a study on racial and social profiling hosted by the Commission sur le développement social et la diversité montréalaise.

In 2017, the city itself issued recommendations that included changing municipal bylaws and other things that would reduce the criminalization of homelessness, but what we've seen since is a massive increase in the criminalization and repression of homeless people. We've become a city, that despite having always had encampments all over the city, has now become a city that dismantles encampments the moment they pop up. Not even giving people the chance to spend a few days looking for housing before having all of their stuff seized, before getting ticketed, or even assaulted by police, and critically before spiraling into further difficulties.

Just a few weeks ago, groups like mine, Stella, were invited to the city for a meeting to get an update on this commission from 2017, when we were promised the abolition of 13 municipal bylaws that disproportionately target homeless people and specifically the most vulnerable homeless people, Indigenous people, and people who use drugs. The conclusion, that this city told us, is that they're actually not going to do that at this point. They're going to do very minimal changes that actually give more power to the police. So, we're seeing a major deterioration everywhere and an increased repression at all levels of government, despite all the consultation and research.

« J'entends constamment que les conservateurs vont venir au pouvoir dans un an et demi, et pour moi, c'est un appel à l'action. Ce n'est pas une excuse pour ne rien faire. Quand les conservateurs savent qu'ils vont perdre le pouvoir dans un an, ils passent tous les projets de loi possibles et imaginables pour changer la société comme ils le veulent. Et bien moi, je demande que les gouvernements actuels à tous les paliers, s'ils s'inquiètent vraiment de la venue des conservateurs, et bien c'est le temps d'être créatifs, c'est le temps d'être courageux, c'est le temps de passer des lois.

C'est le temps de faire du changement et pas de gouverner comme s'ils étaient des conservateurs, simplement parce qu'ils pensent que c'est ça qui va arriver dans un an. La raison pour laquelle les conservateurs risquent de venir au pouvoir, c'est parce que les gouvernements qui se disent progressistes empirent nos conditions de vie, ne font rien, brisent leurs promesses. Donc, ce qu'on demande, c'est la décriminalisation totale du travail du sexe, des drogues, de l'occupation de l'espace public. On demande également de rendre la

vie en public confortable. Si les gens n'ont pas de logement, et bien qu'on fournisse une qualité de vie décente.

C'est comme ça que les gens peuvent ensuite partir de ça et améliorer leurs conditions de vie. Ce n'est pas en punissant les gens pour être dans la rue qu'on va leur trouver un logement, qu'on va stabiliser leur situation. Il faut avoir des politiques créatives pour avoir des logements à but non lucratif. Pour aussi trouver des façons de rendre le logement privé plus abordable, parce que beaucoup de personnes ne sont pas éligibles au programme de logement subventionné, que ce soit des personnes qui n'ont pas de statut, des personnes comme nous, les travailleuses du sexe, qui n'ont pas de revenu légal et qui ne peuvent pas, donc, s'inscrire dans un programme où on doit produire ces revenus.

Il faut penser où sont les maisons de chambres privées qui ont sauvé la vie de tellement de personnes. Une petite chambre à 200 \$ par mois qui te permet, en sortant de prison, en arrivant en ville, de restituer. Elle n'existe plus. Il faut trouver des façons de les rendre existantes de nouveau. Et puis, il faut aussi se rappeler que la raison pour laquelle Montréal est la ville qu'on aime tant au niveau des artistes, comme on l'a mentionné, au niveau des travailleuses du sexe également, mais au niveau de toute la vie dynamique de Montréal.

C'est parce qu'historiquement c'était une ville où on pouvait arriver, se trouver, marcher dans un quartier, trouver une affiche, louer un appart et vivre une vie décente. Et c'est comme ça qu'on a créé Montréal. On est à risque en ce moment de perdre l'esprit de Montréal, et on ne peut pas laisser ça arriver maintenant. »

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MOSTAFA HENAWAY **THE IMMIGRANT WORKERS CENTRE**

Thank you, it's a pleasure to be able to participate in the launch of the report today. For us, the link between the housing crisis and our membership, particularly - migrant workers, temporary foreign workers, international students, asylum seekers - is that they've become a political football, not just by the Conservatives or Pierre Poilievre, but also by the Liberals.

Fundamentally, for the Liberals, migrants have become a political scapegoat in terms of the housing crisis. As a result of the policies of successive both Liberal and Conservative governments, we don't have enough non-market supply and there is simply too much demand. Due to this reality, it has been easy to blame international students and asylum seekers for the housing crisis. But that logic doesn't explain a housing crisis in Shawinigan, which has one of the lowest migration rates in all of the country - it's one of the least diverse places in Canada, where the housing crisis has actually doubled over the last 15 years. So, how can an influx of migration explain unaffordable housing in Shawinigan? Or in some towns



in Southern Ontario, where there are very few temporary foreign workers, international students, or asylum seekers, there is also a housing crisis.

This has unfortunately been the Liberal strategy of putting the blame, or trying to direct popular anger, not against the real culprits of our housing unaffordability crisis in Canada, the housing crisis, which are investment outfits, like Brookfield Asset Management, that have been pushing mass real estate speculation, or other companies, like Airbnb, which of course is pushing the question of short-term rentals.

Overall we need to focus on the question of the outsized role of banks and investment firms on housing, the financialization question. Until today governmental authorities have been trying to resolve our housing crisis through market oriented policies, when it's the market that is creating the crisis itself, so this approach is wrong and inaccurate.

The reality for most of our membership, at the Immigrant Workers Centre, is that they feel the housing crisis acutely, and this is something that is misunderstood by the general public, that migrants are facing the brunt of housing injustice. If you're a temporary foreign worker - a seasonal agricultural worker - or a domestic worker, your housing is provided by the employer. A lot of the time, workers pay enormous amounts for housing, not even to have their own room - just to have a bed in a room. There is a fundamental difference of how the realities of the housing crisis are focused on, these stories of migrants facing substandard housing conditions isn't a focus, but it needs to be.

