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## Sex and (Evacuation from) the City

The Moral and Legal Regulation of  
Sex Workers in Vancouver's West End,  
1975–1985

Becki Ross

SEX WORK INVOLVES TOUCH and bodily exchange—other indicators of intimacy, from partial to full exposure of “private” parts to emotional concern, often exist in the negotiated play between provider and consumer. Such acts occur behind closed doors as well as on streets, in alleyways, parks, and cars. As a varied practice, there is hardly one form of sex work, and thus political struggles over the past century across North America and beyond reflect specific locations and embattled interests. To explore what happens when intimate, sexualized labor impinges on space designated as “public,” this chapter explores the debate about outdoor sex work in Vancouver’s West End neighborhood during a pivotal decade, 1975 to 1985. Following the police closures of downtown nightclubs on prostitution-related charges in 1975, in-house sex workers took to the streets of the West End, where they were met by residents and business owners who instigated a full, frontal assault on “sexual perversion.”<sup>1</sup> Lobbyists, as well as politicians, journalists, urban planners, police, and vigilantes, strove round-the-clock to formulate an “antihooker” consensus centered on the sex worker as *object* of inquiry and management. In the face of unrelenting hooker bashing, the Alliance for the Safety of Prostitutes (ASP) formed to raise awareness of the whore stigma and to combat politico-legal maneuvers enacted to expel them and other street-level sex workers from their moorings in the West End.

My analysis of interview-based and archival data reveals how the West End became not only desexualized and sanitized but whitened and made safe for (a certain kind of queer) capitalism and residential occupation, with lethal consequences for outdoor sex workers in the city. The work of Phil Hubbard on the

“geography of prostitution” inspires me to uncover how the West End became imbued with complex spatialities of power, desire, and disgust.<sup>2</sup> This class-bound, gendered, and racialized contestation over space was also a struggle over the meaning of public and private and ultimately about the power of intimate work to unsettle commonsense perceptions of labor, leisure, love, and community.

### Pushed Out: West End Troubles Engineered by CROWE

In 1975, after decades of soliciting clients indoors at hotels and nightclubs downtown such as the Penthouse Cabaret and the Zanzibar, a heterogeneous, racially diverse community of sex workers—some of whom were queer—was forcibly pushed by the police department’s vice squad onto the streets of Vancouver’s West End.<sup>3</sup> Here, in the face of a mounting antiprostitution backlash, approximately 250 sex workers who took pride in their pimp-free community began to solicit clients.<sup>4</sup> While women—including African Canadians and Aboriginals—made up the majority, a minority of male hustlers and male-to-female transsexuals also sold sexual services on and around Davie Street—the first tranny stroll in the city. Portrayed sensationally as she-males in fetish pornography, ridiculed in tabloids, pathologized in medical texts, and condemned as “mutilated, masquerading males” in Janice Raymond’s vitriolic tract, *The Transsexual Empire*, trans sex workers capitalized on customers’ desire for what Jamie Lee Hamilton calls “the full-package deal”—both tittie and clittie (*clittie* being the feminine term for cock).<sup>5</sup>

In response to the increasingly visible street sex trade outside the boundary of the city’s historic East End track, a community organization, Concerned Residents of the West End, or CROWE, emerged as a juggernaut for disaffected citizens. Established in 1980, CROWE assumed a well-organized, well-funded leadership role in coordinating a vigorous crusade, including vigilante action, against the West End’s prostitutes. CROWE’s members—predominantly white, middle-class residents and business owners—launched a crackdown on “sex deviance” with the most exercised throwing eggs, tomatoes, and beer bottles at community meetings and during public altercations. Led by a charismatic gay man, Gordon Price, and sporting a large gay male membership, CROWE strove to set the agenda, define the terms of debate, and influence the levers of legal and political decision making. Over the course of six years, the organization became the envy of antivice lobbyists across Canada. Indeed, CROWE’s ability to frame and tactically manage the conflict was later emu-

lated by similar organizations from Victoria to Edmonton and from Toronto to Halifax. Not unique to the Canadian context, contentious “urban renewals” were engineered in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s in New York, Pittsburgh, Detroit, San Francisco, and Birmingham, among other cities.<sup>6</sup>

