

SAFE

LOVE & ROBOTS

CHEAP LIQUOR & TACOS,

**FROM THE WHAT? GALLERY
TO PKSSY PALACE,**

**AND SOME SPACES
OF SOFTNESS;**

**STORIES
FROM
BIPOC
NIGHTLIFE**



**Safe, love & robots,
cheap liquor & tacos,
from The What? Gallery
to Pxssypalace, and
some spaces of softness;
Stories from BIPOC nightlife**

is a zine exploring nightlife and safety from the perspective of Black, Indigenous and People of Colour. What safety, belonging, fun, and threats can look like in night spaces.

All proceeds will go to Vancouver Black Therapy and Advocacy Foundation And Western Aboriginal Harm Reduction Society.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This zine is a collaboration of BIPOCs living in the diaspora, including those displaced from their ancestral homes to colonial land (settlers and those living in the belly of the beast AKA the UK) and those displaced even while still in their ancestral home. As our experience with our connections to land varies greatly there isn't a simple way to sum us up. The zine, however, was devised and printed by Good Night Out Vancouver so we're including their Land Acknowledgement.

GNO LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We carry out our work on the occupied and unceded ancestral territories of the Musqueam, Skwxú7mesh, and Tsleil-Waututh people. As a feminist anti-violence project and as settlers, we are committed to unpacking the links between colonialism and all forms of violence and oppression, as well as making space in our work to call attention to the continuing colonial Genocide that is non-consensual land occupation and resource extraction, and the ongoing and unsolved cases of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and 2Spirit people (MMIWG2S).

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CONTENT WARNING / SUMMARY

Contains sexual content, swear words, hook up culture, polyamory, alcohol and drug use, “he kā ingo haumarū, he āhuru mōwai moku” (text translates to: “A safe home, a sheltered haven for me”), radical self-love, consent, racism, white supremacy, sexual harassment, discussing the existence of sexual assault, homophobia, fatphobia but does not include graphic descriptions, threats of violence, bit of gore, covid, overdose, bystander intervention, community care, looking out for each other, hope.

EDITOR'S NOTE



I grew up, a mixed up / mixed race Xicanx, in East Van. I moved to East London, UK soon after graduating high school.

This zine has ended up being somewhat autobiographical, in the sense that most of the contributors live in or near those places. And like me, quite a few of them like a night out but many have felt racism (and other forms of structural oppression) when they were just trying to have fun.

Working on this zine has reminded me of what it was like to grow up in Vancouver. The highs were really “high” and the lows got pretty fucking low. Growing up in the punk scene was kinda magic, there was a lot of unity and looking out for each other. But it wasn't perfect, it also reflected what mainstream society was like, it still had a lot of sexism and misogyny. And as much “anti-racist” sloganering on everyone's t-shirts and patches there was, there wasn't really room to speak about experiencing racism, the nuances and the complexities, never mind space to speak out against it happening.

This zine attempts to start a bit of the conversation by sharing lived-experiences of nightlife from Black, Indigenous and People of Colour. The call out was focused on BIPOC experiences, but you know, intersectionality, so all types of marginalisation are discussed.

I hope this zine makes some space to say, yeah we are here, partying, getting drunk, falling in love or lust, making mistakes and being silly. Sometimes we have each others' back, my friends have literally saved my life. But sometimes there's some extra shit going on that isn't being talked about, so let's talk about it. Sometimes I'm not even sure when or how much these things really played a role? Sometimes your denial / gas lighting hurts 1000 times more than the initial act of racism / sexism / homophobia / etc.

This zine is a love letter to all the BIPOCs out having fun. All those exploring Pleasure Activism whether they've heard of adrienne maree brown or not.

Hope you enjoy reading this as much as I enjoyed putting it together.

In Love & Solidarity
Diana Muertos

SCREENSHOTS

by Steve Radford



Diana Muertos

27 November at 20:47 · 🌐



sometimes you don't actually know how traumatic something you went through is until you talk about it like it's just some random anecdote, until you realize the table's gone silent and your friends are all staring at you like, what the fuck

Toxic Relationship Recovery

24 November at 01:27 · 🌐

👍❤️👍 20

30 comments

👍 Like

💬 Comment

➦ Share



Steve Radford

Totally, i was sleeping in a homemade lean-to and set on fire on the side of the georgia viaduct, spent 2months in the burn unit!

Like · Reply · 1 w



Diana Muertos

Fucking hell **Steve** that is so much. That really fucking sucks!! Sorry it happened, I can't even imagine. I'm glad you're still here to tell the tale ❤️❤️❤️❤️❤️

Like · Reply · 1 w · Edited



Steve Radford

Diana Muertos me too! My friend who was in the lean-to with me was trapped in the fire and I went back and managed to drag her out without her getting burned!! But it was the reason for my getting off the streets and getting my place in native housing!! So there is always something positive you can find out of the worst situations!!

Like · Reply · 1 w



Illustration: Steve Radford



Diana Muertos

wow! That's great you can find the positive, that's definitely not something a lot of people can do. also so amazing that you managed to save your friend! Again not something everyone would be able to do. Proper hero move there **Steve**. What a horrible situation to be in tho. I'm glad you she wasn't hurt. But really sucks you were. Getting into native housing sounds awesome though. I haven't heard of that before. I'm so happy to see you on here posting all your up to these days 🥰🌱🥰 what a journey its been

Like · Reply · 5 d



Steve Radford

Diana Muertos sometimes I cant believe how blessed I am to have survived all i have and to still have my health and friends and family!!