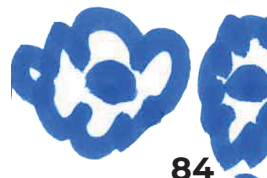
For many asylum seekers, who are living in very cramped quarters, in areas like Parc Ex., which are becoming akin to migrant worker camps in the Gulf. So this means that entire neighborhoods have been treated this way also. You know, one of the framings that Liberal politician Marc Miller presented, was a focus in speeches and statements on the housing crisis in places like Surrey, B.C., or in Brampton, Ontario, or in Parc-X here in Montreal, this discourse worked to visualize and lay blame on migrants, a type of talk that actually blaming the people who are facing a difficult situation for the injustices that they are facing in their lives, it is racist and unacceptable.

These neighborhoods, that Miller pointed to, are largely areas where migrant workers live, people who have been taken advantage of - because they are newcomers, because they have a lack of understanding of the law, because people are vulnerable around their status - so they are exploited by landlords. Oftentimes, in these neighborhoods, which literally represent the front lines of the fight against gentrification, against reno-victions evictions, are then scapegoated for the larger crisis.

One of the things that's really important to address, when facing this racist political football strategy, is that both parties, the Liberals and Conservatives, have been using this type of discourse in different ways, this means that if you're not a permanent resident, you somehow don't deserve to have access to social housing, this is said between the lines and this is unacceptable. All temporary residents and those who are undocumented need to have access, housing is a right, but in real terms such communities do not have access to the same state support when it comes to housing, a support which permanent residents and citizens actually have. This means that in real terms these communities, which are being blamed, actually aren't getting a lot of public funding or resources, so the blame game in this context is also untruthful just on a basic numeric level. There actually is no strain in terms of our resources from these communities because they are largely outside of the system.

The impact of the scapegoating of our housing crisis on migrants has actually had a multi-dimensional impact that is felt very acutely by our members. This pinpointing of the housing crisis on migrants and temporary migrants, by the Liberals, means even more restrictive measures and more social repression on a group facing some of the most difficult situations. An example is the fact that most international students will no longer have access to post-work graduate work permits, so are being thrown out of this country, there is this massive deportation effort. This is also unjust because literally the post-secondary education system has taken thousands of dollars from them - they have actually been helping to subsidize our post-secondary education system and now we're going to throw them out the door?

Now Canada is directly expediting deportations to lower the temporary population, with the goal of bringing it back down to 5%. This is how we're dealing with the housing crisis, but this will not address the problem. As opposed to having an



immigration system based on solidarity and values and human rights, communities are being scapegoated. The real issue around housing is the fact that there isn't the non-market housing needed to meet the massive demand, this requires public intervention and public spending, along with public options.

The large promise made by the Liberals, earlier in the Trudeau years, right at the end of the pandemic lockdowns, to actually give permanent residency to all those who are undocumented, and also took place when Marc Miller was a minister, now sees the Liberals actively scapegoating the same communities that they made a promises toward. Instead of really addressing the housing crisis by making real solutions, like the massive construction of non-market public housing, the Liberals have been using the tool of racist scapegoating.

The issue is that the Liberals don't want to disrupt a housing market that is forever rising, generally, but this economic framework needs to be questioned because it leaves so many people behind. With



housing prices being generally inflated over the last decades, it makes housing more and more out of reach to many working people, including working immigrant communities. Claiming that you are for affordable housing, while pursuing this market driven vision of housing, is fundamentally contradictory.

This vision leaves the weakest in society in a difficult position, newly arrived folks, workers, unhoused communities, and racialized people. All of these communities have become targets in this policy and scapegoating attack. While it does not seem, on the surface, that Canadian migration policy and housing policy are linked, we must underline that all of these issues are linked but in ways that the mainstream media has not been addressing.

All of this context points to why we have been working with housing groups in areas like Parc Ex, groups like Comité d'action de Parc-Extension (CAPE), we see it as so important to underline that for those in political power, like the Liberal party, to scapegoat migrants for the housing crisis, is both unacceptable and racist. The real solutions to this crisis are those that the housing justice movement has been demanding for quite some time, which is the expansion of non-market housing, which moves us toward accessing housing for all, regardless of status, economic situation, employment. This is the only way we're going to fundamentally deal with this crisis. Thank you.

Community Voices

HOUSING JUSTICE, IT IS A LOCAL AND GLOBAL ISSUE

BY NILDEEP PAUL

Over the last decade, the Canadian housing economy has seen a sharp rise in the proportion of renters and an even more concerning hike in rents. Between 2019 and 2025, rent in Montreal itself has risen over 70 percent, with other parts of Canada reporting steeper surges (Statistics Canada). Lack of rent regulation and sidelining of tenant rights has left large swathes of the Canadian population in a precarious limbo. Within the affected communities, international students and racialized minorities face a disproportionate difficulty in finding affordable housing. While struggling with economic precarity, these communities have also been scapegoated as the supposed 'cause' of the housing crisis. This elides the reality of the real crisis – a highly financialized housing market which assetizes homes and treats tenants as disposable. As a research lab dedicated to immigrant rights and anti-racist values, RAAH stands by the goals of the housing justice movement – securing the right to affordable housing for all, irrespective of identity or economic status.

Housing inequality is not a Canadian issue alone, and encouraging conversations between housing justice movements across the world helps build more inclusive and effective frameworks for activist work. It also broadens the understanding of housing inequality's relations to unbridled capital accumulation, erosion of tenant and worker rights worldwide and the creation of an increasingly precarious and disenfranchised population. As an international student myself, I have



been witness to the anxieties caused among my peers by rising rents, compounded by our precarious financial status and Canada's hostile anti-immigrant policies. RAAH is committed to supporting endeavors such as the publication of this zine, which brings together ardent voices from all across the spectrum, with the goal of building broader coalitions for justice.

