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**Cover Picture** : Anti-racism activist Ken Herar showing a racist flyer that was found at his doorstep in Mission. In the background is the Abbotsford Heritage Sikh temple that was once a centre of activities for the Ghadar Party, which fought against racism and colonialism.

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**RADICAL**  
DES

"If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor."  
Desmond Tutu



## Editorial

was playing on the basic emotions of the people should have caught the imagination of the intelligentsia. Some thought that when the US made history by electing Barack Obama as its first Black President, it was time to look forward. What they missed was that Obama's victory did not end structural racism against Blacks, who were still repeatedly targeted by the police and white supremacists under his administration. Shortly after Trump's victory, racist comments were made about Obama's wife on social media. All this shows that Trump is only a symptom, and not the cause of racism, which was always entrenched in US society. Trump only took advantage of that. Visible minorities, women, marginalized sections, including LGBT people, and the exploited working class from the dominant society, should have voted with vigour to defeat Trump, to send a strong message that racism and sexism will not be tolerated. Warnings from a few well-known activists, such as Michael Moore, were not enough. On the contrary, the polls that put Clinton ahead with a narrow margin were seen by many as a guarantee of Trump's defeat. This is not to suggest that Clinton is perfect. But the fight against racism should have been taken seriously, and a clear strategic choice should have been from among lesser of the two evils. It is disheartening to see some self-styled gatekeepers of the minority communities supporting Trump. These sell outs even ignored the endorsement of Trump coming from white supremacist groups. What can be more shameful than to see some women and members of the Muslim community supporting his candidacy? Trump's victory has once again given legitimacy to racism. Because of this election, white supremacists feel emboldened. There is a feeling that racist incidents have grown both in US and Canada since he got elected. Racist flyers have appeared in Vernon and Richmond in BC, and there was an attack on the house of a Jewish Rabbi in Ottawa. Now that Trump is going to run the US, it is time to be vigilant and stop his administration from deporting immigrants and adopting racist policies. The damage has already been done, as the society stands divided. It will take a while to remove hostilities. There is also a need to be skeptical about his symbolic gestures, such as nominating Nikki Haley, the South Carolina Governor of Indian origin, as US envoy to the UN, or organizing a Sikh prayer. Those who are pleased among the Indian Diaspora and within the Sikh community must remain cautious to the fact that white supremacy poses dangers to everyone, and such tokenistic measures are only aimed at further dividing the South Asian communities. And those who remained complacent during US elections need to learn that this problem can surface in Canada too. Never forget that the previous Conservative government used similar tactics. It is a separate matter that the Liberals won the last election under Justin Trudeau, who has tried to undo some wrongs committed by them. Encouraged by the victory of Trump, a section within the Conservative Party is trying to polarize the white community to win leadership. It is funny that many emotional Americans are talking about migrating to Canada. It is not surprising to see that the Canadian Immigration website crashed following the victory of Trump. What people need to understand is that by changing residency, racism won't go away. Even Canada is not perfect. It's a country built on stolen lands belonging to the indigenous peoples. Racism is still prevalent in Canada and the First Nations are worst hit. For that matter, no country in the entire world is safe from bigotry. Instead of running away to find a refuge from hate, its time to get united and resist. Leaders like Trump are weak, and that's why they often take the refuge of nationalism. If people are united against such forces, it won't be difficult to reclaim political and cultural space that belongs to the masses.

-Editors

## BC's Shame

Despite growing racist incidents,  
the province remains without Human Rights Commission

**K**en Herar is a worried man as he displays a racist flyer to a crowd at the Abbotsford Heritage Sikh Temple on November 20. The occasion is the commemoration of the centenary of the execution of political activist Harnam Singh Sahri, who was hanged in November, 1916, for waging war against British occupation of India. Sahri was part of the radical movement launched by South Asian immigrants in 1913 in North America, to fight back against racism and foreign occupation of their home country. Sahri was one of the ideologues of the movement started by the South Asians, who were being treated unfairly by the British empire both in India and Canada. He and his associates felt that they were being subjected to racism abroad only because their motherland was under foreign rule, and thus began a two-tier fight against racism and imperialism. Sahri was executed after being arrested in Burma, where he had gone to launch a rebellion after spending several years in Canada and the US.

Herar held out a flyer thrown at the doorstep of his house in Mission recently. It read a clear message from the Ku

Klux Klan (KKK), a white supremacist group with roots in US, the country that shares its border with Abbotsford. He wanted to show everyone that racism has not died. The challenge that existed when Sahri was alive remains and continues to haunt people of colour. Being an anti-racism activist, Herar, who represents a group called

Cycling 4 Diversity, has already started going around in different communities to warn that the KKK might be trying to recruit white youngsters and intimidate people of colour. In fact, his fears are not unfounded. Similar flyers, some under different names using offensive language, targeting white people as potential recruits and mocking

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people of colour, have been distributed in numerous communities in BC, including Vernon and Richmond.