Members of CROWE, in concert with Vancouver’s mayor, city councilors, provincial premier and attorney general, federal members of Parliament (MPs), the chief of police, and journalists—from all points along the political spectrum—were in agreement: Street solicitation represented a “blight on urban life.”<sup>7</sup> While lobbying to stiffen antiprostitution laws in the criminal code, Pat Carney—the Conservative MP for Vancouver Centre—referred to the West End as a “sexual zoo.”<sup>8</sup> In formal correspondence through briefs, letters, and articles to different levels of government and the media, CROWE emphasized that street prostitutes in the West End “commandeered its streets,” accelerated “the process of decay,” and made the area “vulnerable to criminal invasion.”<sup>9</sup>

In 1983, Mayor Mike Harcourt channeled the fear of a “takeover by hookers” into support for stepped-up federal criminal sanctions against prostitution.<sup>10</sup> British Columbia’s Attorney General Brian Smith described his abolitionist mandate in the West End as a “war on hookers.”<sup>11</sup> Vancouver’s city politicians, provincial legislators, residents’ groups, business owners, realtors, and police force formed a powerful network with a single-minded mandate to criminalize prostitution and purge prostitutes from the West End. Especially after 1980, when Vancouver was designated the host for the international fair, Expo 1986, CROWE championed the interests of multiple stakeholders feverishly intent on transforming the port town into a “world-class city” through a slate of cleanup initiatives.

In the early 1980s, in spite of the heavy capitalist investment in the neighborhood, the discursive reformulation of the West End as a uniquely “residential” space void of commercial activity became central to CROWE’s coordinated “not in my backyard” (NIMBY) campaign. CROWE’s leader, Gordon Price, disingenuously called for greater police enforcement of laws against prostitution, insisting that “street soliciting is incompatible in a residential area.”<sup>12</sup> Ironically, the West End made manifest key elements of American urban planner Jane Jacobs’s vision for high-density dwelling mixed with diverse, street-level workplaces, commerce, and cultural sites, all enabling the hustle and bustle of intertwined social and economic relationships.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, there were signs aplenty that the West End had begun to cater to a “pink market” of gay consumers, both locals and tourists alike.<sup>14</sup> In spite of these

contradictions, night after night, from corner to corner, members of Shame the Johns (CROWE's militant arm) engaged in aggressive monitoring of on-street sex workers—a form of extrastate spatial surveillance, or “subpolicing,” to quote an ex-member—all the while enacting a systematic governance of self.<sup>15</sup> As the boundaries between social groups hardened, the clashes became especially charged for female and trans prostitutes of color who endured the predominantly male residents' sexist and racist belligerence.

Not content to stop at calls for pumped-up policing, CROWE doggedly lobbied the Vancouver City Council for more concrete intervention. In August 1981, councillors voted unanimously to reconfigure the physical space of the West End to thwart the occupational and geographic mobility of street prostitutes.<sup>16</sup> Faithful to its own blueprint—the West End Traffic Plan—the Engineering Department oversaw the construction of cement traffic diverters, traffic islands, signage for new turn controls, traffic circles (or roundabouts), alleyway lighting, and one cul-de-sac. The automobile (including the taxicab), reimagined as a conduit of vice, became a target of moral and material regulation.

Alongside community-based abolitionists and urban planners, print and broadcast journalists fuelled what John Lowman terms a “discourse of disposal”<sup>17</sup> to justify the purge of throwaways. News articles that dramatized and sensationalized the conflict flooded the *Vancouver Sun* and *Province* with headlines such as “Prostitution Swells in the West End,”<sup>18</sup> “Hookers: Lazy Crooks or Victims?”<sup>19</sup> and “Can New Bylaw Hook the Hookers?”<sup>20</sup> And yet far from the negative image of all prostitutes as unstable and transient, most West End sex workers lived and worked in the neighborhood.