Love · Reply · 5 d



Diana Muertos

Steve Radford 🐾💖💖💖💖💖

Like · Reply · 5 d





I'm a survivor of the opioid crisis in Vancouver and recovered from hep c, and homelessness of more than 20yrs. After living in a lean-to and having it set on fire on the Georgia Viaduct I spent 2months in the burn unit at VGH. When I finally got released from another few months in a recovery house in Surrey, then I was back sleeping outside. There was really no way I could do that again, I was traumatized by waking up on fire, and could only fall asleep, curled up in front of the police building. Thankfully I was woken up by outreach workers for Vancouver Native Housing and they fast tracked me into a building on E. Hastings!! It's probably the reason why I'm still breathing. Eventually I got on the methadone program and moved to Edmonton, Alberta and then weaned off the methadone and got treatment for the hep c!! I now have a renovation company with my best friend who also came from the streets of East Van and we bought a truck for work. We also help take care of my elderly parents who live in Edmonton as well!!! Sometimes your worst experience can lead to the best outcome!

CELEBRATING SELENA IN THE DIASPORA

by Jael de la Luz

I always wanted to do a performance about Selena. Being a Mexican, queer and migrant womxn in the diaspora, I needed references to claim my joy and my place in London. And Selena has always accompanied me in that process of letting go of my body through dance. When I was a teenager, I used to listen to her songs secretly and dance to “Como la flor” or “Donde quiera que estés” (a duet with Barrio Boyzz).

I grew up in a Pentecostal church where the dance and popular music played on the radio were not part of my culture. However, my musical references were the cumbias and urban rock that the neighbors listened to. My mother always complained that the neighbors played their “pagan music” on Sundays when we returned from services. The neighbors hated us for being “hallelujahs”, and to annoy us they played cumbias by the Bibis, the Acosta, the Temerarios and Selena at full volume. What no one knew is that I was happy listening to that music echoing through the walls. I liked listening to them at night, because that way I forgot my fear of the apocalypse and found a little happiness in the midst of the precariousness in which I lived.

Since then, I have claimed Selena as a role model. I remembered how her family trusted her talent and prompted her to pursue a singing career, despite all the obstacles. Chicanos - US citizens of Mexican origin

- had to create their own musical style beyond pop and country music. In her artistic career, to have an impact beyond her region, Selena learned Spanish to conquer the Mexican people in their own language. I remember seeing her on television speaking that Spanglish that many mocked. But for me, Selena was an example of determination for the courage to create her own style and for not being ashamed to speak two languages sometimes mixed.

Arriving in the UK, five years ago, for the first time I started playing Selena's music at home so that my children would know her. By imitating her with such seriousness, I thought: "How would I want my Latino community in London to know her?" My surprise and happiness was to know that Selena is very well-known among the queer Latinx community here in London.

In 2016, Maricumbia, a queer space for tropical rhythms, gossip and pure perreo did two fundraising projects for the Latino community, and I decided to get in touch to pay tribute to Selena. Wrapped in neon lights, I explained in my half-spoken English that Selena is an icon of Chicano intersectionality and a model for mestizo women where the Aztec goddesses Coatlicue (of fertility) and Metztli (goddess of the moon, of the night) , along with the Virgin of Guadalupe, Las Adelitas, Frida Kahlo, La Doña (María Felix) and now Jenny Rivera, are taken up together with Selena to locate the thread of memory and resistance of the Brown chingonas women. I think I am part of that legacy too. And with that force behind me, I invited to dance and sing along to the songs of the queen of Tex-Mex. I will not forget those party nights. It was like rehearsing the nightlife we want to live as first and second

generation migrants, as people of color, as queers and grassroots activists. At Lime Wharf, in the heart of Hackney, in East London, we build a space where through the music of our land with alternative mixes, we indulge in dancing, tenderness and the pleasure of being together. We chanted the songs in Spanglish or Portuñol when Afro-Brazilian music was mixed. We also paid tribute to those divas and divos who came before us. There are nights when I feel nostalgic and lonely, seeing myself far from my country, my family, my friends, my culture, my traditions and my food. So I put videos of Selena on Youtube and start singing and remembering. Joy comes to me.

While my children and my partner are sleeping, sometimes I travel at night somewhere in the south where the Latinx community resists. I gather with them to march against gentrification and do my performance of Selena, because if one thing I know is that the joy of resisting and celebrating no one is going to take it away from me; dancing and singing challenge to the white supremacy; singing, dancing and marching we reclaim the night to live as migrants and queers free of violence.

Selena collage (page 12): Selena is inside fire, like a symbol of power, light and joy. She is in the middle of the sky and London Bridge, a very powerful landmark in this city. The flowers around are symbols of her legacy and music. I put some words in English and Spanish to make more accessible my art to people for my community

Gloria Anzaldúa collage (page 13): “We need workers to clear the rubble, lay down the new foundations. We need wise women to teach us the skills and techniques needed to construct tomorrow.” Gloria Anzaldúa. I created this collage when I put my desire to honor our ancestors and migrant women of color, indigenous, poor mestizas and queers folks who fought to make our way more visible; those women and queers who challenged normal narratives and re-signified the myths and legends of our cultures to give us symbols of liberation. At all of them I said, thanks.



@joedelaluz



“Dancing like Selena we reclaim the night to live as migrants and queers free of violence.”