Government of Canada, Statistics Canada. "Quarterly Rent Statistics, First Quarter 2019 to First Quarter 2025." The Daily, 25 June 2025, www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/250625/dq250625b-eng.htm. Accessed 10 November, 2025.

Nildeep is a member of The Raah Lab which is based in the Department of Film and Moving Images at Concordia University, aims to examine the intersection of migratory processes and media practices. Central to Raah's project is a community-driven model, which brings together scholars, activists and community partners in a single space. Raah aims to host both theoretical and practice-based research, as well as community-facing projects, in order to investigate the questions of immigration, hospitality, marginalization and their mediatized forms.

THE INTANGIBLE HERITAGE OF PARC-EXTENSION

BY SEPIDEH SHAHAMATI

The Intangible Heritage of Parc-Extension project was developed when the social and communal fabric of Parc-Extension (Parc-Ex), one of Montreal's working-class and immigrant neighbourhoods, began to be disrupted in 2019 by the construction of Campus MIL of the University of Montreal, adjacent to the area. In 2019, when the project first started, coinciding with a rise in evictions in the neighbourhood due to the inauguration of Campus MIL, there were many mobilizations and discussions about gentrification, the right to housing, and the displacement of the most vulnerable populations in this neighbourhood. While people were moving from one place to another, being displaced and pushed out of the neighbourhood, and while important discussions on the right to housing, the importance of social housing, and other related topics were taking place, I began to think about understanding and documenting the stories of places, the fading memories, the social connections that people had developed in this neighbourhood, and their feelings toward it, all of which I referred to as the intangible heritage.

This project was developed to help us reflect on the meanings of this neighbourhood, that is undergoing rapid gentrification. It aimed to show that Parc-Ex is more than just a cheap and

affordable place to live, it lives on in the hearts and minds of both its long-term and newly arrived residents, through a direct conversation and dialogue between its past memories, the deep roots of long-term residents, and the short but deeply emotional experiences of newcomers. Through my involvement in the neighbourhood, I have always reflected on the meaning of this changing place, as a historically rooted community that has also become home for very recent immigrants, and on how talking about heritage can reflect that. To this end, I came up with an audio sound/walk 1 of the neighbourhood, where I reflect upon my four years of involvement with the place: what I was feeling, the sounds, the smells, the sense of the place for me in various locations, as well as the stories and memories I have heard, from the stories of children playing in the factory yards during the 1950s in Parc-Ex, where we now see luxurious condos, to the feeling of at-homeness of a newly arrived refugee woman who had a surprise baby shower party organized by one of the community groups. This audio walk helps us rediscover the geographies of Parc-Extension through these intimate stories and memories.

– Sepideh Shahamati

VIBRER CONTRE LA SÉPARATION

BY HUBERT GENDRON-BLAIS

La vie est un flot continu où tout est interconnecté, les événements se répercutent dans les différentes sphères de notre existence. On a parfois besoin de séparer les choses, les rapports, pour y voir plus clair. Mais il faut se rappeler que c'est une illusion pour permettre une clairvoyance momentanée.

Musicien depuis des lustres, mon passage dans un comité logement en tant qu'organisateur communautaire m'a fait réaliser tout l'importance des luttes pour l'habitation, tellement le « chez soi » est le lieu de tout un tissage affectif, mental, existentiel, social et politique. J'ai fini par quitter ce milieu épuisant, où l'on court sans cesse pour éteindre des feux, sans trop avoir le temps de cibler la source de l'incendie. L'art y était toujours vu comme accessoire, superflu, une distraction de la « vraie lutte ». Ces déceptions, et un certain épuisement professionnel (bravo à ceux qui gardent le fort), m'ont donné envie de reprendre mes études, cette fois en ciblant directement le nexus son et politique. À la fin de ce parcours académique, je me trouvais dans une position délicate : comment utiliser les réflexions issues de cette plongée dans les rapports entre sonorités et politique dans les luttes actuelles? J'ai alors eu envie d'explorer ce que Félix Guattari appelle le paradigme éthico-esthétique, c'est-à-dire l'importation des techniques et connaissances développées dans le milieu des arts pour analyser la vie sociale et la transformer sous un nouvel angle.

C'est ainsi qu'est né le projet Réverbérations d'une crise. Une enquête sonore sur le logement à Montréal, qui vise à interroger le potentiel politique des sonorités, à utiliser le médium du son pour jeter un éclairage nouveau sur cet enjeu. Ce projet transversal, connectant art, activisme, communications, interventions communautaires et analyse critique a été pensé comme un antidote à la séparation : séparation entre les sphères de nos vies, entre nos envies de créer et celles de lutter pour un monde plus juste. Les premières rencontres avec les membres du collectif ont confirmé que je n'étais pas le seul à souffrir de cette mise à distance de l'art et des luttes. L'ouverture d'un espace de discussion et d'expérimentation entre artistes-locataires a montré comment les sphères doivent être reconnectées. Un peu comme le son défie la séparabilité des choses, faisant tout vibrer sur son passage.

<https://reverberationscriselogement.org>

FOR STUDENT LIFE AND HOUSING OVER EXCESSIVE SECURITY ON CAMPUS

A TEXT WRITTEN BY THE MOBILIZATION COMMITTEE OF THE ARTS & SCIENCE FEDERATION OF ASSOCIATIONS (ASFA) AT CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY.