However, on arrest for “communicating” in the late 1970s and early 1980s, some were forbidden by police from returning to their homes. Jamie Lee Hamilton, an Aboriginal transsexual sex worker and part-time entertainer at BJ's Lounge, a gay bar, was arrested for soliciting clients outside of a West End liquor store in the late 1970s. She recalled: “I was charged and put in jail. It was Halloween, and I remember the police were throwing firecrackers at me as they booked me. They made me strip in front of them, they strip-searched me, and they threw me in the male section of the jail.”<sup>21</sup>

Humiliated and violated, once released Hamilton was given an “area restriction,” which forced her to move out of the West End. Clearly only certain expressions of sexual commerce—discreet, indoors, and taxable—were legitimated and accommodated, while others were rendered illegitimate, “out of place.” In effect, some residents were accorded the rightful status to work and

inhabit the West End as “honest citizens,” to quote Mayor Mike Harcourt, while others were cast as a menacing nuisance to be roughed up, belittled, and expunged.<sup>22</sup> While middle-class gay men had achieved a measure of respectability, political and social capital, and residential entitlement in the West End, prostitutes (and their clients) were subjected to evermore intrusive tactics of “spatial governmentality,” to cite Lisa Sanchez, in ways that amounted not only to removal but also to a denial of the prostitute’s legal subjectivity and cultural existence.<sup>23</sup>

### Legal Rulings and Their Pernicious Effects

In April 1982, in response to relentless pressure from CROWE, the Vancouver City Council passed a “street activities” bylaw that imposed fines of \$350 to \$2,000 on those convicted of purchasing, attempting to purchase, selling, or attempting to sell sexual services on Vancouver streets. Dubbed the “antihooker” bylaw in the mainstream press, it was widely applauded as an ingenious, municipal solution to controlling a crime defined under the federal criminal code. The bylaw, much like the one adopted by the City Council of Calgary, Alberta, in 1981, specified “the noise made and uncivil behavior of the persons seeking to sell and purchase sexual services.”<sup>24</sup> Further, it maintained that sexual commerce on streets (and sidewalks) owned by the city of Vancouver “seriously interfered not only with the rights of others to use the streets but also with the rights of persons to peacefully occupy property adjacent to such streets.”<sup>25</sup> In the first six months, a reported \$28,000 in fines was collected from accused persons who pled guilty to prostitution-related charges; by contrast, sex for wages occurred inside the city’s massage parlors with almost no police intervention.<sup>26</sup>

Challenged by sex workers and their lawyers as an unconstitutional breach of freedom of expression and assembly enshrined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the bylaw was upheld by B.C. provincial court judge David Moffett in September 1982. Moffett wrote: “The buying and selling of a prostitute’s services on the streets of Vancouver has been prohibited by an elected body in our democratic society for the sole purpose of remedying a nuisance.” He insisted that placing limits on Charter rights was not only reasonable, but “demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society.”<sup>27</sup> Here Moffett affirmed what Appeal Court judges in Calgary, Alberta, identified several months earlier as, “the need to protect citizens who use the streets from the irritation and embarrassment of being unwilling participants in the

[sex] market.”<sup>28</sup> Under this adversarial formulation, the rights-based claims of sex workers were rendered undemocratic, hence unworthy of defense, if not altogether unintelligible. However, in 1983, the Supreme Court of Canada struck down the bylaw in Calgary (and by extension, the sister bylaw in Vancouver) as an invasion of the exclusive federal power to pass criminal law.

Exasperated by the legal limbo, Vancouver’s CROWE, politicians, and police stepped up the pressure on provincial and federal governments to fill in the gap left by multiparty foot dragging. In response, using the commission as a century-old technology of colonial rule,<sup>29</sup> federal parliamentarians struck the Special Committee on Pornography and Prostitution in early 1984 to research, hear submissions, and make recommendations, with the goal of resolving jurisdictional skirmishes.<sup>30</sup> As the committee traversed the country, Chief Justice of the British Columbia Supreme Court Allan McEachern executed a preemptive, unprecedented strike: In July 1984, in response to an application for a legal injunction from the province’s attorney general, he banned “blatant, aggressive, disorderly prostitutes” from the West End to preserve the “peaceful integrity of the community.”<sup>31</sup> More than a decade before the Prostitution-Free Zone Ordinance was passed in Portland, Oregon, in 1995,<sup>32</sup> McEachern described the situation in the West End as an “urban tragedy,” chastising those who “defiled our city” by “taking over the streets and sidewalks for the purpose of prostitution.”<sup>33</sup> To Stacey, a former sex worker, the injunction decimated her West End community: “When they moved us, they broke us. They totally disenfranchised all of us.”<sup>34</sup>

