

HAC protests police brutality

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March 15 is the International Day Against Police Brutality. Across the world people take to the streets to denounce escalating police repression, the Housing Action Committee did the same through the streets of the Down Town East Side (DTES).

We marched through the streets in silence to pay our respect to our sisters and brothers who have been killed by the police or who are incarcerated due to unjust laws. Three letters were delivered to three organizations that we feel are most responsible for the ongoing violence and harassment in our neighborhood.

The first letter was left at the Vancouver Police Departments (VPD) station in the DTES. In the letter we demanded immediate respect and an end to brutality. By brutality we mean not only the savage beatings that we endure in the back alleys but also the day-to-day persecution we are subjected to on the streets. Constant jack-ups, ticketing, name running and so on constitute the daily experience for many.

We know the police are not solely responsible for brutality, the orders and money comes from people in positions of power who are never held accountable. Because of this we marched to an office that liaisons with the Vancouver Agreement (VA). The VA is a deal that has allotted 30 million to be invested into the DTES. We the residents have yet to receive any benefits from this money. In fact a large sum of money has been set aside to fund the VPDs failed City Wide Enforcement Initiative. The crusade also known as 'operation torpedo' has only perpetuated the suffering in the DTES. City hall knows this, that's why the VPD is going, hat in hand, to beg for money from the VA so that they can keep their extra cops and continue their displacement campaign. We demand not one cent be given to the police from the money meant for our community.

The last letter we delivered was to the Business Improvement Association (BIA). The BIA with the Vancouver Board of Trade, Tourism Vancouver, and 25 other Businesses associations have created a 'Safe Streets Coalition'. The coalition is using their purchased lobbying power to push for the BC equivalent of Ontario's safe street act (OSSA). Implemented in 2000 the OSSA has been instrumental in bashing the poor of Ontario. By creating more repressive laws and giving the police and business owners more authority the catastrophe of homelessness and poverty has greatly increased (as has the amount of over doses and women and girls entering the sex trade).

We outlined our strategy to defeat the Safe Street Coalition. As poor people our power is disruption, we will attack every meeting they try to have. We will shut them down. We will defend our selves. We will fight back. Whatever it takes.

HAC