Anti-Human Trafficking Rural Symposium

March 19, 2024

Background and Objectives

Building off from previous years of engagement and research in the anti-human trafficking space, ORCC is seeking to continue momentum and broaden our scope to unpack obstacles to anti-human trafficking initiatives that are faced in rural settings. We acknowledge front-line organizations are working at their max capacity, and we are right there with you. At the same time, we recognize that being caught in a cycle of crisis management is unsustainable for front-line workers and for the communities we serve. This was confirmed through research ORCC conducted with Eastern Ontario service providers in 2022, which found that:

- Community organizations are dedicating more and more resources to human trafficking;
- 75% of respondents said their organizations don't have enough resources to adequately address human trafficking cases; and,
- Over 70% of respondent said there is a lack of community services to provide wrap-around care and more than 50% noted the challenge they faced about their organization's limited capacity to intervene adequately.

(ORCC, 2022)

We believe it's time to consider broader changes and address the roots of inequalities and injustice that are key contributors to sexual violence. As a result, we are dedicated to holding space to redirect the current focus on crisis responses at the individual level and to dig deep into the systemic roots of violence. We'll start this work by connecting violence to structures and systems of oppression.

Setting the Context

Over the past 20 years, human trafficking has been receiving increased attention from the public, media and politicians; and as a result of increased awareness and advocacy, perceptions, definitions and anti-trafficking efforts have shifted over time. Currently, in the National and Ontario's human trafficking strategy there is a strong emphasis on awareness campaigns, pilot projects for at-risk youth (with an emphasis on youth living in, or leaving care), data collection and research and supporting law enforcement (Government of

Canada, 2019 & Government of Ontario, 2020). These identified priorities then inform funding parameters and response models. While it remains critical to continue supporting individuals who have experienced trafficking, these areas of focus disregard any acknowledgement that systemic and structural forces are the root cause of this violence. As Nonomura (2020) notes, "we are less prepared to acknowledge the ways that our own racially and culturally marginalizing policies have shaped, and are currently shaping, this violence and its targets in the first place (p. 8)."

This shift from a structural gaze to a focus on the individual has been corroborated by Durisin & van der Meulen (2020) in their analysis of two national House of Commons standing committees on trafficking in 2006 and 2018. They find that, "the cause of trafficking shifts from being structural and grounded in material conditions (i.e., poverty) to emotional and psychological elements such as the need to be loved or their desire to please their male partners" (Durisin & van der Meulen, 2020, p.8).

This departure from a structural gaze and emphasis instead on the individual is reflected across mainstream approaches to human trafficking. For example, common definitions of human trafficking are closely connected to the Act, Means, Purpose model and the Canadian Criminal Code's definition of human trafficking, both of which centre around individual experiences. While these can be a helpful place to start, we echo Nonomura's statement about critically reflecting on our understanding and approaches to human trafficking:

> *"it is prudent to think beyond the "official" definitions proscribed by the state (or similarly interested transnational bodies), and to inquire about how human trafficking interconnects with other systems of violence within Canada—and perhaps with the operation of the state itself. This critical perspective is especially important where issues of sexism, racism, and colonialism are concerned, given the ways in which laws tend to reflect and reinforce the interests of dominant classes within society. It is no coincidence that popular portrayals of human trafficking—and the laws themselves—make it easier to imagine individual pimps or criminal organizations as the culprits of human trafficking than it is to think of governmental or economic systems in these terms" (Nonomura, 2020, p.6).*

We believe that disregarding systemic inequalities contributes to an unsustainable cycle of crisis management rather than addressing the root causes of the violence. To provide

further context, some key structures and systems of violence are unpacked in the following section.

Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism is an ideology that is dominant in today's society and is responsible for profound cuts to social service funding (welfare state retrenchment) as well as individualized approaches to services. Over the past 40 years, "governments in Canada and in other Western democracies have increasingly adopted neoliberal approaches to the welfare state…This neoliberal approach encourages less state involvement and reduced public spending in order to 'put an end to a perceived culture of welfare dependence and to reinvigorate the nation by giving free rein to individuals' own entrepreneurial proclivities'" (Kendall, 2003, p.6 in Collier, 2008, p. 19). In other words, neoliberalism perpetuates the belief that violence only exists between individuals, that it's the responsibility of individuals ensure their own safety and well-being, and solutions are typically centered around increased access to finances. Examples of common neoliberal ideology in this space includes discourse around prevention that relies solely on how to spot a trafficker and avoiding 'high-risk' behaviours or lifestyles; while solutions often centre around increasing access to financial and/or employment supports.

