

# The Communist Party of Canada and the Young Communist League proudly salute LGBTQ workers and activists

Egale and other community advocates throughout Canada and in Quebec, safer queer positive schools, and corporate free space on Pride Day! **We say: No Pride in the international criminalizing of sexual orientation, sexual expression and gender identity! No Pride in War or Corporate Plunder!** Pride events this summer are celebrating welcome progress towards greater equality and social justice. Communists are active players in Canada's various LGBTQ and queer\* identified communities. **Together we stand proudly in solidarity with all LGBTQ allies and activists marking Pride.**

**GLOBALLY** celebrations are marking the anniversary of the "Stonewall Riots" in Manhattan. A show of working class resistance, the first scuffles were reported to be initiated by local homeless and unemployed queer youth patrons of the Stonewall Inn. 40 years on we are bombarded with both encouraging and alarming headlines:

- >Many more queer positive environments are available to us in the public realm.
- >Initial but promising signs on the left to re integrate the fight for justice and the fight against homophobia.
- >Increasing numbers of trade unions now have active Pride and LGBTQ caucuses.
- >High schools are launching gay straight alliances, safe school spaces and "Pride proms".
- >Sex reassignment surgery is at least partially covered under some provincial health insurance plans.

These legal, political and cultural victories are the hard won results of decades of efforts by the LGBTQ community and allies. **HOWEVER:**

- >California has overturned the same sex marriage ruling, despite equality gains in other states and in Canada.
- >The Harper Tories still hope to reverse queer rights if they win a majority government.
- >The Right continue to scapegoat the LGBTQ community and racialised groups, to divide working class resistance against finance capital, corporate bailouts and global environmental plunder.
- >The politics of Pride events are skewed by corporate sponsorship, and with a handful of notable exceptions, military opportunism

**AND THERE'S MORE: Despite Canada's welcoming image, queer youth in Toronto and Montreal seeking asylum from persecution in**

other countries are being extradited; HIV positive men still face barriers to travel across the Canada US border; LGBTQ secondary students, (over two thirds in a recent survey) report feeling unsafe at school, (compared to 1 in 5 straight students); Prosecutors are unwilling to prosecute vicious gay bashings in Vancouver as hate crimes.

Globally, violent public expressions of homophobia are on the rise; the struggle to end the decriminalization of sexual orientation and sexual expression faces stubborn resistance; working class queer people suffer especially vicious discrimination, and as women and racialized communities bear the severe brunt of neoliberal economic and social policies; ILGA, the association of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersexed peoples reports that 90 United Nations member states still criminalize consensual same

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sex acts among adults; in seven countries, legal punishment for homosexuality still includes the death penalty; In many countries, such laws drive women, men and youth underground to hide from fear of exposure and censure.

### **BUT IMPORTANT PROGRESS for LGBTQ equality is being achieved in countries such as Cuba, South Africa and Nicaragua.**

The myth that queer rights can only be won in wealthy capitalist countries is shattered by these advances, and by the reality that homophobic and racist concepts are exported from North America and Europe. **Despite the cultural and legal shift in favour of equality and diversity, homophobia and transphobia remain tenaciously powerful within the Canadian state.**

Behind his mask and 50s sweaters, *Stephen Harper's anti equality positions are clear.* The Tory leader: voted against same sex marriage; has left his options open on abortion if he wins a majority; snubbed the 2007 international AIDS conference in Toronto; has appointed anti choice, anti gay judges to provincial courts; includes "Focus on the Family" zealots among top Tory advisors; pushes through regressive tax changes to promote the patriarchal family model; has gutted Status of Women Canada and bars the use of government funding to promote equality; criminalized youth by raising the age of consent to 16 and limited young people's access to condoms and abortions; allows Canada Customs to seize literature ordered by bookstores which serve the LGBT community.

**At a time when the so called "war on terror" is used to remove civil liberties for racialized communities, we need to remind each other that "an injury to one is an injury to all."** Just like racism, sexism, and national chauvinism, homophobia and transphobia are weapons to divide working people. Despite this

effort, most Canadians support equality and human rights. *These must now be expanded to include full legal and political protections for sexual orientation and expression, and gender identity.* **This demand is a vital part of the wider movement to drive the Harper Tories out of power.** Today the ruling class is using the economic meltdown to carry out a vicious assault on working class and unemployed queers and the entire labour movement. A cover as well to reverse hard won social equality gains. A broad democratic and social resistance is going to be needed to block and reverse this corporate agenda. *Together, we must build a powerful coalition around a genuine people's alternative to this crisis -- a common front of Aboriginal peoples, youth and students, women, seniors, immigrant and racialized communities, environmentalists, labour, peace activists, the LGBTQ community, farmers, and many other allies.* **Ultimately, this struggle in our communities and workplaces, and at the ballot box, will defeat the right and open the door to a people's coalition government.** *The goal of the Communist Party is to win fuller social freedom and genuine people's power in a socialist Canada, where our economy will be owned by all and democratically controlled. It will then become possible to eradicate the intersecting forms of exploitation and oppression which we face today, while defending our sovereignty and protecting our common environment.*

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**www.ycl-ljc.ca 290A Danforth Ave. Toronto**

(\*Queer is a term widely used by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, inter sex, queer, questioning and two spirited communities to describe the richly diverse community as a whole. The word unifies all the identities into one inclusive term. It was meant to "take back" an otherwise derogatory, and formerly spiteful word.)

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