Even as racism continues to cause anxiety to people in one of the most diverse provinces in Canada, British Columbia remains without a Human Rights Commission, which was dismantled by the provincial Liberal government in 2002. Though it is hard to say whether such a commission would have made any big difference in the light of these racist incidents, it might have made the task of individuals like Herar a bit easier. A commission dealing with human rights could at least have done more to raise awareness, and to consider the pattern behind these incidents, and the circumstances leading to a surge in distribution of flyers spreading hatred.

As racism refuses to die, the demand to restore the human rights commission is growing. However, despite repeated calls, the Liberal government (which does not forget to make a customary statement to recognize International Human Rights Day every December 10), remains adamant to leave BC as the only Canadian province without such a body.

### History of racism in BC

When Sahri came to Canada for a better livelihood, like many other immigrants from India more than a century ago,

he was deeply pained by blatant racism. It was the time when India was under British occupation. Partly because of their economic policies, the Indians, who could not survive the financial hardships, started moving abroad. Canada was also a British colony, attracting many who believed that being British subjects, they could freely move from one part of the empire to another. Once here, they discovered how facts are different from fantasy.

Some white labour groups felt threatened by the immigrants, who were willing to work at lower wages. The employers also preferred them, to weaken the bargaining power of the workforce. Thus, white supremacists started attacking them. However, in any event of racial violence, British officials in Canada and the US never came to the rescue of immigrants from India. Considering Canada a "white man's country", Canadian authorities formulated policies to discourage Indian immigrants from permanent settlement. They were not allowed to bring their families, and in 1907, they were disfranchised. A conspiracy was also hatched to relocate Indian immigrants to British Honduras.

Following these attacks, activists within the Indian community started getting organized. The Ghadar Party

was formed across the border in the US. The party believed that the root cause of the sufferings of Indian immigrants was the foreign occupation of their home country. Hence, the party resolved to fight back against racism in North America and British occupation in India. Sahri became an active member of the party, which had a big following in Vancouver and believed in an armed rebellion.

In 1914, when Britain got locked in a war with Germany, the Ghadar Party members felt that it was the right time to strike. They decided to leave for India and launch a revolt with the help of the Indian soldiers working for the British Armies. The Komagata Maru incident that happened around the same time added fuel to the fire. The Japanese vessel carrying more than 300 South Asian passengers was forced to return by the Canadian government under a discriminatory law designed to deny entry to the Indian immigrants. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has acknowledged that it was a discriminatory act, and made an official apology in the Commons after a century. Sahri was part of the shore committee that was formed to defend the passengers of Komagata Maru.

Under these circumstances, Sahri went to Burma, which was a part of India back then.

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He tried to mobilize Indian soldiers working for the British armies for an uprising. After being arrested there, Sahri was executed in November 1916.

A hundred years have passed. The situation has greatly changed as Canada, which has its first turbaned Sikh Defence Minister in Harjit Sajjan, and its first premier of Indian origin, BC's Ujjal Dosanjh. Yet racism continues to prevail, and that's what was bothering the speakers at the November 20 public meeting in commemoration of Sahri and his associates at the Abbotsford Heritage Sikh temple, which used to be the center of activities of the Ghadar Party.

The grandniece of Kartar Singh Sarabha, another Ghadar hero, was among those who spoke on the occasion. Like Sahri, Sarabha was also executed in 1915.

Rajinder Kaur told the gathering that when Sarabha came to the US he could not bear racial taunts. Incidentally, she is from Mission, where the KKK flyers were distributed.

The key organizer of the event, Dr. Gurvinder Singh Dhaliwal, announced that the event was not just a commemoration of history, but a serious effort to start a conversation about racism that still exists in our communities in BC. He observed that the idea is not only to pay tributes to our heroes who fought against

racism in the past, but also to figure out how to keep their struggle for social justice alive in today's world.

In fact, not very long ago, a white man threatened a lawyer of Indian origin outside Abbotsford City Hall for making his video after seeing him abusing a bylaw officer. Kerry Vernon Corbett, who used the expression "white power" and hurled racial abuses, now faces charges after his video went viral on social media. While the police do not think that the

distribution of KKK flyers and the tirades of Corbett are connected, former neo-Nazi Tony McAleer, now an anti-racism activist, warns that all these incidents should be taken seriously, as there could be a pattern emerging in Abbotsford and Mission areas.

McAleer isn't alone to think this way. Charanpal Gill, a veteran anti-racism activist in the Punjabi community, who has been following hate crimes in BC for many years, feels the same. Gill has been

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organizing vigils against hate crimes. He remembers how the KKK tried to organize itself in BC in the past, but the collective efforts of individuals like him discouraged them from setting their base here. He warned that the KKK, which wanted to establish an office in Vancouver, is raising its head again in BC.

Gill is one of those who has supported the restoration of the BC Human Rights Commission since it was dismantled in 2002. He emphasised that the latest incidents show that the Human Rights Commission has become even more relevant today. He argues that a commission would have tried to investigate these cases, to find if there is a pattern behind such incidents. In the absence of such a body, nothing is being done either to raise awareness against racism, nor to investigate the trend which is picking up once more.

### Trump Factor

There is a feeling that since the election of Donald Trump on November 8, racist incidents have grown across North America. Its effects are also being felt by many in Canada. BC therefore is not an exception.