Mindful of McEachern’s ruling, and in defiance of progressive recommendations made by the Liberal-appointed Special Committee in early 1985, the new right-wing Conservative majority in Parliament passed Bill C-49 of the criminal code in November 1985. Closed to the possibility of prostitution in licensed brothels and other unregulated spaces, Bill C-49 tightened the screws to prohibit “all communicating in a public place for the purpose of prostitution.”<sup>35</sup> No longer was it necessary for soliciting to be “pressing and persistent” (defined in 1978 by the Canadian Supreme Court in *Hutt v. Regina*); the broad new law eliminated the need to prove that the act of solicitation had taken place on more than one occasion. Moreover, under this new legal framework the definition of “public” was enlarged to include the interior of a motor vehicle. The maximum fine set for the offence was \$2,000 and six months in jail. Vehemently opposed by sex workers and allies twenty-five years ago, the draconian anticommunication law remains in place, unchanged, in 2010.

## Sex Workers and Allies Mobilize

At a one-day conference on prostitution sponsored by CROWE at the West End Community Centre in October 1981, politicians, a psychiatrist, police inspectors, and social planners addressed the “prostitution problem.” CROWE organizers said they would consider “serious requests” from prostitutes to address the gathering but only on CROWE’s terms.<sup>36</sup> The Alliance for the Safety of Prostitutes (ASP) attempted to speak. Emboldened by the news of activism catalyzed by COYOTE (Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics) in San Francisco,<sup>37</sup> the Alliance had formed earlier that year to resist police incursions and nightly “Shame the Johns” patrols. At this forum and several others, ASP leaders were not only muzzled but subjected to nasty verbal abuse.

On April 20, 1983, members of ASP marched on Broadway Street to a demonstration in front of Vancouver’s City Hall. Handing out leaflets to passersby, the marchers chanted “Hookers unite, fight for your rights.”<sup>38</sup> In her speech following this first-ever public protest by sex workers and allies in the city, ASP member Michelle stressed the importance of providing a service to men who “find it hard to release their innermost feelings.”<sup>39</sup> The message on Michelle’s sign, “Harcourt is Our Pimp” was a brilliant mockery of the mayor’s hypocritical collection of fines for the state’s coffers on the backs of sex workers engaged in “illegal” trade.

In June 1984, ASP demonstrated again, this time in the city’s West End. Striving to articulate an empowering reverse discourse, sex workers and allies orchestrated public action; community meetings; a monthly newsletter, the *Whorganizer*; and “Bad Trick Sheets” to warn workers across the city of entrapment, beatings, and robberies. Also, in their nuanced brief to the federal government’s Special Committee on Pornography and Prostitution in January 1984, ASP recommended, first and foremost, decriminalization to “reduce the abuse heaped on women who work in the sex trade” and to “allow women autonomy over their working and living conditions.”<sup>40</sup> In addition, they insisted on the reentry of prostitutes into bars and nightclubs (like the Penthouse), together with the right to “collectively apply for a license to operate a bawdy house with a specific capacity, much like seating capacities in restaurants.”<sup>41</sup>