“Bailando como Selena, nosotres les migrantes y queers reclamamos la noche para ser libres de violencia.”

WE RECEIVE INFORMATION FROM ANCESTORS INHABITING OTHER WORLDS. WE ASSESS THAT INFORMATION AND LEARN HOW

TO TRUST THAT KNOWING.

GLORIA ANZALDÍA

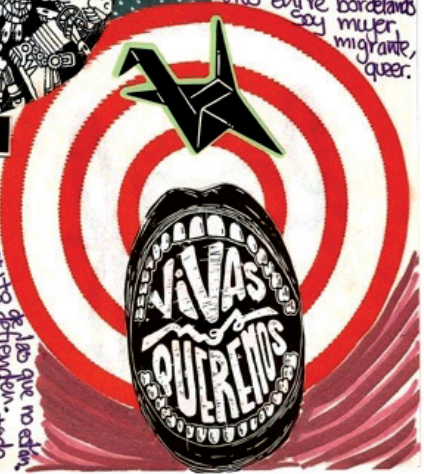


Honrar mis raíces.
Mis ancestros me
guiaron en el camino.
Vivo entre bordlands
soy mujer
migrante,
queer.

Quiero ser libre y valiente.
Dejame en Paz. Mi Trabajo
Vivas nos queremos. Mis



Somos el 57% de la población. Todo.
Mis amigos nos apoyan.
Dejen de hablar de un delito.
Ninguno de nosotros
tiene que ser un delito.



SAFE, INNIT (SAFE-IN-IT)

by In*ter*is*land Collective

Moana (Pacific or Oceanic) world views centre around alofa/aroa (love), fa 'aaloalo (respect), whakawhetai (gratitude) and importantly the give and take of reciprocity. Relationally; we also acknowledge tā - time (or being marked) and vā - space (or space between) which is not only present in our interpersonal relationships with each other and non-human life but also the spaces we inhabit and the land on which we locate ourselves. “Teu le vā” translates to “cherish the vā” meaning acknowledge, look after and maintain all of our relationships - however they/ we manifest - and to seek all the spaces in between.

A blessing in the vā - the space - will occur when entering a space for the first time, or when we are wanting to reacquaint or locate our mindbodies again. The words we speak into the space set intentions, can provide guidelines for behaviour and provide a tangible way to acknowledge the physical and the spiritual.

Our collective dreaming imagines a vā - a space - where QTIPOC/indigenous mind bodies are safe and sacred - our spaces will be accessible and inclusive to all.

With alofa (love),
In*ter*is*land Collective



*Title: Safe, innit (safe-in-it). Text translates to:
A safe home, a sheltered haven for me*

OTTOMAN

by Cynthia Rodríguez

You are having a heart-to-heart, existentialist chat with your girl friends at the smoking garden, when a bald gammon sits next to you, like an eagle, asking your hot friend to borrow her lighter.

He has had a few pints. For some reason, he holds one in each hand. No companion in sight.

He introduces himself in the conversation. Once he says he is divorced, then he says he is a widow, then he says he is not precisely well endowed.

You ask if he likes piña coladas and getting caught in the rain. He does not get the reference, but then he becomes the one asking everyone in the garden if they like piña coladas.

You tell him you are a triad.
You ask him if he would like to become
human furniture.
You ask him if he would like to be an ottoman.
An empire that liked stepping on people,
now turned into an object for people to rest
their feet on.

Another friend comes in. Another one. Other one.
The drunk widow, divorce, short dick, ottoman,
piña colada guy
keeps misgendering one of your girls and keeps
pestering the youngest one.

You get him kicked out of the club.
The power, through arteries, like glasses
of White Russian, Bad Boy, Rockaberry, Blue Lagoon,
Godfather, feels fresh.

HOW TO HAVE THE BEST NIGHT EVER

by Varsha, Okong'o & Ava



*How to Have
the Best
Night Ever.*



No Racism

Treat everyone equally no matter their skin colour.



No Xenophobia

Accept people from all nations and backgrounds.

No Sexism or Transphobia



Engage with anyone no matter their gender.

Self-Love



Give care to yourself unapologetically.

No Homophobia



Let people love who they love.

No Body Shaming



Accept all bodies no matter their size or ability.

Inclusion

Treat everyone as human and nothing less.



Consent

Acknowledge and respect other people's boundaries.

*Have a
Wonderful
Night!*

By: Varsha Gill, Okong'o Kinyanjui,
& Ava Swanson

AN ODE TO CLUB HOOK UPS

by Jon Bellebono

Clubbing is how/where i found my queerness.
Clubbing is where i was first able to let go of the stiffness and rigidity my body had to uphold in its poor portrayal of masculinity, and instead follow my body, and its natural movements.

Clubbing is the only thing i've looked forward to at times.

Clubbing is where my femmeness has been rejected, and fetishised, and loved.

Clubbing is where i can't go five minutes without a stranger trying to guess my ethnicity.

Clubbing is where i've felt the most sexy, and the least sexy.

Club hook-ups used to fit my thought process when it comes to dating.

They're meant to be sleazy. Fun. One-offs. Careless. Commitment-free.

And whilst quite rarely the sex in those hook-ups was great... it also kinda was. The adrenaline, the messiness, the mystery, the grossness, the awkwardness, the passion, the chemistry, the regret, the laughter, are all aspects i remember with a weird fondness in the sex i've had with people i've hooked up with at parties, whether that's in a club toilet or in one of our beds later in the night.