Call it a co-incident or a bad omen, on the eve of the Presidential election, racist flyers were distributed in Vernon. The flyers had web addresses of hate groups.

Police have already started their investigation and are consulting the BC Hate Crime Team.

People had not recovered from the shock of earlier incidents of Abbotsford and Mission, and the racist flyers in Vernon aggravated their anxiety. While this was still being investigated, racist flyers also appeared in Richmond, this time explicitly targeting the Chinese community which has a sizable population in the city.

At the time of filing of this story, reports came in from Salmon Arm about racist graffiti on a public trail. The graffiti incited violence against Muslim immigrants from Syria. This came after the announcement by Trump that he will deport three million undocumented immigrants. The announcement was in line with his statements during election campaigns, according to which he is going to ban the entry of Muslims to the US and

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cut welfare being given to undocumented immigrants.

In the meantime, Julio Montero, an immigrant from Cuba, reported that a man gave him a Nazi salute while he was coming out of a London Drugs store in Vancouver. Montero told *Global News* that the man also said, "Donald Trump Power! Now the power is on our side." Significantly, the KKK welcomed the election of Trump and announced that it will hold a victory parade in North Carolina on December 3.

Whether the recent incidents reported in various BC communities during the US election campaign and afterwards have anything to do with Trump is hard to establish. But his tirades against immigrants and Muslims have certainly emboldened the white supremacists. At least that's what Gill and some other activists feel.

Imitiaz Popat, an independent broadcaster and social justice activist who organized two demonstrations outside Trump Tower in Vancouver before the election, sees a pattern behind these incidents. He had predicted that if Trump wins, this would encourage racist elements to come out in open both in US and Canada. Popat is not at all surprised at these developments. He rather feels that racism has always been present in BC, and with the

election of Trump it has only become more visible.

Anticipating more hate incidents, Gill has announced that he is going to revive the BC Organization to Fight Against Racism, a group he started back in 1980 to challenge racial violence. He is apprehensive that Trump's victory might result in more racist attacks against vulnerable immigrants, particularly those who cannot speak English, or seniors taking transit every day.

Gill's fears cannot be brushed aside considering the reports that a white ultra-nationalist group with Finnish connections has started patrolling in Vancouver streets. McAleer too has shared those concerns and has cautioned that the patrolling might trigger some trouble.

### **What could BC Human Rights have done?**

Harinder Mahil, the former BC Human Rights Commissioner and an activist himself, believes it is high time that the authorities think about bringing back the commission to examine and investigate these cases more closely. He fears that there is no independent body that could speak out for the victims of the incidents. "Right now, what we need is a body that can educate people by raising awareness against racism and send its investigators in the field to document and analyze these instances to find how

wide spread they are." From his own experience, Mahil says that these functions were part of the mandate of human rights commission, which has been replaced by the BC Human Rights Tribunal.

To be fair, the Tribunal has come out with some important decisions ordering compensation to victims of discrimination after hearing their stories. One of the most important cases related to discrimination against Indo-Canadian veterinarians was heard by the Tribunal. In its landmark decision in 2015, the Tribunal ruled that the veterinarians had been discriminated against by the BC Veterinary Medical Association, who had erected an unreasonable barrier to practice by instituting a discriminatory English language standard higher than that used by comparable professional associations. The tribunal also awarded \$300,000 in monetary damages.

But critics, including Mahil, insist that Tribunal cannot replace a commission which has a wider role. The Tribunal can only hold hearings into specific cases, while the commission had a mandate to look beyond and go into the root cause of the problem. Had there been a commission, its staff would have looked into the pattern if any, behind discrimination against professionals coming from

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outside Canada, he noted. "Since the government has done away with the commission all together, there are no investigators to look beyond such individual cases."

Interestingly, there is no explanation as to why BC is the only province in Canada without a commission. As of now, Premier Christy Clark is convinced that the Tribunal is doing an excellent job.

Opposition NDP MLA Raj Chouhan, a former critic for human rights, disagrees and demands the restoration of the body. He also thinks on the same line as Mahil and Gill. In his understanding, the commission would have provided better leadership in the current situation by ordering an investigation into the recent racist incidents. "Unfortunately, it is not within the reach of the Tribunal as it has a limited mandate of examining specific complaints."

However, the NDP also came under sharp criticism for remaining silent on the question of restoration of the commission during the 2013 provincial election. No definite commitment was made in their party platform. It is a separate matter that the current NDP Leader, John Horgan, has made a commitment to bring back the commission once they are in power.

BC Human Rights Tribunal Registrar Steven Adamson

admitted that they cannot investigate these cases, as the Tribunal is more like a court system where the victims of discrimination can file complaints that are duly heard. He added that the BC Human Rights Clinic, which does advocacy for victims of racism, can help in presenting such cases before the Tribunal, which itself cannot investigate them on its own.

The BC Human Rights Clinic Communications Director, Robyn Durling, says the Tribunal can only look into a complaint of hate crime or discrimination in the context of a hearing into a specific case. In terms of the recent incidents, he said that those affected can come forward and file a complaint with the Clinic, which can provide assistance in presenting their case to the Tribunal. He acknowledged that the commission had a mandate to investigate, but that process was very cumbersome and long, whereas the Tribunal and the Clinic together provide much quicker resolution to problems.

