bread, roses
and hormones!

YOU DON’T HAVE TO UNDERSTAND US TO FIGHT WITH US

1 Year of Collective Struggle 50 Years from Stonewall
Bread, Roses and Hormones

Bread, Roses, and Hormones is a campaign of the revolutionary anti-colonial and anti-capitalist political organization Red Roads Alliance for Indigenous and Working Class Power coordinated by working class trans women in the lower mainland.

Bread, Roses and Hormones organizes on the stolen and never surrendered lands of the Coast Salish people.

breadrosesandhormones.wordpress.com
facebook.com/breadrosesandhormones
organizebrh@gmail.com

2019 Red Roads Alliance for Indigenous and Working Class Power
For all our dead and martyred sisters, rest in power.
You Don't Need to Understand us to Fight With Us!

The title of this statement is inspired by Valerie Spencer, a trans woman who worked alongside trans liberation icon Miss Major on HIV/AIDS outreach in the 1990s. Spencer was challenging the wider LGBTQ community to put aside their prejudices about trans women and sex workers in order to respond with urgency to the spread of HIV/AIDS.

During the HIV/AIDS epidemic trans women and sex workers were not being served by organizations combating the spread of HIV, but we were on the front line of the fight for safer practices and expanding resources for the gay community struggling with the condition. Spencer would say “you don’t need to understand us, you need to respond!” because as trans women we understood the issue was not educating clueless cis gays it was fighting for survival. Bread, Roses and Hormones shares Spencer’s sentiment, although our social and political context has changed.

In place of the HIV/AIDS epidemic is the alarming rates of working class trans woman who commit suicide or are murdered for being poor, migrants, drug users, sex workers, or all of the above. BRH is addressing our friends and peers in the LGBTQ community and also the revolutionary left from the standpoint of crisis. We are dying and no awareness campaign will save our lives. We need bread, we need roses, we need hormones, but most importantly, we need ongoing organization.
Trans women and sex workers have always been the pillars of the LGBTQ community as militants in class struggle and anti-imperialist movements. BRH is a campaign led by working class trans women that was convened by anti-colonial and anti-capitalist political organization Alliance Against Displacement.

BRH formed, in what is known as the Lower Mainland of British Columbia, on May 29th, 2018, because we were disenchanted with both liberal trans politics that seek to assimilate trans women into settler-colonial and capitalist society as well as the reductive or absent analysis of gender power in many leftist organizations. BRH seeks to develop a revolutionary politics that ties gender liberation to working class emancipation.

This statement is not supposed to work as an exhaustive analysis of gender relations, an introduction to trans politics, nor strategic programme. The following statement declares the political principles we have established as a campaign in the last year. It is a call to arms to trans women and for all of our comrades.
Recognition is not Liberation: the limits of trans identity politics and queer separatist culture

“it is on that other being, on recognition by that other being, that man’s own human worth and reality depend. It is that other being in whom the meaning of life is condensed”

-Franz Fanon

BRH firmly rejects a trans women’s politics that highlights our ‘trans-femininity’ as deserving to be accepted into capitalist property relations. The most developed expression of this liberal trans politics is Pride week. This liberal democratic celebration of queerness as an individual choice does not speak of liberation but of recognition. A generous analysis of the politics of Pride suggests that Pride advocates for us to be recognized as humans who should have as equal an opportunity to own property as the rest of the settler population. Pride politics are doubly violent. On one hand, violence against us increases because we are more visible with no real protection from enraged transphobic bigots. On the other hand, it encourages trans people to turn on our working class and Indigenous comrades and identify the Canadian bourgeoisie and its State apparatus as our liberators, leaving the current relations of capitalist exploitation and colonial domination intact.

It’s long been an issue that police and corporations are welcome in Pride. For years activists have noted that the origin of Pride was a riot against the New York Police Department for raiding a historic working class cruising bar.
Yet more detrimental than the pigs marching down the street hand in hand with the middle classes is the groundwork gay and trans identity politics sets up for pigs to become part of our everyday lives. In 2016 the VPD launched the “Safe Place” program, which involves plastering rainbow stickers shaped like a police badge in storefronts to let us know that we can call the cops to report a hate crime against us. Since then, this inclusion campaign has expanded to the Fraser Valley, outside Vancouver’s inner city.