And most of the club hook-ups I had displayed passion, and kindness, and love, and consent. And there was nothing sleazy or careless about them.

Club hook-ups are also not meant to be the start of a great romance. You're not meant to fall in love with your hook-up. There's nothing romantic about being surrounded by a crowd of sweaty strangers, or about being too drunk, or on drugs. Yet here I am almost two years later, still ridiculously in love with my 4am warehouse club hook-up.

SHARDS OF LOST TOUCH

by Maya Bhardwaj

Lately, memories of touch flit through my brain
in shards

Like fragments of a lost dream too sweet to
remember in full.

The air in a crowded QTPOC club, thick and sweet
on my tongue,
Queer embraces and brown hips wining as the
bass drops.

I wake up remembering holding each other's faces
at the pregame,
Smudging glitter on each other's cheeks and burning
palo santo and sage,
Wine drunk, cheap liquor and tacos and jerk,
dirty jokes and raucous laughs,
Spice and syrup and smoke caressing our lips.

I walk outside and the memory of barbeque and
the beach wafts through,
Queer Black and brown elders throned on speakers,
Basking in our collective resilience,
Sun and sweat kissing our skins.

I hear the shimmer and pulse of our gigs in my
quiet apartment,
Loved ones crowded at the front row amidst
beaming faces,
The feel of my lover's hands on my hips and
my violin at my feet,
Her breath hot on my ear and her teeth at my neck.

I brush my bathroom wall and feel the damp
of the dungeon,
Crops and chains arranged in each corner,
Dark limbs intertwined and glistening in embrace,
Gasps exulting freedom and release.

On zoom calls I hunger for the queer bar
after protests,
Stomping in exultant or somber after hours of
chants and marching,
Dancing out futures on the dance floor,
Quenching our thirst for liberation with water
and wine.

Instead, we sit behind screens and imagine we can
feel, smell, taste each other,
Piecing together shards of liberation through
lagging internet and hurried texts.
Masked revolution plotted out through mutual aid
and community care,
Dreaming of the nights when we will touch again.

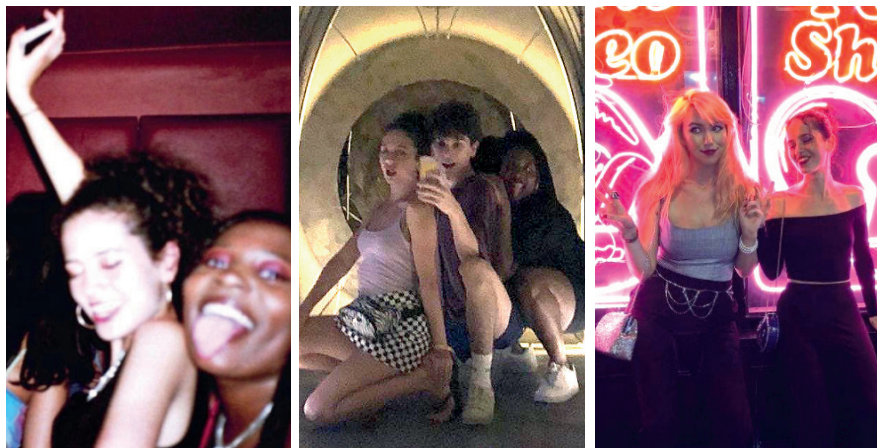
CREATING WORLDS

by Lillie Aissa

I will never forget the first time we went to a gay club. My friend had just turned 18 and we danced the night away, finally getting to hear the music we loved blaring. People were so expressive, free and proud; men wearing lashes, women feeling safe and free enough to dance sensually. One community but all so different. My mate and I sat on a bench eating (cold) chicken and chips at 4am in February and unpacked everything we had seen, shared our observations and cracked jokes. From then on, we regularly frequented Heaven in London, UK.

Over time, I ventured deeper into different queer spaces. I moved away from commercial pride events to places I aligned with more as a Tunisian bisexual woman. I went to Black Pride, Pxxsypalace and Pride of Arabia. These spaces are very close knit and there's a feeling of being unknown but deeply loved and cared for. These are spaces of softness, femininity and safety unlike I had ever felt before. One night at Pxxsypalace, I got too drunk and people I'd never met before took care of me, organised a taxi and managed to locate my friend on the other side of the club in about 5 minutes. I had people on either side of me rubbing my back and being so gentle with me while I threw up in the smoking area.

In these spaces I encountered older queer people living prosperous lives. They had amazing lives, realities I never could have imagined. Queer people in loving relationships, polygamy, having exciting jobs like DJ or tarot reader, stuff I didn't even think was possible. For

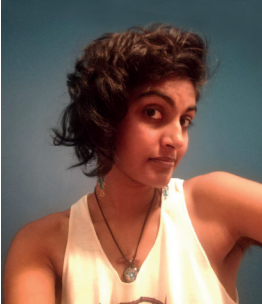


young queer people, having these positive role models means everything, I think it made us realise that there was nothing wrong with us, and we had wrongly taken on society's shame. I caught a glimpse of a prosperous future, overcoming adversity and transcending into something more beautiful and free than the world we had been outcasted from. We have created worlds. House parties became cavernous rooms, became super clubs, became worlds.