In an Access To Information request filed by the Concordia Student Union in 2025, the Concordia administration was compelled to reveal how much it spends a year on their Campus Safety and Prevention Services (CSPS). Much of these CSPS jobs seem to have a lot to do with restricting the freedom of movement in what is considered to be "university space" (Concordia University Administration has both claimed campus to be a public & private space, whichever is more advantageous to them at any given moment). CSPS duties entail the following; unlocking & locking campus buildings, keeping watch of & following/harrasing people they deem suspicious, guarding campus buildings during mobilizations, & more notably corroborating with the SPVM to facilitate arrests on campus, as well as forcefully moving our unhoused friends off campus.

This is an astronomical amount of money to be spending in a time of austerity (budget cuts), in what can only be seen as an effort to further police, stalk, intimidate and brutalize anybody they do not want on campus, all the while sending a clear message to everyone watching.

Meanwhile, we as members of the Concordia community continue to struggle with food insecurity, transportation to and from campus, lack of mental health services, a housing crisis with constant rent increases,

loss of third space, repression of our communities, facility failures including building temperature drops & constant escalator/elevator jams – the list piles up about as high as the tuition does.

We as a community firmly believe that the Concordia administration should re-evaluate its priorities, reduce their administrative bloat & begin the work of relinquishing their greedy control over this university, its spaces & its budget, as it is not built for them, but for our communities.

The reality is no matter what struggle, we as strugglers know what we can give, what we can pay, what we can afford; & so to speak, it is time for us to take over the budget.

The budget breakdown of Campus Safety & Prevention Services:

2023/2024 budget breakdown of the CSPS department

- Staff salaries: \$1,813,130.79
- Equipment: \$1,045,741.41
- Security 3rd party: \$6,136,229.80

2024/2025 budget breakdown of the CSPS department

- Staff salaries: \$2,039,053.41
- Equipment: \$843,629.12
- Security 3rd party: \$6,096,906.44

Kindly note that budgets pertaining to third party security are primarily related to the ongoing contract with Corps Commissionaires du Québec, which provides the regular uniformed agents on campus.

HOME: HOUSING JUSTICE + CLIMATE JUSTICE

BY JUHI SOHANI

I'm so grateful to be here.

And when I say "here", I mean here in Tiohtià:ke, the place that's been the closest to what I've been able to call home.

I'm grateful in particular to have the privilege to have been able to find life, community, and a sense of home here in Tiohtià:ke, land that's still the unceded traditional territory of the Kanien:keha'ka Nation.

My family was able to come here for what we were sold as a “better life”

Not a better life because of the Canadian state, but a better life on the backs of those who are the original stewards of this land.

So, I'm upset.

I'm upset by the fact that the same actors, the same powerful systems — colonialism, imperialism, and capitalism — that brought my family away from our ancestral land (while continuing to exploit it for its resources and labour) are the same systems that made it so that my story of home was never written by me or by my family.

It was written by those others who held power.

And they don't have our best interests at heart, nor do they have the best interests of the original stewards of this land at heart.

But that's why I'm here, considering how housing justice and climate justice are both, at their cores, about home.

Upon arriving here, my parents asked two questions: where can we afford to live and where can we find some semblance of community?

Again, the answers were written by others.

The answer was a neighbourhood called Rexdale in Tkaronto (Toronto), where we lived in an apartment with paper thin walls and no ventilation. Today, we still deal with the health effects of growing up there.

We moved again, this time into a small home where 3 generations slept under one roof, with more people than beds, and where the floors were peeling, and where we didn't get a park to play in until one day.

One day, they started building green spaces, which we realized came with white folks who moved to our street and started writing their own stories — stories in which we were the ones in their home.

Now I find myself here and I ask the same questions: where can I afford to live and where can I find community?

And so many of us ask the same questions, right?

All the people who call this place, Tiohtià:ke, home are asking the same questions.

Those whose homes are in Kanehsatà:ke, where construction waste is sent to the community to dispose of leaving all this industrial refuse and toxins next to the community, their homes, it smells, and it's harmful to the health of those who live there.

In Montréal-Nord, where we see the highest rates of air pollution. It's not a coincidence that the neighbourhoods that are home to primarily Black and migrant communities have lower life expectancies than rich, white Westmount.

And, of course, there's a lack of investment in green space, in housing, in transit...the list goes on. The sulfur dioxide, ozone, and hydrogen sulfide particles float through the air in the north and east ends of the island, where housing isn't adequately built so people are living cramped together without adequate ventilation.

So, let's call it like it is.

Environmental racism.

With gentrification pushing low income and migrant communities out of their homes in Parc Ex, and where a lot of what's being built is veiled as "climate-friendly", but where it's really just corporate landlord pocket-friendly.

It's injustice that our homes aren't safe. That folks are not safe in their homes from developing cancer, respiratory diseases, and higher rates of asthma. That folks are drinking poorer-quality water, and are more exposed to CO2. That communities see miscarriages and less normal births.

As the climate crisis worsens and we experience poorer air quality and extreme weather, it's the most vulnerable in our communities — those who don't have adequate housing — that are disproportionately affected.

And the most telling thing about our leaders' priorities is the insistence on continuing to invest in policing.

In spending money on overpolicing marginalized populations instead of investing in infrastructure. While Black and Brown people are living packed together in less-than-ideal housing, near high pollution areas like highways, and don't have access to transit because decisionmakers choose not to invest in the fucking transit system.

And that's theft.

They're stealing our money. They're stealing the money that's supposed to go to housing and feeding and healing us, and they're spending it on protecting capital and property. And it's all at the cost of the lives of the most vulnerable of us.

So now, my family that's still primarily in Pakistan, on the front lines of the climate crisis, are seeing these same powerful systems come together to keep writing their stories. More and more people, especially those with young children, have to consider how they can make their way here and ask those same questions:

Where can I afford to live and where can I find community?

And obviously I hate that my stories, my ancestors' and family's stories, are being washed away as the Global North looks on, but I do have the power to dream of new stories.

And I have hope that we, as a collective, can write our own stories from here on out.

Because housing justice and climate justice are deeply interconnected. Because they're both about home.