To support his argument, he mentioned a case where a pregnant woman was terminated from her job, but was only able to obtain justice from the commission after her child turned eleven.

Whatever may be the merits behind the decision to dismantle the BC Human Rights Commission, the fact

remains that a BC government statement on its website, dated December 9, 2013, celebrates the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and reads that BC is committed to upholding the declaration's principles, including the promotion of justice and equality. For the record, it also says that BC's Human Rights Code protects British Columbians from discrimination based on race, physical or mental disability, sex, sexual orientation and age in areas such as employment, housing and public services.

Despite Canada's image as a human rights leader in the world, one of its provinces remains without a human rights commission, embarrassing for the provincial government, but also for the Canadian government. For men like Mahil it isn't just BC's shame, but also a national shame. As British Columbians are gearing up for the next provincial election in 2017, whether the issue of a human rights commission will cause ripples, especially in swing ridings where South Asians and other immigrants hold the key, only time will tell. As things stand today, a campaign has already begun with the launch of a petition seeking restoration of the commission, and is likely to grow in the aftermath of racist incidents.

-RDNB

## Grassroots level movements need to push for an end to racism

In the Lower Mainland, there have been a number of troubling white supremacist organizations on the rise. Soldiers of Odin have begun foot patrols in Vancouver and the Okanagan. The group is part of an international network co-founded late last year by a Finnish white supremacist convicted of racially motivated assaults. In October of this year, flyers from the Loyal White Knights of the Klu Klux Klan were found on the doorsteps of homes in Mission, Chilliwack and Abbotsford. In November, swastikas were found spray-painted in North Vancouver, while racist flyers directed against Chinese people were circulated in Richmond and encouraged residents to "join the alt-right" and "save Richmond."

The rise of these kinds of racist hate crimes is not limited to white supremacist organizations. Anti-immigrant sentiments is prevalent in society. Four in ten Canadians believe 'too many' immigrants who come to Canada aren't white, according to a new Metro poll. Ekos research asked more than 2,000 Canadians: Of the immigrants who come to Canada, are too

few, too many or the right amount visible minorities? Forty-one percent said "too many." Anti-immigrant hate is also entrenched in the government. Conservative leadership candidate Kellie Leitch is a fan of American president-elect Donald Trump and openly says she supports Trump's ideas on immigration. Leitch has said she proposes screening new immigrants and refugees for so-called anti-Canadian values.

Theorist Sherene Razack argues that race thinking not only depicts racialized people as deserving of a different type of humanity but also constructs them as a different type of humanity. These lived experiences of otherness are shaped by imaginings about who is entitled to protection from Canada because they represent the national identity, and who faces embodied violence by Canada because their bodies are deemed not to belong. Despite the prevailing myth of Canada as a benevolent counterpoint to the U.S., Canada has in fact killed, tortured, occupied, raped, incarcerated, sterilized, interned, pillaged, stolen children from, denied public services to, and facilitated capital's hyperexploitation of

racialized communities. The superficial narrative of 'racial equality' and 'multicultural diversity,' then, just becomes an effective colour-blind cloak for the maintenance of a racial hierarchy that entrenches whiteness as pervasive and hegemonic.

Especially since the events of September 11, 2001, Islamophobia is predicated on the ability to designate and vilify the "dual" citizen (the Muslim-Canadian) as a potential terrorist threat, rendering every Muslim, Arab, and/or Sikh as an eternal Other and Outsider to the nation-state. By comparison, the massacre in Norway and Oak Creek gurudwara massacre were considered to be the acts of "lone" white men. As commentator Juan Cole blogs, "White terrorists are random events, like tornadoes. Other terrorists are long-running conspiracies. White terrorists are never called 'white.' But other terrorists are given ethnic affiliations."

High-profile cases targeting Muslim men like the Secret Trial 5 or Omar Khadr are taking place alongside daily -- almost ritualistic -- racial profiling of Arab, South Asian and/or Muslim communities: searched at airports, refused

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visas, inclusion on no-fly lists, denied employment, stopped and frisked by police, CSIS interrogations, and vandalism targeting places of faith. According to Statistics Canada, police-reported hate crimes continue to be on the rise, with hate crimes due to race or ethnicity constituting half of all reported hate crimes.

While anti-Muslim sentiment has escalated in the past decade, anti-migrant racism is not new. From the War on Terror to the internment of Japanese-Canadians, from the Komagata Maru to the Chinese Head Tax, "White Canada forever" has been a prevailing political and social force in Canada. In different eras, different racialized migrants have been constructed as invading threats (ironic, given the history of settler-colonialism) whether as terrorists, or criminals, or here to steal jobs. Most eyes are focused south of the border when it comes to anti-Black violence, and in doing so we overlook the struggles of Black people within Canada. In *Black Like Who? Writing Black Canada*, Rinaldo Walcott offers the following contestation: "The writing of blackness in Canada might begin with a belief that something important happens here."