For the future of queer nights out, I hope we carry on empowering young people. May the nights become more accessible and inclusive. I want us to keep pushing ideas of what is acceptable and 'normal', to keep smashing glass ceilings and showing that life as a queer person should not be about death, tragedy and rejection. I pray these nights stretch out into days, that we have open, light filled rooms as well as club nights, that we are able to show up in public. I pray we can show up as our highest, truest selves and inspire others to do so. I pray we don't have to meet up to mourn anymore. I await the day we will celebrate together again.

RESONANCE

by Sunitha



Anticipation is normal but this feels like anxiety, it's been so long since I entered any space since the pandemic hit. So much in me has changed, in ways I never expected. In ways that have given me the space to embrace myself in my entirety.

I kept to my decision and my hair is all gone, shaved not in a moment of charity or panic or regret that I'll never do it but a calculated decision to liberate myself. Inevitably, my family feels differently, stuck in more traditional times but their insults no longer stick, my beauty is not for their consumption.

Lost in my thoughts, I look up and realise I'm just standing at the entrance with my beautiful friends looking at me in confusion. They gently nudge me, knowing this is what we all need to remind ourselves that we are enough. As I enter, I'm struck with how many people look and feel like me. Smiling at the first person I see, our eyes connect and it feels like they're seeing me for all that I am, where I don't feel fetishised. Without thinking, my feet are moving towards them and we introduce ourselves, taking time to pronounce each other's names right, our pronouns (both she/they) and so there's no missteps, who we like to fuck.

We smile at each other, she asks me if she can hold my hand to which I nod. As our hands embrace, I notice our shades are one, allowing her soft hands to guide me as we allow the music to move through us. With each

movement, the vibrations of each beat travels from the speakers and through our physical body. We're completely connected as one, with each breath we take, we take it together along with the sound and energy of the music, resonating in our soul.

Our bodies are intermingling, flowing together, respecting our boundaries but allowing the tips of our fingers to explore each other's skin. Before long, I find myself pulling her away from the noise of the dancefloor, so I can whisper gently in her ear, "May I kiss you?". "Of course," she responds, "but not here," dragging us back to the immersive space. Though we're almost in the same physical space, the music is in a lull so we gently sway, our arms enveloping each other, our bodies pressed against each other with our heads perfectly balanced, leaning on each other. The melodic voices accompany the layers building as our energy builds yet again, we're both engrossed in a space beyond ourselves that allows us freedom from the masks that we put on to survive. With the gradual crescendo of the bass, we open our eyes, reminding ourselves of who we are now in this moment is all that matters. As our lips gently touch, we remember the ecstasy of being alive."

BULLIES, SKINHEADS AND LSD

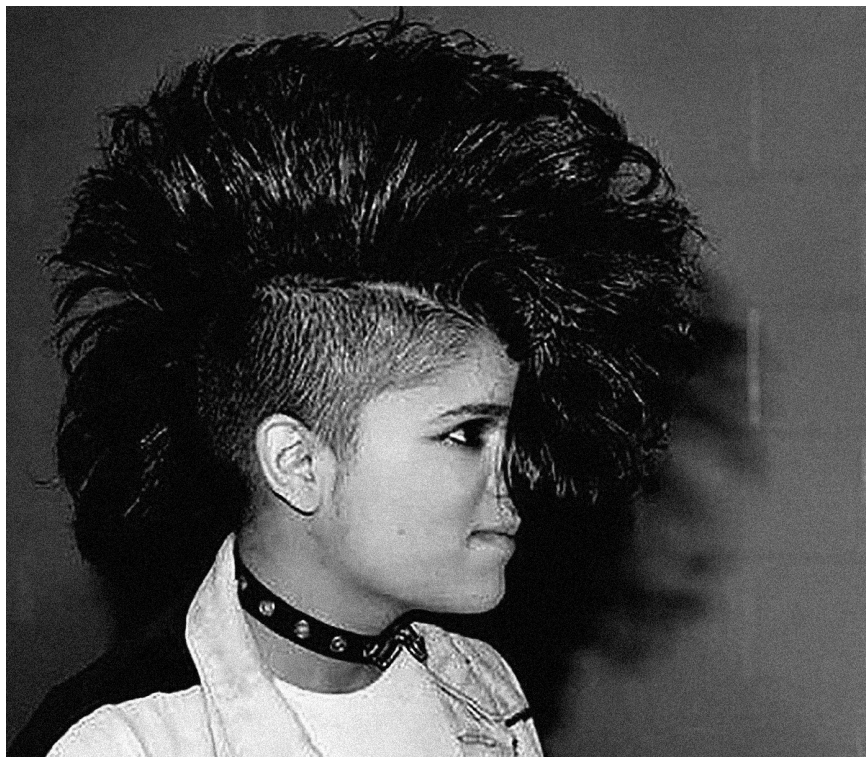
by **Natasha Hamblin**

A schoolyard bully once told me that I have a zebra family and, although meant as an insult, I actually thought that zebras were really cool. I don't remember my colour being much of an issue in my life. Don't get me wrong, my mother is Indo-Caribbean from Trinidad, so I am most definitely brown.

As far as my appearance goes, I remember being concerned that my babyish nose wasn't growing to the extent that I would pull on it with pliers (in fact, I think that my nose is currently a bit lopsided as a result). The funny thing is that I actually got my pug nose from my dad who is a white prairie boy.

It's possible that I experienced racism as a child but if I did it didn't have any long-term effect on me. I came of age in Vancouver in the 80's as a young punk rocker in the scene. Vancouver in the late 80's/early 90's was a dangerous place with groups of skinheads roaming around, and with China White in the drug supply there were always reasons to be wary.