Reflecting on the ups and downs of her thirty-six-year career in the sex industry, Jamie Lee Hamilton calls the West End days “The Golden Age of Prostitution.” In an interview with me, she stressed the camaraderie among West End workers in the early 1980s: “We ate together, we lived together,

took breaks together. We looked after one another. We built a community—an outdoor brothel.”<sup>42</sup> She added that within her close-knit culture, she and co-workers supplied clients with myriad services ranging from sex surrogacy, fantasy, and companionship to emotional support, instruction, and sex therapy. While activists in ASP worked in solidarity for social justice with sex workers like Hamilton, most feminists dissociated themselves from prostitutes or disregarded them altogether. Some were outwardly hostile toward women who, they argued, participated in their own victimization and exploitation by men.<sup>43</sup> Marie Arrington, cofounder of ASP, recounted that her organization was “suddenly ostracized by the feminist community because Sally de Quadros, ASP’s co-founder, was a whore.”<sup>44</sup> Vocal feminists across North America prioritized campaigns and firebombings against the “scourge” of commercial pornography throughout the late 1970s and early 1980s, leaving sex workers without access to the organized support, resources, and skilled leadership of second-wave women’s liberation, including feminists in the legal profession and the labor movement.<sup>45</sup>

While some gay activists grappled with the complexities of street-level sexual commerce, other gay men openly demeaned prostitutes as vulgar, lower-class, and deviant—the very pejoratives hurled at “queers” a mere decade earlier.<sup>46</sup> In fact, for some gay men, political alignment and resource sharing with “normal” residents of the West End may have had the desired effect of weakening the stigma attached to homosexuality. I also suspect that female and transsexual prostitutes’ brazen, hypervisible femininity triggered misogyny in some gay men eager to celebrate a macho, butch masculinity—the San Franciscan “Castro clone” archetype far removed from the stain of effeminacy.<sup>47</sup>

Notwithstanding the shortsighted abandonment that continues to blunt the potency of coalition-based organizing today, a small number of feminist, gay, and labor activists echoed sex workers’ condemnation of a police-led crackdown.<sup>48</sup> In 1983, city alderwoman Libby Davies called for enforcement of existing laws to combat noise, street fighting, and traffic violations, not the introduction of new laws that would inevitably mean more punishment of prostitutes. Interviewed for a feature story in the *Vancouver Sun*, Davies argued: “Throwing prostitutes in jail is not going to help the prostitutes.”<sup>49</sup> In the same story, Joanie Miller of Vancouver Rape Relief is quoted as saying, “We women must have the freedom to set standards for our own sexual encounters [which] includes the right to charge money.”<sup>50</sup> Marie Arrington warned that changes to the criminal code “would give the police more license

to beat up prostitutes.”<sup>51</sup> To protest the increased violence spawned by Judge McEachern’s injunction, ASP members took refuge in a West End Anglican church for four days and nights in July 1984.<sup>52</sup> ASP spokeswoman Sally de Quadros noted that the cathedral was chosen because churches were known to have operated as sanctuaries for oppressed people in the past.<sup>53</sup>

### The Germinated Seeds of a New Homo-Norm

Ultimately, the legally mandated (and unappealed) purge of sex workers from the streets of the West End resulted in the rupture of prostitutes’ relationships and community formation. The banished became exiled from their intricate, intimate emotional networks of kin and care, the bricks and mortar of home, and the economic and social stability of work on the Davie Street strolls.<sup>54</sup> Bullied by CROWE’s vigorous defense of “neighborhood standards” and the “social fabric of the community,” sex workers were reclassified as trespassers with no legal, civic, or moral purchase on the definition of either “standards” or “community,” reminiscent of restrictions that confined prostitutes to the margins of medieval European cities.<sup>55</sup> Intrinsic to CROWE’s narrative of redemption was the possibility of rescuing a city space and, by extension the Canadian nation, from the contaminating grip of deviance.

In ways that parallel Zoë Newman’s critique of the remaking of “Toronto the Good” in the 1970s, Vancouver’s West End clean-up was about consolidating bourgeois whiteness through coercive boundary control and the assertion of respectability.<sup>56</sup> That white, upwardly mobile gay men wrestled control from “uppity hookers” is a distinct variation on stories about commodified relations of space fundamental to what Henri Lefebvre terms the “logic of capital accumulation.”<sup>57</sup> By the mid-1980s, the seeds of a new cultural phenomenon—white, middle-class, homonormative community formation—had been planted and taken root.<sup>58</sup> In the West End, unlike many other city districts in the West, a new gay moralism was rooted less in the defense of heterosexual family values or a “healthy, wholesome suburb”<sup>59</sup> than in an emergent, privatizing, and gay-inflected rhetoric of domesticity, decency, and consumption. Conventional notions of intimacy supplanted the care work and sex work that previously had defined this space.