Another outcome of neoliberal governance is a collective shift from broader systemic advocacy efforts to a focus on supports and services that respond to violence in order to remain eligible for funding (Brodie, 2008). This focus on the individual leaves very little capacity and resources to consider systemic and structural roots of violence, and even less so when it comes to discussions around how to disrupt power imbalances that are so deeply embedded in society.

Colonialism

Settler colonialism is a structure (not an event in the past) that today's society, systems and ways of thinking have been built around (Wolfe, 2006). It has historical and ongoing implications and is the foundation in which countless other layers of oppression (i.e., patriarchy, sexism, classism etc.) have been built upon in Canada.

Not only does settler colonialism strive to "disappear the Indigenous peoples" that inhabit the place they have set to claim (Arvin et al., 2013, p.12), but there has always been a

gendered element to colonial violence that disproportionately and deliberately harms Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ individuals (Hunt, 2015). Examples of this gendered violence include, but isn't limited to alarming rates of violence, homicide, police violence, child removal, incarceration, sexual exploitation and trafficking experienced by these populations (Trocmé et al., 2004; Palmater, 2016; Roudometkina & Wakeford, 2018).

Despite numerous inquiries, statistics and ongoing advocacy by Indigenous communities, this violence continues to be met with apathetic responses by the government, media, justice system, and the general population; reiterating time and time again how these systems have been designed to dehumanize and harm Indigenous populations.

Monitoring and controlling the movements of Indigenous people has been normalized through historical and ongoing political, social and economic initiatives that together "create the ideal foundation for Indigenous human trafficking, a natural extension of the occupation and exploitation of Indigenous lands and peoples upon which Canada was built" (S. Roxburgh, unrecorded presentation, Feb 2, 2023). Importantly, as Robyn Bourgeois (2015) points out, "by its own legal and conceptual definitions of human trafficking, the Canadian state has been and continues to be directly complicit in the human trafficking of indigenous women and girls" (p. 1433).

Heteropatriarchy

Heteropatriarchy refers to social systems where "heterosexuality and patriarchy are perceived as normal and natural, and which other configurations are perceived as abnormal, aberrant and abhorrent" (Arvin et al., 2013, p. 13). While patriarchy has been defined in numerous ways, Hunnicutt's (2009) definition and context aligns well with this project's approach:

> *Broadly, patriarchy "means social arrangements that privilege males, where men as a group dominate women as a group, both structurally and ideologically—hierarchical arrangements that manifest in varieties across history and social space. There are patriarchal systems at the macro level (bureaucracies, government, law, market, religion), and there are patriarchal relations at the micro level (interactions, families, organizations, patterned behavior between intimates)." (p. 557)*

Active settler colonies like Canada are "balanced upon notions of white supremacy and heteropatriarchy" (Arvin et al., 2013, p. 9). Smith (2006) expands further, noting that "in order to colonize peoples whose societies are not based on social hierarchy, colonizers must first naturalize hierarchy through instituting patriarchy" (p. 72). While this situates historical roots of heteropatriarchy in Canada, it's important to recognize that it evolves to remain invisible and sustainable in society (Enloe, 2014). Not only do we "need to account for variation across time and space," we also need to acknowledge that heteropatriarchy is "so pervasive [that] it is hard to 'see' unless the lens is calibrated to gauge it" (Hunnicutt, 2009, p. 559; 556). This can often lead to mixed narratives and understanding about heteropatriarchy's role in perpetuating violence. This question requires a deep theoretical analysis, however for the purpose of this project we see heteropatriarchy as an ever-evolving structure that is "sustained and reinforced" by other forms of oppression and that normalizes hierarchy and domination (Hunnicutt, 2009 p.567). This structure affects *all* genders (including men and those beyond the gender binary) and uses violence as a method to exert power and control over others (Hill Collins, 2017).

White Supremacy & Racism

A starting point for discussions of white supremacy need to be centered around the concept of race "as a social construct that organizes social interaction" (Kulkarni et al., 2022, p.1189). This social organizing is then influenced by white supremacy which "assigns 'human value and worth against a hierarchy that privileges and rewards proximity to Whiteness at the top and disadvantages and punishes distance from Whiteness at the bottom'" (Whitaker et al. 2021 in Kulkarni et al., 2022, p.1190). Closely tied with structural racism, these two forms of oppression work together to normalize "an array of dynamics-

historical, cultural, institutional and interpersonal - that routinely advantage whites while producing cumulative and chronic adverse outcomes for people of color. It is a system of hierarchy and inequity, primarily characterized by white supremacy – the preferential treatment, privilege and power for white people at the expense of… other racially oppressed people" (Lawrence & Keleher, 2004, p.1 in Kulkarni et al., 2022, p.1189).