Although skinheads would "roll" people for their Doc Martin boots, I had no reason to worry as who could afford Docs anyway? We used to walk around in our little used parade boots that we would get from the basement boot room at Save on Surplus on Hastings and when they became too worn, we would "exchange" them. As for drugs, who could afford those either?



At the time there were various groups of skinheads and you could tell which group each belonged to by the colour of their boot laces and suspenders (braces).

The two big racist groups at the time were the Nazi skins and ARM (Aryan Resistance Movement) skins and although we especially avoided the Nazis, the ARM guys were always around, yet we seemed to all exist in each other's midst without too much friction.

They often had indigenous girlfriends so maybe a certain amount of colour was ok? Also, they all really seemed to look up to a local black guy who was wiry and missing front teeth from bar room boxing. I guess colour doesn't always matter when you are tough. I remember a situation where I was at an after-hours

booze can in Gastown and I drunkenly asked an ARM skin who happened to seat himself at our table if we were going to have an issue. I was relieved that the answer was that we weren't, yet I was puzzled at the same time. Perhaps the fact that my boyfriend at the time was albino (can't get paler than that) was sitting next to me afforded me some tolerance or maybe I was just deemed harmless.

It was just common sense that you didn't leave your drink unattended, walk down alleys by yourself, or leave a friend behind at the bar. If we were able to afford any drugs at the time, acid was definitely the one to take. You could pay your \$10 and voila you were off for 12 hours of fun (albeit 4 of those hours were the most fun) and the fact that you had to take twice as much the next day for it to have any effect made it so that you couldn't get addicted. Bonus!

Typically, you knew the person selling the drugs or it had been vetted by another friend, so you knew that nothing toxic was going to slip into it. However, there were a couple of people I knew who took an extreme amount and were never quite the same afterwards.

I'm sure we were quite the sight, me with my big red mohawk and brown skin and my boyfriend with his spiky white hair and translucent skin. So, it wasn't overly surprising the day a big rock was thrown from a car window, narrowly missing us as we were walking down Broadway. We watched as it bounced off the auto glass shop window creating the effect of it going concave and convex yet not breaking.

If you have ever dropped acid, you can imagine how "trippy" this was and how it left us speculating over what just happened. Was it thrown at us because I was brown, his lack of colour, our punk attire, the fact

that we were holding hands, or even the possibility that us being there was a coincidence and it was a disgruntled customer or employee.

I'm pretty sure that's the same night we innocently walked through a field where two groups of kids were shooting fireworks at each other. We ended up getting chased down an alley by another group of guys and our friend ended up running into a tree trying to escape. We had to retrace our steps and talk our way out of getting beat up once we realized he was no longer with us.

Dumb luck seemed to help us to escape situations many times. The fact that I am brown didn't make me stand out as much as the fact that I had a 2-foot tall red mohawk, but I guess I hit all the marks for being disenfranchised. Add the fact that I am also female, and it definitely added to the need to be cautious. How many times do you have to hear people telling you to get a job or a haircut let alone to go back where you came from before you feel wary wherever you go.

I remember getting on a bus in east van and the bus driver told me "Halloween is over" to which my response was that if it were Halloween I would be dressed as a bus driver. This was my only mic drop moment that I remember in my life. At a certain point I became friends with the Chaos skins who weren't racist but everything about them was chaotic.

One of their members accidentally shot himself in the head with a crossbow while playing with it and died days later in the hospital. I wasn't there when it happened, but I imagine that it wasn't a pretty sight. I lived with a few of them and I'm sure that my association with them protected me from harm to

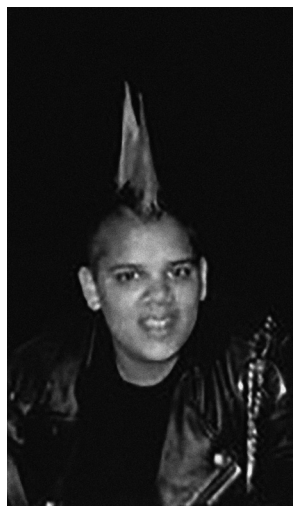


some extent. They enjoyed getting drunk and going out to the alley to swing punches at each other and then would come back into the house laughing and arm in arm like nothing ever happened.

One time I got really mad at the biggest one of them for some reason and punched him in the nose causing it to collapse on his face surprising both of us. It was a brutally long two seconds as I braced myself to see what his reaction would be and, to my relief, he just burst out laughing. Despite being an asshole and a tough guy, he never hit a woman.

It often pays to have tough friends. I've never been tough, so it was surprising when a group of girls came after me on Granville street one night. I had been sitting on the arm of a cement bench when the lead girl pulled me off from behind and said "welcome to Vancouver". I'm not even sure what that meant since I had lived in Vancouver for a while and regularly hung out on Granville with my friends.

Her friends held off my girlfriends as she tried to grab my hair and with something I can only explain as



superhuman strength I slithered away and pushed her down hard. I believe that we agreed to disagree, and they ran off into the night.

Again, did they come after me because I was the only one coloured in the group? Or was it my big red mohawk and punk attire? I would like to believe that it was my ability to rise to the occasion in my defence even if I didn't know I could. Flash forward to current times and there are different reasons to be wary.