In 2012, for example, the *Toronto Star* did a story on carding by Toronto Police

Services. "While blacks make up 8.3 per cent of Toronto's population, they accounted for 25 percent of the [police] cards filled out between 2008 and mid-2011," they reported. This year, the *Ottawa Citizen* reported that between 2010 and 2014, 20 percent of the people carded by Ottawa police were Black, despite being only 5 percent of Ottawa's population.

This means we cannot continue to be willfully ignorant on histories of enslaved Black people within Canada, de facto prohibition on Black immigration from 1896-1915, displacement of communities from Africville and Hogan's Alley, made-in-Canada segregation laws, and pervasive institutional and interpersonal anti-Black racism and violence including in our own families and communities.

Racism comprises the social, political and economic processes that utilize monolithic racial markings to stereotype diverse communities of colour. These essentialist markings are then institutionalized with in state and society to maintain the subjugation of communities who are racialized as inferior. As Black feminist and scholar Barbara Smith puts it, "Racism is not primarily a set of negative attitudes or behaviours on the part of individual whites. These negative attitudes and

behaviours are grievous and sometimes fatal, but they are in fact symptoms of a system whose purpose is not merely to make people of colour feel badly but to maintain white power and control."

The very foundation of Canada is marked by racial colonial violence. Conquest in Canada was designed to ensure forced displacement of Indigenous peoples from their territories, the destruction of autonomy and self-determination in Indigenous self-governance, and the assimilation of Indigenous peoples' cultures and traditions. The racist denial and violation of Indigenous self-determination is part of the colonial project to, on the one hand, annihilate Indigenous communities through overt violence, and on the other hand, assimilate them through residential schools and legislative control.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's report, released earlier this year, painstakingly details how Canada clearly participated in "cultural genocide." For example, until 1985, Indigenous women who married non-Indigenous men were entirely stripped of their legal status as "Indians" and lost all corresponding rights, such as the rights to live on the reserve, inherit family land, and be buried on reserve land. As Indigenous scholar Bonita Lawrence notes about such

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racialized and gendered policies of population control, “To be federally recognized as an Indian either in Canada or the United States, an individual must be able to comply with very distinct standards of government regulation.”

Settler-colonialism is not a thing of the past. Indigenous people within Canada are still impacted by the pillage of lands, experience disproportionate poverty and

homelessness, are overrepresented in statistics of missing and murdered women, have their children apprehended and put into the child welfare system, and are the primary targets of repressive policing and prosecutions in the criminal justice system. It is up to grassroots movements to push for an end to racism. As Uruguayan writer Eduardo Galeano poignantly put it “The human rainbow had been

mutilated by machismo, racism, militarism and a lot of other isms, who have been terribly killing our greatness, our possible greatness, our possible beauty.”

*Harsha Walia is a social justice activist who has also authored a famous book , "Undoing Border Imperialism " and is very articulate on issues like racism and colonialism. She is part of the editorial team of Radical Desi.*

A copy of a KKK flyer distributed in Abbotsford and Mission.

## Why the hate campaign against Justin Trudeau?

**T**he death of Comandante Fidel Castro Ruz, the leader of the Cuban Revolution, has sparked a world-wide outpouring of solidarity with the Cuban people. As part of this remarkable phenomenon, Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau sent his condolences, noting that Fidel was a "legendary revolutionary and orator," who made significant improvements in the education and health care systems of Cuba.

The PM also noted that his father, the late Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, was proud to call Fidel Castro a personal friend. In 1976, Pierre Trudeau was the first NATO leader to visit socialist Cuba, and Fidel attended Trudeau's funeral. These facts reflect the historic record that every Canadian government since 1959, Liberal or Conservative, has rejected U.S. demands to join in the Yankee blockade to isolate the Cuban people - a blockade which is widely considered a human rights violation of massive proportions, since it has denied the population access to a wide range of modern medicines, agricultural inputs and equipment, technology,

and so forth.

Yet for expressing his sorrow, Justin Trudeau is the target of a vitriolic wave of hatred emanating from far right elements, U.S. and Canadian politicians, and even many liberal or social democratic activists. Their demands to label Fidel Castro a "dictator" fly in the face of reality. After all, it was the Revolution led by Fidel and his companions which brought real, popular democracy to the island for the first time, after decades of brutal military rule and fake elections under US tutelage. Has their Revolution been perfect? Of course not, but those who attack Cuba should take care that they also point to the terrible human rights record of our own country.

After all, in both Canada and the United States, the ruling circles use the legitimacy of elections to impose their own form of dictatorship on the working class, Indigenous peoples, Black Americans, and other racialized and oppressed communities, none of whom have any meaningful input into fundamental economic and political decision-making.

How can Conservative or Republican critics, for example, condemn the human rights record of Cuba without

first acknowledging that North American society is based on one of the greatest genocides in human history - the theft of indigenous lands, during centuries of violent wars and massacres, followed by the residential schools (with a similar program in the United States) intended to assimilate Native peoples completely? How can our politicians talk about Cuban prisons without referring to jails in Canada and the U.S. which are overwhelmingly filled with indigenous and Black prisoners? How can they talk about "Cuban political prisoners" while AIM leader Leonard Peltier has now been incarcerated for over 40 years in a U.S. prison, for the "crime" of standing up for the rights of his people?