### The Age-Old Trade Perpetually Imperiled

Three decades ago, Vancouver’s West End was an imagined community built on gendered, class-bound, and racialized inclusions and exclusions. To adapt

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the insight of Dorothy E. Smith, a line of fault or disjuncture emerged between the everyday lives of street-level sex workers and the extralocal, institutional relations and discourses of ruling that produced “hookers on Davie Street” as heinous public trash.<sup>60</sup> Forged through violent political struggle and legal remakings in the early 1980s, the West End became a site of collision. The mass eviction of on-street prostitutes from a city space initially founded on the brutal dispossession of Musqueam, Burrard, and Squamish First Nations struck a doubly bitter, neocolonial blow to Aboriginal women in the industry, including Jamie Lee, Raigen, Michelle, and Gina. For young gay hustlers, evacuation from the West End’s “gay utopia” signaled a similarly painful irony.

Central to the “victory” celebrated by CROWE and its antihooker lobby was an intricate weave of commonsense assumptions about prostitution and property. As Nicholas Blomley puts it, the enactment of a right to property—both private and public—“erases and effaces in ways that are both symbolic and ineluctably corporeal.”<sup>61</sup> Indeed, West End sex workers became construed as loose impediments to be removed “in order to honor,” said Chief Justice McEachern, the “rights of others to freely use the streets,”<sup>62</sup> which included buying and selling property (and goods) unencumbered by what CROWE warned were the “depressed values” of a “de facto red light district.”<sup>63</sup> In the city’s popular, racist imaginary, the historic Chinatown stroll on the east side—the red light district—remained the “logical” and “natural” repository of sexual iniquity and racial otherness. Sex workers of color, in particular, had long been associated with, and consigned to, segregated zones of the city commonly equated with disorder, crime, filth, and degeneracy.<sup>64</sup>

Through real and symbolic processes of spatial differentiation and “cleansing,”<sup>65</sup> street-level prostitutes in the West End were deemed anathema to what David Ley described in 1980 as Vancouver’s postindustrial, neoliberal “accent on individual gratification, physical health, pleasant exercise, and quality of life.”<sup>66</sup> Rather, white bourgeois subjects, led by respect-hungry gay men, grabbed the reigns of a “revanchist” or “revenging” neighborhood under siege.<sup>67</sup> Regardless of the fact that 80 percent of West End residents rented (rather than owned) their homes, CROWE and elite allies engineered an emotionally charged campaign for the right of “ordinary citizens” to “safe and secure” residential occupancy and belonging.

In *Imperial Leather*, Anne McClintock argues that “abject peoples are those whom industrial imperialism rejects but cannot do without . . . the abject returns to haunt modernity as its constitutive, inner repudiation: the rejected

from which one does not part.”<sup>68</sup> In Vancouver from 1975 to 1984, sexual civility was contingent on the repeated avowal of sex workers’ uncivil, carnal disobedience and the repeated disavowal of sex workers’ substantive citizenship. The manifold penalties meted out to female sex workers sounded a cautionary note to all women who pushed against the idealized, patriarchal norm of heterosexual marriage, monogamy, and motherhood. In addition, the involvement of young men and transsexuals in the West End ramped up what I term the “deviance quotient” in the eyes of antivice crusaders. The whore stigma appeared remarkably elastic: It was stretched to snare and punish all “deviants”—male, female, trans, and queer, both white and nonwhite—who dared to make claims on illicit street-based commerce. Discredited and dehumanized, attributed an “undesired differentness,” to quote Erving Goffman, streetwalkers were re-marked as moral and physical contagion.<sup>69</sup> To extend the wisdom of Judith Butler, CROWE and allies shortsightedly repudiated the vulnerability of “unfamiliar” Others in their midst on the cusp of devastating loss wrought in the neighborhood (and beyond) by HIV/AIDS from the mid-1980s forward.<sup>70</sup>

After the provincial Supreme Court’s cavalier injunction of 1984 and the punitive stance taken toward solicitation in the federal Canadian criminal code in 1985, West End sex workers were forcibly relocated to an isolated, poorly lit industrial zone in Vancouver’s East End, where they began to go “missing” in ever greater numbers.<sup>71</sup> The few still alive recall the horrible aftershocks, including the barriers to reestablishing safety plans—exchanging stories of bad dates, copying down license plate numbers, taking “coffee and smoke breaks” together at cafes, and sharing affordable rental apartments—that had once been fundamental, mutually beneficial elements of life in the West End.