And that justice looks like the amplification of our voices — the voices of the people of the global majority. It looks like Indigenous leadership being respected, not just tokenized, as they continue to steward this land as they have for generations.

That justice looks like building cooperative housing that has childcare and long-term care. Housing that facilitates local food production. It looks like building efficient, long-term housing in and for Indigenous communities. It looks like controlling speculative investment and properties that sit around empty.

These things can be changed and we can create upward pressure together.

So I invite you to dream with me. To dream of a world in which people aren't cramped together, nor are we isolated from each other. A world in which we're brought together by housing built around green space, that's creating its own energy, and is more efficient for people — not for landlords' pockets. Living situations that facilitate food security and encourage more connected and healthier and just communities, so that no one has to ask those questions again: where can I afford to live and where can I find community?

Instead, we can come together as a collective in solidarity with each other's movements.

And we can write our own stories of home.

Interviews

INTERVIEW: SÉBASTIEN B. GAGNON FROM KABANE77

What is KABANE77?

Sébastien: Before the Champs des Possibles was transformed into a park by the city, it was a natural ruin with an abandoned building nearby. Around 2007, the artist Emily Rose Michaud painted on this building a Roerich circle: three circles inside a bigger circle. This artistic gesture, which had protected Europe's cultural buildings from bombing during World War II, inspired artists to look closer at the structure. With many expelled from their Mile End jam spaces, artistic spaces, and apartments, there was a need to secure a place for artistic activities outside of traditional venues. The building was seen as something to protect.

At first, three collectives of cinema artisans [Épopée, Double Négatif, and Hors-Champ] discovered there were no pillars inside the building and wanted to use it for cinema projections. As an architecture project manager, when I joined the project I saw that everything the city said couldn't be done with the building was actually feasible. With the addition of a fire exit and a bathroom, it could almost be used as-is to start answering community needs.

Many people were drawn to the project's appeal and the struggle to liberate an autonomous space: writers, typographers, carpenters, programmers, cultural and community workers. Within a horizontal and democratic scheme, they expanded the project's view to answer the needs of the community and the unhoused people who resided in the building: providing food, organizing yoga classes, and partnering with other organizations. KABANE77 also became a project for analog arts like printing, film, and non-electronic music, like a foil for the Société des Arts Technologiques, because we felt the need to keep these forms alive.

A 2019 fire left only the building's metal structure intact. How did this affect the development of the project?

That was a shock. There had been a few wins before. First, the city's plan to use the site as a public works yard was prevented because the noise would have been incompatible with the nearby Carmelite monastery. So that was a win. Then the building was saved from demolition. Projet Montréal opened the door for groups of citizens without a board of directors to participate in planning urban space. This was a big win. Sadly, we had started discussions with the city and a nonprofit when the fire happened. When we saw how the building was affected, it was a big turning point.



What is the status of the project today?

We're all artists with two or three lives. Everybody's super busy, and we're not pushing for the project right now, but it lives on in the work that we do. It lives in the inspiration that we can give to others. It was possible: we were about to do something with that building.

It should be encouraged for this kind of planning to be as horizontal as possible. People might think that an anarchist way of working together is slow, but it's fast. It's more durable. It's aligned with real needs and aspirations. Surprisingly, our decisions were relatively quick and efficient. We naturally managed to create order without power structures. We experienced that, we tasted that, we lived that. To me, it was very important to see the real possibility of democracy in organizations.

The project might not have been realized in a material sense, but in its imaginary and organizational sense, it was an important experience. Still today, it's an art project wherein the idea surpasses the form. The idea is stronger than the material object. KABANE77 is an artistic, democratic, and anarchist project that should inspire people to build co-ops to fight landlords, to emphasize that art and community must go together to build new ways of urban planning.

How do you see KABANE77 as connected to housing justice efforts in Montréal?

The function of the building was not residential, but the project was an example of community-based architectural planning.

The world of architecture is dominated by the architect, hand-in-hand with the developer.

This is something that has to be changed. Social and political pressure can create good results. Sometimes we have to work with people we don't like, and it can be difficult. But I still see municipal government as a transformative level. I don't think that municipal politicians will want to go in this direction, but we have to force them. We have to change laws and public opinion. There are multiple aspects to this fight, so every little thing that we do matters: zines, videos, songs. As long as we know that it reaches somebody and has an impact, it can open minds.

We need more co-ops. I think that co-ops could become magnetic if they incorporate art and other functions and activities. The building code dictates what can happen where, but we have to pressure architects who know about this. We have to take every means necessary to understand what can be done architecturally and encourage professionals to be democratic and horizontal in their work. Get out of traditional ways of thinking about architecture and make it non-hierarchical. This is a fight that could lead to many advancements.

HOUSING FINANCIALIZATION AS SOCIAL VIOLENCE

A DISCUSSION WITH FRED BURRILL, RESEARCHER, ACTIVIST AND EDUCATOR, FACILITATED BY STEFAN CHRISTOFF

In this conversation with long time community organizer and researcher Fred Burrill, we hear reflections on the history of anti gentrification struggles and housing justice organizing in the Saint-Henri district of Montreal.

This interview examines how the financialization of housing, through the involvement of financial investment markets, particularly impacts working class neighbourhoods within a key North American city, Montréal.

I speak with Fred about the ways that local residents have been organizing and trying to push back against this process of financializing housing that has driven such devastation, both in terms of unsustainable rent increases and also people being pushed out of their historical working-class neighborhoods in large numbers. This interview is an important window into somebody that spent a lot of time both organizing and thinking critically about these intersections.

Stefan Christoff : Housing crisis is a term that we hear today in mainstream media reports and also on the lips of politicians, across the spectrum, at a scale that seems unprecedented within living memory. That terminology, that asserts a housing crisis, can point to the reality of a crisis that really can't be wrapped up quickly in one term.