It appears that the real goal of this hate campaign is to force the Liberal government to drop any limited expression of independent Canadian foreign policy. Canadians should instead commend Justin Trudeau for his message of condolences, and speak out against those who want to demonize the PM on this issue.

*Kimball Cariou is the Editor of People's Voice, a social justice activist, and a member of the Radical Desi Editorial Team.*

## Indian state concedes defeat before Hindutva terror, but is not done with killing Muslims and others at will

**N**ot surprisingly, the Hindu nationalist Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) government in India has conceded its defeat by Hindutva terrorism, claiming that it has not found any evidence to ban one of the notorious Hindu nationalist terror groups.

The Indian government told the Bombay High Court that until now it has not found any satisfactory material to ban Sanatan Sanstha, a rabid Hindu group which has been involved in bombings and murders. This was in response to a petition filed by Vijay Rokade that sought a ban on the organization.

The court has now asked both the union government of India and the Maharashtrian state government to file a reply. In fact, the government of Maharashtra had proposed to the previous Congress-led union government back in 2010-11 to consider banning the group. Yet, it was never outlawed. This is despite the fact that activists associated with Sanatan Sanstha have been involved in bomb blasts in Maharashtra and Goa, and in the murders of rationalists, such as Narendra Dahbolkar, Govind Pansare and M.M. Kalburgi. They were critical of

the Hindu fundamentalism that has been gaining ground under the patronage of the BJP government, which has come under fire for going slow on cases of Hindutva terrorism, including political murders and bombings.

For the record, the BJP is a political wing of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), an ultra Hindu nationalist organization that has been trying to transform India into a Hindu state. The group was banned following the 1948 assassination of Mahatma Gandhi, by Nathuram Godse, who was an RSS member in the past. The current Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is an RSS man. He was the Chief Minister of Gujarat in

2002 when anti-Muslim violence was engineered by Hindu extremists across the state, which happens to be the birthplace of Gandhi, who was killed for denouncing Hindu theocracy. The complicity of the police in the anti-Muslim massacre has been established by human rights groups and eyewitnesses. Modi was denied visas by several governments in the past because of that violence. He can also be seen in the company of a controversial ascetic who was involved in the 2007 bombing of the Samjhauta Rail express, which connects India and Pakistan. That bombing left 68 people dead. Modi's picture alongside the ascetic Swami

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Aseemanand has been published number of times.

That the current government lacks the will to ban Sanatan Sanstha is not surprising. A quick look at the list of terror groups on the National Investigation Agency of India website reveals that none of the Hindu outfits involved in terror activities is banned. Among those outlawed are Muslim, Sikh and Communist outfits, besides those associated with other nationality movements. This is not to suggest that the previous self-styled secular Congress government was doing a good job. In an apparent compulsion not to upset the Hindu majority, the Congress government also remained ineffective in dealing sternly with organisations like Sanatan Sanstha, which was never banned even under the previous regime.

Interestingly, several days after the Indian government's response to the Bombay High Court, eight Muslim undertrials mysteriously escaped from the Bhopal jail on October 31. They were reported to be associated with the Students' Islamic Movement of India (SIMI), a banned terror group, and were killed in police shooting. There is a feeling out there that it was a cold-blooded murder, as the men were not armed and were shot above the waist. The establishment tried to shut every criticism and

skepticism by repeatedly stating that those killed were dangerous terrorists. The entire narrative of the Indian state remains problematic, first because only the courts have the right to decide who is guilty or not. In this case those killed were not convicted, and still faced trial. The police and the politicians have no authority to brand anyone a terrorist without being proven as such by the court. Secondly, what was actually done by the police to prevent these deaths? Nothing really. The killings of activists associated with movements that are in direct conflict with the state in staged shootouts is a common occurrence in India, which claims to be the world's largest secular democracy. This practice was very common in Punjab when Sikh militancy for a separate homeland was at its peak. It still goes in Kashmir, where insurgents are fighting for the right to self-determination, and also in central India, where Maoist insurgents are fighting a class war. Sometime before

the Bhopal episode, about 32 tribals, including Maoists, were killed in Malkangiri area under suspicious circumstances.

The Indian state's rush to brand Muslim undertrials as terrorists or kill them in staged shootouts, and its laid back approach in dealing with Hindutva terror, only reveals its prejudice against minorities. That the Muslims are frequently rounded up, thrown into jails or killed by extrajudicial methods is not something unknown in India. All the officials have to do is give them a bad name by calling them Islamic terrorists, and both the media and public will easily accept the official version. If the Indian state is serious about dealing with terrorism - which is absolutely not the case - then it should permanently ban the RSS and other extremist Hindu groups which systematically terrorise the minorities and use violence against political opponents. If this cannot be done for "lack of evidence," as told to the Bombay High Court, maybe they should use extrajudicial means to end this menace, as is done in the case of minority terror groups and Maoist insurgents, or else simply accept with all honesty that India is a Hindu state.

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## 90 years of the burning of *Manusmruti*

**T**his month marks about 90 years of the burning of a controversial ancient Hindu text that condones oppression of Dalits, or so-called untouchables, and women.