As noted by Nonomura (2020), "racism and colonialism are recurring factors in sexual exploitation of women in Canada, including what is referred to as 'human trafficking'" (p. 4). We recognize that racism operates differently across racialized groups and individuals. This section is not intended to homogenize or oversimplify these experiences, but highlight how systemic racism and white supremacy are mechanisms in which racialized folks are de-valued and deliberately and disproportionately targeted for acts of violence (MacDougall et al., 2022; Nelson-Butler, 2015; de Finney, 2017; Nonomura, 2020).

As we discuss in our 2023 anti-human trafficking report, beyond "stereotypes or victim blaming attitudes, cultural oppression [and racism] exacerbates the risk for human trafficking through the denial of resource access. These resources include but are not limited to safe housing, a livable wage, education, safe childcare, and protection under the law" (Bryant-Davis & Tummala-Narra, 2017, p. 157). These barriers to resources are also intensified at the intersection of neoliberalism and racism; where the removal and underfunding of universal state supports disproportionately impact racialized communities who have less political, social, and economic power as individuals in a society dominated by white supremacy.

Power & Oppression

It is widely accepted that "oppression works at three interacting levels within our society-structural, cultural and personal" (Centre for Innovation in Campus Mental Health, n.d., p.4). Building on this concept, Adkison-Stevens & Timmons (2018) specifies that sexual violence is "based in power differences, not only at an individual level but also structurally in systems of power, also known as oppression" (p. 2).

There are countless forms of oppression that interact and influence individual's experiences of violence, to the extent that "[i]t is impossible to name every discrimination, identity and structure" (MacDougall et al., 2022, p.34). Importantly, "[m]ultiple forms of

oppression are simultaneous and cannot be separated from another. Therefore, ending gender-based violence requires dismantling racism and all structural oppression" (MacDougall et al., 2022, p. 11). This report is meant to be a starting point to encourage critical thinking about oppressive structures and systems, as well as our responses and interactions with them.

We also want to reiterate a message from ORCC's report on Trauma-Informed and Anti-Oppressive Practice that highlights how:

> *"recently, power is rarely mentioned and in place, systems of oppression such as colonialism, racism, or heteronormativity are used instead of direct discussions of power. While these are important to discuss, too often the links between power, systems of oppression, and sexual violence are not made and it is left unclear as to how these ideas operate together. Linder offers a concise example of how to clearly link these concepts, noting that systems of oppression 'allow and encourage members of dominant groups' greater access to resources (2018, p.7). In other words, systems of oppression like colonialism, racism and heteronormativity, ensure that power remains concentrated among dominant groups" (ORCC, 2023, p. 5).*

Expanding on this point further, the report goes on to say:

> *"Though most social service industries are currently focused on recognizing minoritized groups and the oppression they experience, including diversity, equity, inclusion initiatives and discussions about intersectionality, it is important to keep dominant groups within our gaze and to reflect their privilege in the way we frame violence against minoritized people.*
>
> *Too often, we allow perpetrators, the systems of oppression they enact, and the power imbalances they benefit from to go unnoticed. In other words, we let power slip from our view. As a result of this omission, we place a spotlight on people who are targeted, allowing perpetrators and power to fall into shadow" (ORCC, 2023, p. 7).*

ORCC recognizes that considering the intersecting layers of both power and oppression at all three interacting levels within society can be overwhelming. This is not easy work,

particularly while working within a cycle of crisis management. However, we believe this approach is critical to make the lasting change that our communities need and deserve.

Rural Considerations

From our engagements with rural service providers, we heard how these structural layers of oppression trickle down into rural realities of human trafficking.

Heteropatriarchy normalizes dominance within relationships. At the individual level, this can be seen through intergenerational violence, trauma and family violence. Because this dominance is so deeply engrained as a normal and acceptable reality, relationships with traffickers are not seen as violence. Only certain forms of human trafficking (i.e., the form of violence often depicted in media such as smuggling, or kidnapping), that are much less prevalent, are recognized. As a result, the general public, and many people who experience trafficking aren't aware of the realities of human trafficking, which contributes to a widespread belief that "it doesn't happen here," or that it's a "city issue."