On this point, there has been a whole wave of different sorts of policy proposals, even the Conservative Party of Canada is talking about the housing crisis, albeit not proposing any real solutions. Often missing from this discussion, framed by politicians, is any sort of understanding as to what the social movement points of responses to the social housing crises can look like.

To start, on a basic level, I wanted to talk with you about why going beyond the term, non market housing, is important, but also why specifically calling for tangible things like social housing and cooperative housing funding is key. Addressing these points in a more layered way I think can also bring on points of analysis around larger critiques on how the commodification of housing brought us to this point of crisis.

Fred, so you're an educator and a researcher, you worked for many years in the southwest of the city, particularly St. Henri, with the housing community, P.O.P.I.R. - Comité Logement, a member of Front d'action populaire en réaménagement urbain (FRAPRU) in Quebec.

To start, maybe you could first introduce yourself and respond to anything that I just brought up, any points that you feel are important for understanding the deeper context of the housing crisis, locally and globally.

Fred Burrill: I'm a teacher and an organizer around housing justice networks. I worked for many years at the P.O.P.I.R. in Saint-Henri in the southwest of Montreal. Listening to your introduction gives me a push to share a little preface about the housing crisis as unprecedented and of course it is. The proportions of the disaster that urban tenants are facing across Canada right now and in Montreal specifically are unprecedented, but a housing crisis is in fact not unprecedented, it is long standing in this city and beyond.

In Saint-Henri anyway, in the southwest of the city, you probably remember this because you were active around this time in the early 2000's, we saw that on moving day, every July 1st starting around the year 2000, there were many families sleeping in the gym of a local high school because there were simply not enough places for them to go after they were evicted, or renovicted.

The systematic move by the federal government to wash its hands of its responsibility for ensuring the right to housing has its roots in the neoliberal turn that basically dates back to the mid 1970s and onward in Quebec. By the turn of the twenty-first century this policy had resulted in a total breakdown of society's collective ability to ensure that the vast majority of its population was able to sleep inside, as public funds that had been previously directed toward this were systemically hollowed out.

This crisis has continued to expand over the last ten years. Although it has been a little bit under the radar in the last few years, not now, because when we talk about the housing crises we are talking about the vacancy rate being under 3%. The vacancy rate in general has been around 3%, or a little bit higher than 3%, but what this hid, until now, was the fact that this vacancy rate was bumped up by the construction of condos which were then being rented out. Condos that were of course inaccessible to anybody of low income, but even for many middle-income households.

Now, the subterranean housing crisis, that has been building over the last decade, has exploded out into the public views. It's really drastic and it is indicative of the systematic under-investment in the construction of social housing. When I say social housing I mean housing that is both geared to income and is not just nonmarket, because then you are still participating in the housing market because private developers are involved, but basically I am talking about off market housing alternatives that are driven by public investments by the state through public funds, this is really what is needed.

I am speaking about this point within the context of a broader economic switch from industrial production to a financialized model in the global north in which the profit-making model in North American capitalism has become almost entirely based on speculation, extraction and household income debt, all points that are deeply related to the current housing crisis. This entails the buying and selling of debt as the driver and the relation to shelter, to housing, as a sort of a speculative good to flip, this is a shift from the old-school basic profit model of securing rental units to generate income, landlord style. This change is important to underline. The people who were before the slumlords are now the property developers and have gotten into the speculation model at different levels.



Overall, the economic model of many capitalist rent seekers has now shifted, from making money off of people's monthly needs, to making money off of selling people's homes. So this means that people are now facing mass renovations, as increases in rent are based on increases in property value, not the material conditions of the housing. This is a never-ending speculative cycle which is structurally violent and of course today creates conditions in the city where we are now into a deep crisis territory, as rent is now off the charts.

Stefan: A lot of strands there and important ones. I just want to pick up on one with the goal of underlining the political and economic decisions that have brought us to this place. I mean the financialization, or the marketization of housing is something that is starting to be understood a bit, but I think there is still this basic sense that of course the primary orientation for shelter, for housing is people either owning their own homes, or renting out a place with the landlord side often portrayed as people, or small companies, renting out a couple of units.

Given how prominent this basic framework is and how it really fails to match the moment of what is actually happening around the financialization of housing, I wanted to underline this a bit more. I am sure that some people listening to this program, or reading this interview, just haven't had a chance to listen to somebody like you who has really taken the time, within the context of movement work, to deconstruct how this situation of financial markets orienting so many of the terms of housing today in Québec and Canada. How did we get here and where are we exactly on this point?

If you could highlight one or two key points, from your perspective, that both explain the situation and outline some key policy decisions, on the part of the powerful, that brought us to this crisis, points that I am sure can underline how this situation is not random.

Fred: The first major one is the decision of the federal government to cut funding in Canada for social housing, a policy orientation that had been built up to by the Mulroney conservatives in the early late 1980s' and into the early 1990s' and this context drove a decision to cut this funding by the Liberal PM at the time, Jean Chrétien, head of a Liberal government that saw Paul Martin as the finance minister in 1994.

In real terms there have been successive moves in this direction across different governments. Québec is one of the only provinces in Canada that still has limited provincial programs on housing and there have been successive moves, over a variety of neoliberal governments both Parti Québécois, then Liberals and now the CAQ to decimate what remains of that housing program to the point where we now still nominally have some programs on the books, but basically they are non existent in terms of meeting this moment of crisis.

The other kind of major policy, at least in the Montreal context, is rooted in decisions that led to a speculative approach to housing due to the mass de-zoning of industrial property into residential. This actually occurred, to a large extent, under the Montreal Citizens' Movement which was a lefty social democrat party, this was before Projet

Montreal. This party, the Montreal Citizens' Movement, held power in the 1980s' and early 1990s' and in some cases, the party drove municipal policy toward literally buying up industrial properties, like the former Stelco buildings, a former steel plant in Little Burgundy, and then they sold it for peanuts to developers as a way to stimulate the development of something like we see today. So instead of public development, they prioritized private development which they kick started with public money. The shifting of the Lachine canal which was the heart of an industrial corner of the city and has now become the heart of condo land in Montreal, was launched during this time.