Under the leadership of Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar, a towering Indian scholar and one of the modernist nation builders, *Manusmruti* was publicly burnt on December 25, 1927. The *Manusmruti* is considered as the oldest Hindu law that promotes bigotry, yet continues to enjoy the patronage of right-wing Hindu nationalist forces which currently rule India.

The *Manusmruti* divides Hindu society into four caste groups, with Brahmins or the priests being on the top, followed by Kshatriyas or rulers, Vaishyas or artisans, and Shudras, who do menial jobs, on the lowest rung of the ladder. Both Shudras and those even below them are treated as untouchables. The *Manusmruti* expects them to serve those on the top, and bars them from sharing knowledge and equal rights with the so-called Brahmins and Kshatriyas. So much so, *Manusmruti* prescribes violent and brutal punishment for the untouchables if they even dare to listen to the scriptures, a right reserved for Brahmins. Even women have been

assigned a subordinate role by the text, and are prohibited from taking any leadership. Clearly, the laws of Manu, after whom the text is named, are patriarchal and casteist.

Ambedkar was born in a Dalit family, and experienced caste based oppression from his childhood days. He was forced to sit separately from classmates belonging to the upper castes, and was once denied a hair cut by a barber.

Born and brought up in Maharashtra, which has a history of Dalit assertion movement, he managed to get higher education despite all challenges. He rose to become law minister in post-British India and was given the responsibility to co-author the Indian constitution, which guarantees equality to all. But primarily he was a social justice activist who remained true to his commitment to eradicate caste barriers and create a humane society.

As part of his struggle against caste system and untouchability that prevented Dalits from entering temples and using water from public wells, he started a mass movement in Mahad, where Dalits were not allowed to use a public water tank.

In March 1927, Ambedkar and his followers marched to the Chavadar tank to assert their right to take water. Following

this act, there was a well-organized attack on Dalits by upper caste goons. Thanks to the instructions of Ambedkar to his supporters to remain peaceful, there was no retaliation from Dalits. Since this happened under British-occupied India, the mainstream Indian leadership was more focussed on the freedom movement. The Indian leadership either remained indifferent towards the struggle for social emancipation or critical to the approach of Ambedkar. Undeterred by these hurdles, he continued his fight.

In December 1927 he organized another conference in Mahad, as the upper caste people tried to clean the water they thought was polluted by Dalits, and attempted to get an injunction to stop Dalits from entering it in future. During this conference, Ambedkar and leaders of the campaign lit the pyre of *Manusmruti*. This was a very radical move, considering the level of orthodoxy that prevailed during that time. The rites were performed by the Dalit saints.

Before the burning of *Manusmruti*, Ambedkar made a presidential speech in which he mentioned the French revolution, and tried to make parallels between his movement for equality with

the revolutionary national assembly that took place in Versailles in 1789. Resolutions denouncing Hindu scriptures that condone caste system were also passed. Ambedkar remained a tireless champion for the rights of the underdog.

He also advocated for the equality of women. Before his death in 1956, he adopted Buddhism as a statement against Hinduism, which he felt was based on the principles of inequality. He had announced much earlier that though he was born Hindu, he would not die a Hindu.

Both the history of the burning of *Manusmruti* and Ambedkar's struggle against caste based oppression are

relevant even today. Despite tall claims of development and progress in India, structural violence against Dalits continues unabated. Dalits are still prevented from entering many temples, and often they are subjected to physical violence for violating caste codes that are otherwise outlawed by the Indian constitution. It's a shame that many Dalits are forced to indulge in manual scavenging for survival.

Not only does the caste system refuse to die, offensive icons like Manu are being openly celebrated in a country whose constitution is based on the principles of secularism and scientific temperaments. The statue of Manu greets visitors outside a court in

Rajasthan.

Instead of addressing these ugly realities and bringing a real change, the Hindu nationalist Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) that governs India is rather trying to appropriate Ambedkar and distort history to mislead Dalits and the rest of the Indian population. Under the BJP government, assaults on activists who are part of the Dalit assertion movement have also grown. The BJP is also toying with an idea to change the constitution to transform India into Hindu theocracy.

As long as apologists of Manu and his text continue to dominate the political, social and cultural landscape of India, Ambedkar's legacy will remain relevant. **-RDNB**

## History will absolve me

**T**he right of rebellion against tyranny, Honorable Judges, has been recognized from the most ancient times to the present day by men of all creeds, ideas and doctrines.

It was so in the theocratic monarchies of remote antiquity. In China it was almost a constitutional principle that when a king governed rudely and despotically he should be deposed and replaced by a virtuous prince.

The philosophers of ancient India upheld the principle of active resistance to arbitrary authority. They justified revolution and very often put their theories into practice. One of their spiritual leaders used to say that 'an opinion held by the majority is stronger than the king himself. A rope woven of many strands is strong enough to hold a lion.' The city states of Greece and republican Rome not only admitted, but defended the meting-out of violent death to tyrants.

In the Middle Ages, John Salisbury in his Book of the Statesman says that when a prince does not govern according to law and degenerates into a tyrant, violent overthrow is legitimate

and justifiable. He recommends for tyrants the dagger rather than poison.