Neoliberalism has made the non-profit sector responsible for keeping communities safe, but without adequate resources to engage in meaningful prevention work or provide the care and services community members need and deserve. This results in a patchwork of services that have narrow eligibility criteria, short-term timelines and long wait-times to low-barrier services. While service providers do the best with the resources they have, working within this neoliberal framework can result in the services contributing to unsafe spaces for community members. For example, one service provider expressed concern over the common practice in rural settings to use hotel rooms as a short-term housing solution: "so if your options are stay with the abuser you know or go into a hotel that you know exposes to further danger, it makes sense to stay." An added layer of fewer services in rural areas increases the risk of individuals choosing not to seek supports, as there are little to no anonymous options. Additionally, in rural settings, the limited resources available are often channeled into policing responses to violence, which is not always a safe option for community members. We heard at the symposium that this can be a wedge between service providers and clients with the question of "do I (as a service provider) now burn this relationship to call the police?" coming up frequently in their work.

Reflecting on current discharge practices and the lack of ongoing supports available, one participant notes “they can’t just be sent back to where they come from as they are at huge risk of being taken back into The Game.” Building on the discussion around the lack of ongoing supports, another participant stressed the importance of recognizing “the culture that comes with The Game. There is a connection, a support system, needs being met… it is very hard to leave that for the unknown.” In other words, because of welfare state retrenchment, the lack of public supports available are pushing individuals into unsafe situations in order to have their basic needs met.

As a result of classism, lack of reliable access to transportation and housing precarity are major factors that perpetrators leverage to target individuals for trafficking. As one participant noted, “youth are choosing to live in these unsafe spaces versus being homeless.” Lack of access to services in rural areas has direct ties to neoliberal ideologies and classism. The neoliberal outcome of the overreliance on privatized services means that most accessible supports are not financially feasible for many individuals and the inadequate resourcing of public services can contribute to community members feeling unsafe. All of these rural realities that have been highlighted point to the critical need to advocate for greater investment into public supports so they are more widely available, and so there are more options available to community members.

These various barriers are exacerbated as the area becomes more rural and individuals and services become more isolated. As noted by one participant, “there is an important difference between small towns versus rural- at least access to services exist in towns, but not in rural areas.”

While the social service sector is facing countless obstacles, it’s also important to recognize that a strength of rural areas is the sense of community among service providers, who build strong collaborative relationships to foster strong wrap-around support networks to the best of their ability. Adopting an anti-oppressive approach and working collectively to make lasting change are important steps forward to address these injustices.

Intervention Points

Being Anti-Oppressive

In recent years, ORCC has been working to deepen our knowledge and practice of anti-oppressive approaches. As noted in the Madness and Oppression Guide (2015), "[o]ppression is the systemic and institutional abuse of power by one group at the expense of others and the use of force to maintain this dynamic. An oppressive system is built around the ideology of superiority of some groups and inferiority of others" (p.6). Broadly, we consider anti-oppression to be about recognizing and challenging structures of domination and oppression that are deeply engrained in our sector and society. The Foundations of Advocacy Training Manual expands on this, noting that:

> *"Anti-oppression refers to all the ways an individual, community, institution or system actively prevents, challenges and ends oppression against other people. It means taking a stand against and addressing the ways that oppressed peoples are prevented access to crucial resources let alone choices. It means addressing violence, abuse of power, and the ways people are manipulated, limited, controlled, silenced, incarcerated and erased. It is widely understood that oppression in all its forms can cause mental, emotional, physical and spiritual trauma to people, communities and ecologies" (Tremblay et al., 2014 in Resource Sharing Project & National Sexual Violence Resource Center, 2020, pp. 111-112).*

Ultimately, we see anti-oppressive approaches as the foundation for contributing to broader systemic change and the mechanism in which our sector can work towards equalizing power imbalances in society. As noted in ORCC's (2023) report on Anti-Oppressive and Trauma-Informed approaches, "it is important to remind ourselves that trauma informed and anti oppressive work requires us to understand and confront power, domination, and oppression, even when this is complexly entangled in our own privilege and positionality" (p.4). This sentiment was echoed by one participant who shared that they need to constantly remind themselves of "what I'm willing to let go of/give up in my own power and privilege to make forward motion – I need to recognize when I am part of "the they" [those with power] in spaces where I have power."