### Mass Murder Foreshadowed

In short, the explosive urban contest in the West End—its interventions and displacements—endangered the lives of outdoor sex workers and haunts the industry today. The series of legal rulings described above, which formalized withdrawal of legal protections for sex workers, worked to sanction extralegal forms of discipline and spaces for violence.<sup>72</sup> Twenty-five years later, the history of a vibrant, mixed community of sex workers who lived, loved, labored, played, and cared for one another in the West End has been eradicated from popular memory and from the enclave’s physical spaces (save the concrete remnants of the traffic plan). A now sanitized, gentrifying landscape is imbued with the potent ideology of forgetting.<sup>73</sup> What remains is the chilling

fact that more than sixty-five survival sex workers from the city's downtown Eastside, two-thirds Aboriginal, have been murdered since 1978.<sup>74</sup> The carnage, which would have constituted a national emergency were the slaughtered white, upper-crust university students, occasioned much public hand-wringing, particularly during and after the ten-month trial of convicted serial killer, Robert (Willie) Pickton in 2002, but little comfort or justice for sex workers, their families, or supporters.<sup>75</sup>

Current debate rages on in the federal Canadian House of Commons about the efficacy of prostitution-related laws in the criminal code. In August 2007, lawyers for the Downtown Eastside Sex Workers United Against Violence, a group of mostly Aboriginal women, filed a statement of claim with the B.C. Supreme Court alleging that Canada's prostitution laws put them at grave risk of injury, kidnapping, and death.<sup>76</sup> A constitutional challenge underway in both British Columbia and the province of Ontario explicates how the threat of violence is inextricable from and symptomatic of the illegality and stigma attached to the sex trade. Harm reduction and sustainable support services for people working in the sex industry have been ignored, underfunded, or flagrantly slashed in neoliberal fashion. For four decades, activist sex workers have identified prostitution as a legitimate work relation and prostitutes as workers deserving of occupational control and the same rights, respect, and protections extended to other citizens in Canada and beyond.<sup>77</sup>

In 2007, the B.C. Coalition of Experiential Communities began organizing a cooperative akin to cooperatives of farmers, bakers, and artisans a century ago, with the intention of establishing above-ground brothels to service locals and visitors in open defiance of nineteenth-century bawdy house laws.<sup>78</sup> Coalition member Susan Davis explained that her group sought an exemption similar to the one granted to Insite, the safe injection site for heroin use in Vancouver. However, in early 2008, the Canadian federal Conservative government flatly rejected all recommendations to decriminalize prostitution, stating, "We are not in the business of legalizing brothels, and we have no intention of changing any of the laws relating to prostitution in this country."<sup>79</sup> In the end, there is much to learn from our not so distant past about mistakes made, vulnerabilities exploited, the failures of progressive social movements, the intransigence of abolitionist ideology, and the fighting spirit of unrepentant sex worker activists and allies, past and present.