Across the city, during this period, all kinds of property allotments were zoned industrial, which before were places of employment for working class people, spaces that were deregulated and were basically sold for dimes on the dollar to property developers. Those property developers were not people who wanted to build homes in the duplex style which would allow for renting out the top floor, these financial actors are different. It's massive hedge funds working together with major institutions in Quebec actually.

One of the main funders of condo construction is the FTQ, the labor union, until today, through the Fonds de solidarité du Québec. We can see the larger structural move, on the part of unions like the FTQ, away from the daily lives and needs of working-class people, or the labor movement generally, toward locking in investments in speculation.

These two types of dynamics, at the federal and provincial level, as well as the key federal disinvestment of the construction of social housing under the federal Liberals, were key moves that pushed us toward the current crisis. Also at a municipal level, the deregulation of industrial land was a key turning point that helped to push us into the crisis that we are seeing today.

Stefan: I can see a mirror to many situations in cities globally, around the deregulation of formal industrial zones, but thank you for outlining the specifics of the ways that this process impacted housing in this city. This process has happened in other cities around the world, with city governments literally just passing key properties to developers, rather than developing public, non-market options for housing.

Also I wanted to note that people, well real estate and financial actors, are making a lot of money from this process, while there is very little process of accountability for these profits, which I am sure in many cases go off shore, or are hidden in various ways, but minimally go back into the corruption of housing markets that pushes things to be totally unaffordable. City governments taking what could be public housing infrastructure and passing it to the

“free market,” as you described, Fred, just means that little to no resources circle back to the needs of tenants and to supporting working class and low-income people, which actually need the most public support.

I’m seeing this process mirrored in different ways by the rhetoric from both the conservative opposition and of course under the Carney Liberal government. They’re literally talking about taking lands in Canada, declared as public and passing it onto private real estate developers to build housing for profit. Also I should note here that there are so many layers of problematics around this on a structural legal level, historically and into the present, given that these lands are occupied Indigenous territory. All of these policies seem to just add additional layers of problems; the proposed mainstream solutions will fail, as they are aiming to throw public land at developers with few strings attached and that somehow is going to solve the housing crisis. It sounds absurd on a basic level, but can you deconstruct this a bit?

Fred: Well it’s not a new approach. It’s pretty much the same approach here in Montreal in the period of the Montreal Citizens’ Movement in the late 1980s’ and early 1990s’. During this time something called Opération dix-mille logements got going. This drove a lot of deregulation of formal land and gave it to the developers to deal with. This framework was driven by a basic and inaccurate reading of what they saw as the root of problems in the housing market, which was understood to simply be a shortage of available units.

Of course, the big lie of dominant economic rhetoric about the housing crisis then and now, is that it is simply a question of vacancy which of course it isn’t. It’s a question of consolidation of control of the housing stock in the hands of the capitalist class. This style of rhetoric misdirects from the real issues and also says in the current

moment that the problem can be addressed by targeting immigrants, who are taking up all the housing, for deportation. Again a scarcity model that works to criminalize migrants rather than dealing with the substantive issues.

Stefan: That’s a good picture of the distance between the mainstream political rhetoric and really addressing the key issues.

Fred: That’s the rhetoric, yes. The real issue is the fact that people own multiple homes. There are all kinds of luxury condos with no one living in them because they are just speculative properties. If we think about things in terms of that basic class conflict, then those sort of lines of reasoning, the kind of bait and switch that claims to point to the problem but it just works to blame it on the populations that are not responsible. It is important to track this and unspin it.

Stefan: Exactly, but I do think that it would be good to underline a bit more the use of that term bait and switch to describe the dynamics that you just spoke about, can you please clarify these points a little bit more?

Fred: This line first puts out an acknowledgement that we are in a housing crisis, which of course we are. The homeless population of the unhoused populations is growing, yes. Also I should note that there are many hidden forms of homelessness that equals people sleeping on friend’s couches etc. This reality is even more intense for households with kids because families are also sharing small apartments, spaces that aren’t fit for them, because now it is impossible to find decent apartments in Montreal, along the métro lines, with more than three bedrooms for anything less than around three grand a month.

So back to the bait and switch in the mainstream, it puts out this real problem, the housing crisis, which is the bait. Then the switch is blaming

and holding populations that are not at all responsible for the crisis as the culprits. This argument hides the real culprits driving the housing crisis, the landlords, along with critically, the hedge funds and bankers, along with politicians.

Stefan: Alright, so you mentioned hedge funds, I think this is important. Also, you mentioned before, about the Fonds de solidarité FTQ, who use their funds toward investing in companies involved in speculative property development. Can you talk about this?

I know that there are many important companies in Québec linked to this process as well. I remember learning from Mostafa Henaway that one of the formal textile giants, Lamour Inc., in Chabanelle, the former garment district in Montreal, has created a corporate spin-off that has resulted in the redevelopment of formal industrial buildings, for additional profits in the context of deindustrialization. Can you talk about the shape of these types of corporate moves, at a local and international level, maybe you can describe the basic shape of this?

Fred: Part of the general trend in the global north is a move away from the production of commodities to a financialized model in which basically there is the realization of profits without the production of value. It's all just kind of based on moving money around without actually producing anything and that means moving it away from poor people, moving it into the pockets of the ultra wealthy.

One of the mechanisms for that is real estate. In this process you get big companies like Prével or Devimco that are privately owned, but also publicly owned in the sense that they have shareholders, you get people to invest in that, in housing focused corporate groups, so this builds on this kind of socialization amongst the capitalist class broadly speaking, who have for so long loved to make profits of


the exploitation of the need to have shelter.