Saint Thomas Aquinas, in the Summa Theologica, rejects the doctrine of tyrannicide, and yet upholds the thesis that tyrants should be overthrown by the people.

Martin Luther proclaimed that when a government degenerates into a tyranny that violates the laws, its subjects are released from their obligations to obey. His disciple, Philippe Melanchton, upholds the right of resistance when governments become despotic. Calvin, the outstanding thinker of the Reformation with regard to political ideas, postulates that people are entitled to take up arms to oppose any usurpation.

No less a man than Juan Mariana, a Spanish Jesuit during the reign of Philip II, asserts in his book, *De Rege et Regis Institutione*, that when a governor usurps power, or even if he were elected, when he governs in a tyrannical manner it is licit for a private citizen to exercise tyrannicide, either directly or through subterfuge with the least possible disturbance.

The French writer, François Hotman, maintained that

between the government and its subjects there is a bond or contract, and that the people may rise in rebellion against the tyranny of government when the latter violates that pact.

About the same time, a booklet - which came to be widely read - appeared under the title *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos*, and it was signed with the pseudonym Stephanus Junius Brutus. It openly declared that resistance to governments is legitimate when rulers oppress the people and that it is the duty of Honorable Judges to lead the struggle.

The Scottish reformers John Knox and John Poynt upheld the same points of view. And, in the most important book of that movement, George Buchanan stated that if a government achieved power without taking into account the consent of the people, or if a government rules their destiny in an unjust or arbitrary fashion, then that government becomes a tyranny and can be divested of power or, in a final recourse, its leaders can be put to death.

John Althus, a German jurist of the early 17th century, stated in his *Treatise on Politics* that sovereignty as the

supreme authority of the State is born from the voluntary concourse of all its members; that governmental authority stems from the people and that its unjust, illegal or tyrannical function exempts them from the duty of obedience and justifies resistance or rebellion.

Thus far, Honorable Judges, I have mentioned examples from antiquity, from the Middle Ages, and from the beginnings of our times. I selected these examples from writers of all creeds. What is more, you can see that the right to rebellion is at the very root of Cuba's existence as a nation. By virtue of it you are today able to appear in the robes of Cuban Judges. Would it be that those garments really served the cause of justice!

It is well known that in England during the 17th century two kings, Charles I and James II, were dethroned for despotism. These actions

coincided with the birth of liberal political philosophy and provided the ideological base for a new social class, which was then struggling to break the bonds of feudalism. Against divine right autocracies, this new philosophy upheld the principle of the social contract and of the consent of the governed, and constituted the foundation of the English Revolution of 1688, the American Revolution of 1775 and the French Revolution of 1789. These great revolutionary events ushered in the liberation of the Spanish colonies in the New World - the final link in that chain being broken by Cuba. The new philosophy nurtured our own political ideas and helped us to evolve our Constitutions, from the Constitution of Guaimaro up to the Constitution of 1940. The latter was influenced by the socialist currents of our time; the

principle of the social function of property and of man's inalienable right to a decent living were built into it, although large vested interests have prevented fully enforcing those rights.

The right of insurrection against tyranny then underwent its final consecration and became a fundamental tenet of political liberty.

As far back as 1649, John Milton wrote that political power lies with the people, who can enthrone and dethrone kings and have the duty of overthrowing tyrants.

John Locke, in his essay on government, maintained that when the natural rights of man are violated, the people have the right and the duty to alter or abolish the government. 'The only remedy against unauthorized force is opposition to it by force.'

Jean-Jaques Rousseau said with great eloquence in his

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Social Contract: 'While a people sees itself forced to obey and obeys, it does well; but as soon as it can shake off the yoke and shakes it off, it does better, recovering its liberty through the use of the very right that has been taken away from it.' 'The strongest man is never strong enough to be master forever, unless he converts force into right and obedience into duty. Force is a physical power; I do not see what morality one may derive from its use. To yield to force is an act of necessity, not of will; at the very least, it is an act of prudence. In what sense should this be called a duty?' 'To renounce freedom is to renounce one's status as a man, to renounce one's human rights, including one's duties. There is no possible compensation for renouncing everything. Total renunciation is incompatible with the nature of man and to take away all free will is to take away all morality of conduct. In short, it is vain and contradictory to stipulate on the one hand an absolute authority and on the other an unlimited obedience ...'

Thomas Paine said that 'one just man deserves more respect than a rogue with a crown.' The people's right to rebel has been opposed only by reactionaries like that clergyman of Virginia, Jonathan Boucher, who said:

'The right to rebel is a censurable doctrine derived from Lucifer, the father of rebellions.' The Declaration of Independence of the Congress of Philadelphia, on July 4th, 1776, consecrated this right in a beautiful paragraph which reads: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness; That to secure these Rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or abolish it and to institute a new Government, laying its

foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.'

The famous French Declaration of the Rights of Man willed this principle to the coming generations: 'When the government violates the rights of the people, insurrection is for them the most sacred of rights and the most imperative of duties.' 'When a person seizes sovereignty, he should be condemned to death by free men.

***'Fidel Castro was a revolutionary Communist leader of Cuba. These passages from his historical court statement made in 1953 have been reproduced here as a mark of respect on his death on November 25.'***