Despite the fact that Covid 19 means there is no nightlife, meeting people can still be dangerous. These days you have to be as concerned about a roofie in your drink as someone speaking moistly on you. How do you know what he looks like behind the mask? How do you know that the Soldiers of Odin aren't around the corner or some Proud Boys waiting for you on the next block.

The border closures and fentanyl-tainted drug supply of today is making me think back to the days of the China White epidemic in Vancouver in the 80's. Be careful out there.

MILK SWEATER

(excerpts, *The Culture of Death, sci-fi*)



Cyberpunk: “I love weed. It has saved me from opium, fentanyl, and what kills on the streets. When it’s late at night, there’s always music, pre-drinks, dinners, and adventures. Bongs, volcanoes, edibles...have I tried it all? I had bad nights trying to find weed before.

Many younger kids nowadays will not understand those days when we walked to random house parties for some dirt weed. Now, the legalization of weed has opened high-end shops with delivery and legit business hours guaranteed.

I like good food, good times, good company. Stoners, intellectuals, and leaders. Before this pandemic, we could be sitting on the beach, park, coffee shops, or some of the finest hotels in the city. The skylights are still full of dreams.

Pre-pandemic, I met a beautiful woman who speaks passionately of detoxing chemical products. She smoked cigarettes regularly. We smoked cigarettes together many times. Despite all the many crazy things going on in the world, I would have noticed that someone who loves discussions of detoxing also loves smoking toxic cigarettes. How she astounds.

I, for myself, reflect too, why is smoking weed not allowed in public places, or school vicinity, and cigarettes are? Who then resorts to smoking cigarillos, having a blunt, hiding a puff or toke of nature’s gift marijuana? I love cigarillos more than cigarettes. Stronger tobacco. Probably more toxic than cigarettes.

Who knows?

It's like how I like my coffee. Strong. No sugar. Coffee, and caffeine drinks are encouraged for a long night life. Yes, I have worked the grinding late night shifts, closing bars and restaurants, cleaning fridges, mopping the floors, washing the dishes, and everything more. It never ends. But when it ends, we party hard like there's no tomorrow.

Wages remain low. Many guys have idle hands. The misogyny exists. Food is great when the chef is a woman. Women chefs are very organised.

With great service, tips flow. Tips flow too in forms of pitchers of beer. We were never dry. Pitchers after pitchers. But I wanted my tip in cash please. Because I cannot mix marijuana with alcohol.

I, of course, choose weed over alcohol. I never suffered weed as I suffered under alcohol. I've been told by my fellows, I'm one serious pothead because I even put a filter on my joints. I guess I impressed others because I am a girl who can roll. Nobody has smoked me out yet, except my old pot dealer, who said he smoked since he was 14.

Months passed. I knew people who OD, unfortunately. I'm still smoking weed. Then, I remember the dashing beautiful woman. She, and her red wine drinks. She still smokes cigarettes. I wish I knew if she smokes weed. I could have lit one to share and pass one between our lips. Respectfully, I lit my cigarillo instead. That was pre-pandemic.

Now, memory is a cage. Love is a losing game, only if you play. I was blown away. And I am a robot? Am I?"



Digital art credit: Sullecile+Mildred German

BIOGRAPHY

Steve Radford is a survivor of the opioid crisis in Vancouver and recovered from Hep C. He was homeless for more than 20 years. With the help of Vancouver Native Housing he found housing and got on methadone. He has now moved back to Edmonton, Alberta, where he has weaned himself off methadone and now has a renovation company and work truck with his best friend, who also came from the streets of East Van. They also help care for his elderly parents.

Jael de la Luz (she/her) is a writer, editor, book lover and craft maker activist (Fanzines and Collages). Her approach from intersectional feminism, anti-racist practices and non-binary knowledge, nourishes her work and workshops. She is part of the Spanish Reading Book Club in The Feminist Library. She writes “Militancias” on Feminopraxis, a Mexican online magazine for migrant, binary and women of colour from the global south.

In*ter*is*land Collective is a queer, tagata Moana (Pacific, Oceanic people) arts/creative/activist group based in London, UK and Aotearoa (New Zealand). We seek to connect and collaborate with our communities across the vast moana that all of our moku (island) call home. We prioritise tagata Moana world views, philosophies and knowledge - we believe our art and cultural practices can be a vehicle to dismantle systems of oppression and reimagine liberated futures.

Cynthia Rodríguez Juárez is a British-Mexican writer, poet, artist and performer living and working in liminal states. Her debut poetry collection, *Meanwhile*, was published in 2020 by Burning Eye Books. For more work, writings and videos, visit cynthiarodriguez.org

Varsha, Okong'o and Ava are a group of creatives focused on feminism and social justice. Their educational roots are in Squamish, BC, where they studied the nexus of their individual academic and artistic passions at Quest University Canada. As recent alumni, they are now exploring ways to turn their activism and art into full-time careers.

www.varshagill.com

www.instagram.com/okongokinyanjui

www.ava-music.net

Jon Bellebono is a London-based queer Asian community organiser and writer, as well as a fashionista receptionist by day. They're interested in trans and queer Southeast Asian identities, the connection between queerness and grief, femmeness, reality tv, and a lot more - and love facilitating spaces, content and conversations surrounding these topics.