Understanding our own power and privilege, while educating ourselves around anti-oppressive approaches can be a valuable first step towards dismantling layers of oppression. From discussions at the symposium, participants frequently cited the power of education. Specific examples discussed were revised curriculum in schools and training for other front-line workers such as those working in education, justice, and healthcare systems. However, we echo the caution noted in the Roadmap for the National Action Plan on Violence Against Women and Gender-Based Violence: "education without accompanying anti-oppression work, positive and identifiable outcomes, and a commitment to meaningful accountability is inherently limited and will have only limited success in achieving the desired goals. Education and training can be bottomless pits without results-based attention to institutional change" (Dale et al., 2021). In other words, education needs to be grounded in anti-oppressive approaches in order to make the broader systemic changes our communities need.

Areas of Focus

Taking into consideration of what it means to be anti-oppressive, last year four focus areas were identified as a critical starting point for intervention: housing, guaranteed basic income, drug decriminalization and access to physical and mental health supports. At this year's Rural Symposium, participants narrowed this focus down to housing, guaranteed basic income and access to physical and mental health supports-with a particular emphasis on providing support to families.

Housing

Brief Context

According to Ontario's second action plan under the national housing strategy, the following are major housing challenges:

- affordability challenges, as house prices and rents have risen much faster than household incomes, creating a widening affordability gap
- insufficient supply, as substantial new rental construction is needed to keep up with population growth and demand
- significant demand for supportive housing/support services, such as counselling and life skills training, that some people need to maintain their housing

- aging social and affordable housing stock, as a large proportion of the most affordable housing, especially rental and government-subsidized housing, is 40 years old or more and at risk of loss due to poor condition and expiring obligations to provide subsidized housing

In addition, Ontario has a very high level of housing need (as measured through the CMHC indicator of Core Housing Need) (Government of Ontario, 2023).

Discussion

There was consensus across the group that housing needs to be a priority in conversations about human trafficking. There was also general agreement that wrap-around supports need to be part of the housing advocacy strategy (i.e., Housing First Model). Participants shared how homelessness is hidden in rural settings, which can contribute to a "Not In My Backyard" mentality and accompanying barriers when it comes to putting in tangible supports for precariously housed folks. A scenario specific to rural realities is also sending homeless individuals (particularly youth) to the city so they can access services there. One participant shared that there is research demonstrating that within 24 hours of moving into a shelter, youth are approached for paid sex work. Resources for bolstering housing within rural areas is key so these individuals are not disconnected from their support networks and communities.

As a concrete example of what we can do, one participant noted that the National Housing Alliance Conference is taking place in Ottawa this year (October 2024), which could be a strategic event to bring forward rural concerns and make connections to human trafficking and the housing crisis clear.

Guaranteed Basic Income (GBI)

Brief Context

Unconditional basic income is a cash transfer of a liveable basic income (according to the region it's implemented in) and does not impact access to other services or benefits that people access according to their particular needs. According to the Homeless Hub, studies have indicated that "provinces are not in an ideal position to successfully implement an affordable and effective GBI. However, GBI implemented by the federal government…

could be both effective and affordable" (Simpson et al., 2022). Despite findings from this study, it's important to note the provincial pilot programs had promising outcomes and positive impacts for the people who participated.

Discussion

While we did not have time to discuss this specific topic, it was agreed upon to be a priority area, with one participant noting that "income security is a preventative tool in human trafficking," and another participant offering to share resources with the group that can kickstart conversations and build knowledge around this priority area.

Access to Mental/Physical Health Supports

Brief Context

The Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) indicates that people "living in rural and small towns have a lower life expectancy than the average Canadian" (CHMA, 2009). CMHA also notes that an "analysis of the need for services and supports in rural and northern Ontario revealed that compared to urban areas, individuals living in northern and rural areas are in greater need of psychotherapy or counselling…[In addition], in Ontario, the basket of services in rural and northern communities is less comprehensive, available and accessible" (CMHA, 2009).

Discussion

Participants provided greater context for the barriers they see in rural regions to accessing mental and physical health supports. They noted that:

- Clients are often waiting 2 years for a psychological assessment, or access to mental health care and/or doctors who support individuals who have experienced human trafficking.
- Funding restrictions and time limitations to access programs and services don't "acknowledge the long-term healing required for human trafficking survivors"
- "Folks are often so isolated that they're actually inviting their abusers into their 'safe locations'"
- Many conversations around improving family supports also falls under this focus area. For example, addressing intergenerational trauma and mental health were identified as key initiatives that have the potential to reduce violence.