This process has driven, at a massive scale, the major hedge funds, who are working with investors who are building collective funds that are then only shared among the ultra wealthy. This means that you have banks, as well as investment groups, essentially buying and selling housing as part of packaged financial investment portfolios that are traded as assets.

Also there are people that invest in debts. This means exploiting the middle-income household who gets a mortgage from the bank. Let's say this family has overextended itself in order to buy a condo, maybe because they couldn't afford rent anymore, which is actually true in a lot of cases. So in this case that mortgage, that investment by the family, has become a commodity that the bank then sells out in parts to other banks, to speculative individual investors, to investment firms. There is that second underlying model, which sees housing just as another financialized sector.

Also, finally, the other things happening that is important to note, a point that we actually have a lot here in Canada, and there is a really good new book about this by Tom Fraser who's a union researcher in Toronto, so this dynamic sees major public, mostly retirement savings investment funds, become themselves majority shareholders in investment companies that are landlords.

The big example in Canada is a firm called Starlight Investments which owns massive tower blocks in Toronto. The major investment in that is the Public Sector Pension Investment Board (PSP Investments). The pension funds that public servants pay into, then use those funds in order to exploit the monthly needs of other working people. This process takes a certain segment of working-class income and redirects it into the exploitation of other working-class



people. This whole model, in which money is just moved around from one place to another in order to generate profits that aren't based on anything other than the exploitation of real human needs, like housing. This process then of course lines the pockets of very rich people.

Stefan: As you were speaking, I was picturing different marches in the south-west. There was a squat action to talk about the housing crisis in the south-west of Montreal and in Saint-Henri that I remember. Also I was picturing this land occupation that you were involved in, it was driven by a demand for a vacant lot to be turned into social housing. I am sure there were more layers to that action, I would love to hear about that. I am also picturing this march that went up the highway, the Turcot Interchange, when a part of it was closed for renovation. I remember rows of low-income housing were demolished for this highway infrastructure. The many other layers there in terms of car culture etc. that are important to consider as well.

I remember all these stories of Montreal action and also the ways that low-income buildings were demolished in St. Henri recently, but also in Chinatown and in Little Burgundy with the construction of the Ville-Marie Expressway. I have been just thinking about a lot of street actions when you were speaking earlier, as clear points of dissent, and there are many other actions but you worked on in this neighborhood. St. Henri.

I think about the fact that often when we hear about stories about the housing the crisis in the mainstream media, or even coverage about protests movements in relation to the housing crisis, we get these reports that usually feature these individualized stories of one family, or a person, getting evicted and how it's unjust, but it's a heartstring story and a very simplistic story that fails to speak about the larger financial dynamics that you have mentioned. In these types of stories that might even speak about a family that successfully fought, or evaded their eviction, you rarely get a real picture of the social movement energy, the grassroots organizing, that is central to any fight for housing justice, from individual case work to larger structural demands.

In the points you raised earlier about non-market housing, the structural points, also about how provincial and federal governments have been massively removing any public fund investments in non-market housing projects. Like the Liberals pulling funding from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation for co-op development in the mid 1990s.

I wanted to ask you about the ideas within these movements, that really articulate a very different idea as to what housing is, a non-market conception in many levels, economically, culturally and socially. I think that it is important to hear from you about the ideas that are expressed around housing within the protest movements and campaigns that you have been involved in, what are the larger ideas at play?

Fred: I think one thing to highlight about the landlord tenant relationship is that unlike at your job where you often have coworkers and you sort of see that you share those conditions of exploitation with the other people that you work with, being a tenant is a very individualized form of exploitation because you have an individual contract with the landlord and we live in a relatively atomized world and this is especially deepened with the fragmentation of the housing market that exists. People move a lot, very often out of necessity. They don't necessarily know their neighbors. This also has an impact.

Building a sense of being a tenant as a class position through struggle is one of the most important things that we can do at this point. Because as I said, the conditions of precarity that we face as tenants is created by bad public policy and is heightened by intentional moves of the capitalist class to exploit tenants even more, so at a baseline it remains a class struggle. It remains shaped by the fact that there is a massive concentration of power amongst the hands of the ruling class, therefore the only way that we can really contest it is through building counter power. Building that counter power has to happen through struggle.

Stefan: Thanks for that, so now, just to end, you talk about struggle, maybe can you share a bit about what that has looked like for you. I ask this because struggle is a very strong word and holds a lot of meaning. As I am asking this I'm also picturing people duck taping signs together, or making soup to carry it to the protest, or sandwiches, or hot chocolate for a winter action, or a few different people working on sending a text press release to the media. There are all these very human factors that make up actions, campaigns, activism, there are both cute and hardcore moments to this, so many layers. Can you share your thoughts on this point?

Fred: Sure! Organizing is all of it. When I say struggle I mean action and in a lot of cases around housing movements I think about direct actions, but also mass mobilizations. But also it is all the kinds of care, the mutual aid and responsibilities that go into building a movement which includes key things that you said: making food, walking people's dog, hospital visits. All these things that people in our fractured existences often end up dealing with on our own, movement relationships can help with that. So it's our responsibility as people in the movement to make sure that as much as possible we're dealing with those sorts of things together.

Stefan: Thank you, in this conversation you opened up a lot of space for reflection. I hope that people can visit some of the ideas and frameworks that you laid out which are very important to addressing the housing crisis, the origins and the ways that the financialization of housing is impacting us today. Also of course about the key role of popular power and mobilization. Thank you so much for speaking today, Fred.

Fred: My pleasure.

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Here is a series of photos featuring some of the voices included in this zine publication. This isn't everyone, but it gives you a window into the awesome voices that are here!