Maya Bhardwaj (she/they) is a community organiser, facilitator, trainer, researcher, musician, and artist. She is originally from Detroit and Bangalore but has scattered her heart across Bombay, New York, Mexico City, and now London, where she has been based for the past year at SOAS, studying queer activism in the South Asian diaspora in solidarity with Black liberation in the UK and the US. IG / twitter @mbhardwaj FB: maya.bhardwaj

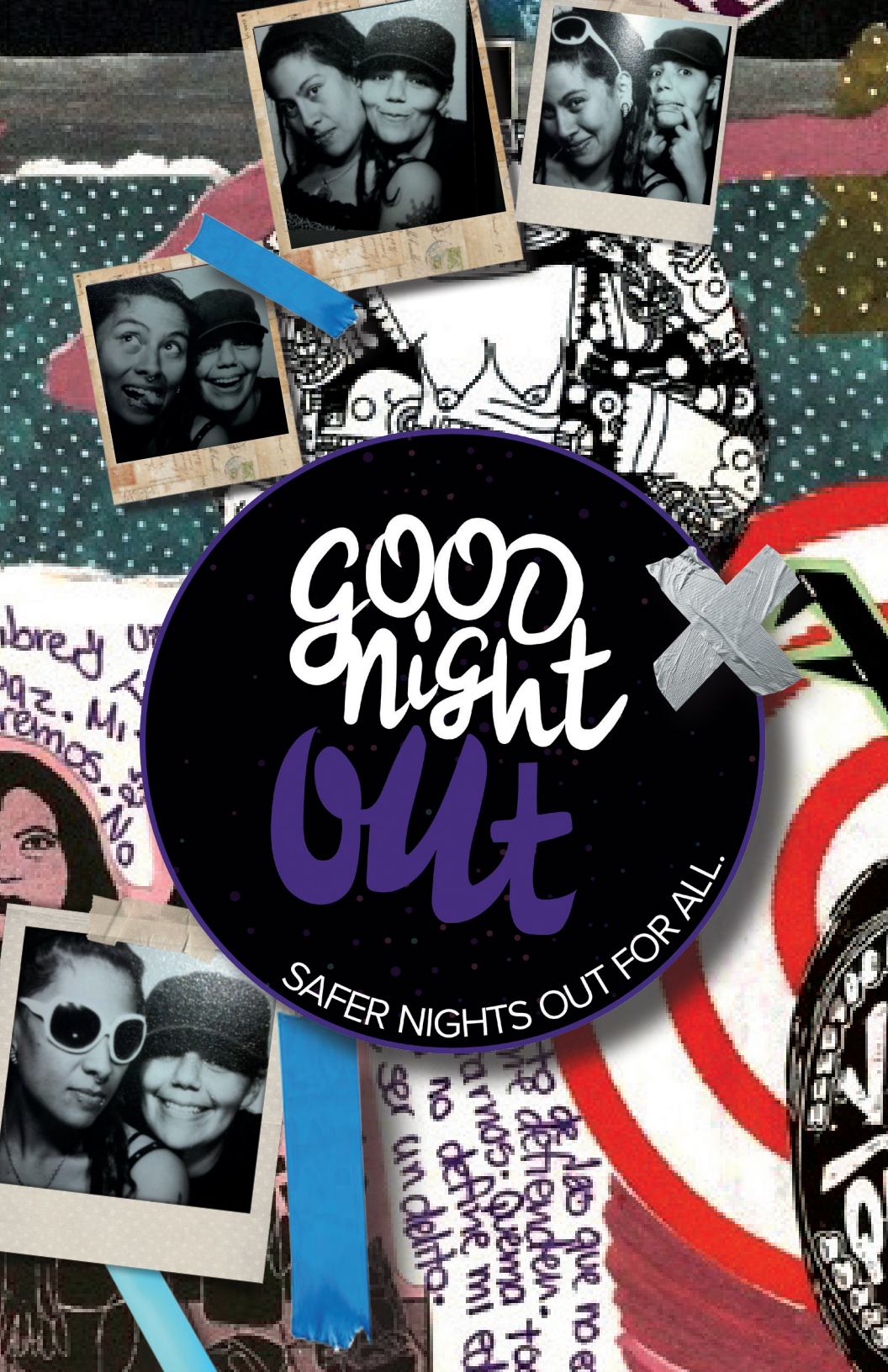
Lillie Aissa is a 20-year-old French-Tunisian creative based in London, UK and Lancaster. Exploring the personal, political and spiritual, Lillie dabbles in uni work, filmmaking, writing and creating music. Instagram @forestfemme

Sunitha (She/they) is a genderqueer pansexual South Asian person living in the UK missing the queer nightlife of the pre-pandemic world and hoping it'll be a space of inclusion in the future. Blogs about her lived experience of mental health illnesses during Covid-19 and has spent a lot of this pandemic time, focusing on activism particularly on the rights of undocumented and insecure migrants. In her downtime, she loves to catch up with friends on the phone and now in real life, read books and sometimes just sleep the day away.

Natasha Hamblin was born in Winnipeg, raised in Vancouver's lower mainland, and currently resides in the Sea to Sky corridor. She currently spends her free time petting her two cats and laughing at her own jokes.

Mildred Grace German is a Vancouver-based, Filipino-Canadian multidisciplinary artist. Having studied Hospitality, Culinary and Pastry Arts, and graduating from the Culinary Management Diploma Program at Vancouver Community College, she is also a Red-Seal trained professional chef by trade. An avid writer, and a collaborator, Mildred supports healthy and safer environments for all, everywhere, all the time.

www.mildredgracegerman.wixsite.com/website



GOOD
NIGHT
OUT

SAFER NIGHTS OUT FOR ALL.