## Notes

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1. See Salmi, 2000: 17.
2. See Hubbard, 1999: 4.
3. See Ross, 2009: 79–80.
4. For a brave portrait of sex workers in the West End, see the documentary film *Hookers on Davie* by Holly Dale and Janis Cole, for Spectrum Films.
5. See Raymond, 1994: xxiv, 30–31. Interview with Jamie Lee Hamilton.
6. See Freeman, 2006; Thomas, 1997; Hartman, 2002; Crowley, 2005; and Hubbard, 1999.
7. "To Book a Hooker," 1983: B1.
8. Cited in Menyas, 1982.
9. CROWE, "A Submission to the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs from the Concerned Residents of the West End." Mayoral Fonds, 66-G-1, File 2 (March 8, 1982): 3.
10. Cited in Barrett, 1983; and "Harcourt Warns MPs on Hookers," 1983.
11. Cited in Herald Staff, 1983; and Mackie, 1984.
12. Cited in Bohn, 1982.
13. See Jacobs, 1961: 154–164.
14. Fairclough, 1985.
15. Foucault, 1991; interview with Gerry Stafford.
16. See City Manager's Reports, "Traffic Plan." City Council Minutes, 30 October. Microform, Series 31, September–November, 1981.
17. See Lowman, 2000: 1003–1004.
18. See Goad, 1983.
19. Bohn, 1983.
20. McMartin, 1984.
21. Susan Stryker writes that transgender women in San Francisco's Tenderloin were similarly vulnerable to sexual assault, rape, and murder when arrested and thrown into the men's jail. See Stryker, 2008: 67.
22. "Fast Action Urged on Hooker Problem," 1982: A10.
23. Sanchez, 2004: 864–865.

24. Moffett, 1982.
25. Ibid.
26. "Hooker Ruling Appealed," 1982.
27. Moffett, 1982, 9.
28. "Supreme Court Ruling," 1983.
29. Stoler, 2002: 87–89.
30. Special Committee on Pornography and Prostitution, 1985.
31. McEachern, 1985: 110.
32. Sanchez, 2004: 864.
33. Ibid.; McEachern, 1985: 110; and Thompson, 1984.
34. Interview with Stacey.
35. See Brock, 1998: 151–153.
36. "Hookers Invited to Speak," 1981.
37. See Jenness, 1990.
38. "Hookers Parade over Proposals to Change Laws," 1983.
39. Ibid.
40. Alliance for the Safety of Prostitutes (ASP). "Prostitution." Submitted to the "Fraser Commission," January 1984. Service and Office Retail Workers Union of Canada Papers, Legal 1984, Box 1, File 13, 20.
41. Ibid., 20.
42. Interview with Jamie Lee Hamilton.
43. *Not a Love Story: A Film about Pornography*, 1981.
44. Arrington, 1987: 105.
45. See Barry, 1979; and Dworkin, 1981.
46. Kinsman, 1996.
47. Serano, 2007: 14.
48. See Gilmore, 2009.
49. Boei, 1983.
50. Ibid.
51. Ibid.
52. Cox and Schaefer, 1984
53. Ibid.
54. Thompson, 1984; and Ousten, 1984.
55. Roberts, 1992.
56. Newman, 2002: 128.
57. Lefebvre, 1991: 56–57.
58. Warner, 1999.
59. Hubbard, 1999: 218.
60. Smith, 1987: 49.
61. Blomley, 2004: xxi.

62. McEachern, 1985: 110.
63. CROWE, "NDP Split on Issue of Street Soliciting," Mayoral Fonds, 66-G-1, File 1. (December 8, 1982a): 3.
64. See Razack, 2002a: 144.
65. Hubbard, 1999: 163.
66. Ley, 1980: 243.
67. Smith, 1998: 8–14. In 1984, Terry Glavin reported that CROWE admitted to having reached faulty, unsubstantiated conclusions blaming prostitutes for a \$14-million decline in West End property values. See Glavin, 1984.
68. McClintock, 1995: 72.
69. Goffman, 1963. In 2004, "the steps" in front of the of the Second Cup Café in Toronto's gay village were bricked in by the store's managers to rid the space of "unwanted degenerates"—the homeless, drug dealers, street youth, and sex workers. See Alison Burgess, 2008.
70. See Butler, 2004: 38–42.
71. Jiwani and Young, 2006.
72. Sanchez, 1997: 575.
73. Pratt, 2005.
74. Pivot Legal Society, 2004, 2006; and Amnesty International, 2004.
75. De Vries, 2003; and Culbert, Hall, and Neal, 2007.
76. Lev, 2007.
77. See Benoit and Millar, 2001; Gall, 2006; *Tales of the Night Fairies*, 2002; and Kempadoo, Sanghera, and Pattanaik, 2005.
78. Levitz, 2007.
79. Cited in Greenaway, 2008.