Access to mental and physical health supports is a particular area that rural communities have gotten 'creative' with addressing. One example of this is adopting the Stepped Care Model in their programming. This model started from a place of assessing what the available services are and then working collectively to determine how best to support their community (applying a collectivist vs. competitive approach to their work).

Drug Decriminalization

Although drug decriminalization was not identified as a focus area during this year's symposium, it is still an issue that does affect rural communities. As noted by one participant, "drug use is prevalent in rural communities and there is often a strong connection to one individual who operates in a variety of spheres [to the point that] the dealer is seen as a 'saviour.'" Another participant noted that some individuals "get in too deep" and fear access to supports that may be connected to police, which builds an even deeper reliance on the abuser. This is a significant concern in rural areas, so we have decided to keep the context that was provided for participants in this report, but note that we did not have a broader discussion about this during our initial time together.

Brief Context

As noted by the Canadian Psychological Association (CPA):

> *"[a] criminal justice approach to substance use has contributed to the broader overdose crisis and has resulted in a myriad of other harms including social harms, victimization, financial costs to society, physical harms to people using substances, delays in seeking (mental) healthcare, delays in calling 9-1-1 in an overdose emergency due to fears of being arrested and increased stigma. These harms are exacerbated amongst people who experience structural inequities and racism" (p.5).*

Overcoming Barriers

Participants were asked "what are the biggest barriers to making progress/change towards improving these focus areas?" Some of their responses included:

- The different bylaws across towns and counties, so service providers face extra layers of siloing between towns.
- Working together efficiently.
- Lack of general public's understanding of how many social issues are connected to the housing crisis, financial precarity and inadequate access to mental and physical health supports.
- Lack of adequate funding to carry out wide-sweeping changes.

Each of these identified barriers offer a tangible starting point to have strategic discussions and coordinate efforts to overcome these obstacles.

Next Steps

Further Discussion Questions for Each Focus Area

- Can you describe the current status of each focus area in the rural context? (i.e., In terms of accessibility, quality and variety). Are there gaps specific to rural settings that should be highlighted?
- If you could identify a priority to address within each focus area, what would it be and why?
- What are next steps that could be taken to address the barriers identified together?
- Do you see advocacy for this issue (i.e., housing, GBI, access to physical/mental health supports) being paired and/or embedded into other areas of your work? In other words, are there ways that are within reach that you could participate in these initiatives?
- Are there promising practices in each focus area that you are aware of?
- What are short-term, mid-term and long-term goals we can set for each of these focus areas?

Seeking to disrupt systems and mainstream approaches to human trafficking are daunting tasks to undertake. As one participant shared, "there is a fear of committing to something that is so enormous to tackle." Another participant expressed "The "theys" [people in power] want you to be daunted and feel overwhelmed so you give up." We know this is partially by design. Systems have been built to seem natural and normalized, and makes it difficult to imagine a world without these oppressive structures in place. However, the group was also reminded by another participant that "there is power in 'micro-shifts'

(versus macro level 'hopelessness') - you need to be okay with your contribution, but you DO have to contribute." Our sector is at a turning point where we must consider bigger-picture changes to break us out of an unsustainable cycle of crisis management.

Unpacking how these bigger picture changes can be accomplished is a critical next step. One participant acknowledged the strength of previous generations of advocates, noting that "it's really helpful for me to remember that we are standing on the shoulders of so many before us (many with far more barriers and far less privilege than myself!) who have fought to get the liberation that we have now. We can look to them for strategies, frameworks and hope as we look forward to what we want to build." Another participant added to this, sharing "back in the day, we used to picket, march and rally -- we made annoying noise for change, banners, posters, t-shirts, emails, letters, petitions.... never stopped until we got someone's attention." As part of our next steps, this group can unpack promising practices for social movement mobilization and ask ourselves: "How can we get loud?"

Logistic questions we also need to consider include:

- How do we keep these conversations going?
- How to keep information flowing?"
- Who will lead this work? Who has capacity to support?

As the symposium wrapped up, the group landed on a discussion around centering access to basic human rights as part of our advocacy and practice moving forward. This work won't be easy and may be isolating at times. But we believe that if we work collectively, we have the ability to make lasting change. As one participant notes, "if we [work together and] come from a place of valuing individuals, conversations could energize and move mountains." We stand by this and are ready to move mountains for our communities.

With Gratitude

Thank you so much to Terrilee Kelford for kindly donating the beautiful space for our hybrid symposium. Your generosity is so appreciated.

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