In Surrey and Langley people are pushing for the “Safe Place” decal to be put up in windows of businesses. Surrey already has the largest RCMP regiment in Canada and will likely use this as an excuse to expand its numbers. We do not agree that we should have sympathy or solidarity for pigs because they happen to be LGBTQ2SA+, racialized, or women. We also do not believe that we are safer around sympathetic cops than our own neighbors. Pigs are violence embodied and have no social function other than suppressing dissent in order to protect private property and the current social relations between colonizer/colonized and bourgeoisie/worker, whatever their identity or mannerisms may be.

No pig, no boss, no landlord is on our side. They may go to Pride but they’ll still lock us up, rob us, and throw us on the street when the cheers die down.

The other side of liberal recognition frameworks is the current formation of queer and trans separatist culture.
This refusal of widespread recognition has turned into a retreat from the “cis and straight world” as a so-called radical rejection of cis-supremacy and patriarchy. This dislocation from larger working class and Indigenous struggles is claimed by these trans and queer people as political victory. We believe it is self-defense at best and political escapism at worst.

In this "separate" trans and queer world, which has very few trans women in it, very little is done to combat racism and transmisogyny. Again, unprincipled allegiances become strikingly clear inside the lavender haze and those that command social leadership roles are absolved from what would be characterized as gendered or racialized violence if it was perpetrated by someone from outside the "community." In this trans and queer world women are still sexualized, boundaries are routinely neglected and transgressed, Black, POC, and Indigenous people are still fetishized and disposed of, and class antaognisms as well as the relations of property remain generally the same. The separatist commune, whether it is a country home or an urban collective house, parallels the cis-bourgeois world, with its attendant gendered and racialized violence, rather than challenges it.
Gender is a Social Relation, There Are More than Two Genders

"For there is no sex, there is merely the sex that oppresses and the sex that is oppressed."

-Monique Wittig

A joke, that is more sad than funny, for working class trans women when we are laughing away trans antagonistic bigotry together is “why the fuck would anyone choose this!?” In other words, BRH does not believe choice is the field on which gender is established. The category of “women” as a social group exists only so much as one group of people, some with dicks, some with clits, and some with neither, are subordinated to the category of "men" through colonial law, property, and violence. The category “man” and the category “woman” as seen in the capitalist division of labor have become “biological” only through genital mutilation, sterilization, and murder.

BRH believes that a world that honors multiple genders is possible through anti-colonial and materialist analysis. It is the task of non-Indigenous trans women to combat our complicity in the destruction of Indigenous genders, which includes settler trans people flattening Indigenous gender systems into the framework of “trans” or “queer.” To quote from Kill the Winyan, Save the Women:

“The last time I came out to a non-native friend as wįńkte, she asked me what that meant. I told her that wįńkte was one of the four genders that we have among Lakȟóta people where a person born wičháša decides that they are going to partially comply with the social roles of wíŋyaŋ, but that they are truly neither wičháša nor wíŋyaŋ because Wákȟáŋ Tháŋka gave
roles that, although leaning towards those of wíŋyaŋ, are
different. Her eyes immediately began to glaze over. ‘Basically
I’m a trans woman,’ I told her. That she understood.”

The materialist feminism most influential to BRH’s
political stance was theorized by French feminist
novelist and activist Monique Wittig in the early 1980s.
Wittig laid out the idea that gender and sex didn’t come
from biology or spiritual essence but rather by the labour
that women are forced to do in service of men. Wittig
saw men as a class that must be overthrown and that
women’s struggle was ultimately about abolishing gender
as organized through the heterosexual power structure.

As a group of mostly trans women, this is an attractive
analysis because it stresses the unity of trans and cis
women as protagonists against patriarchy, and offers a
way out of thinking of gender as symbolic or
performative. BRH agrees with this analysis as far as it
accurately describes the European two gender system
that has been violently forced on the rest of the world
through colonialism and imperialism.

We are critical of universal gender abolition because we
believe materialist feminism does not accurately describe
African or Indigenous gender systems. Although we
understand trans womanhood through a materialist
analysis, we reject the gender abolitionist conclusion of
European materialist feminism as global explanation of
gender liberation.
The terms transgender, non-binary, agender, as well as cultural and language specific terms to explain gender are being discussed in anti-colonial and class struggle organizations. Within this historical moment, our goal is not to abolish all genders, it is to bring the European sex/gender system that lies at the foundation of settler colonialism and capitalism to ruins with every bit of political energy we have.
We started the riot, now we start the revolution

"Only to the rude ear of one who is quite indifferent does the song of a bird seem always the same."

-Rosa Luxembourg

BRH inherits a revolutionary tradition from trans women and sex workers. Since the 1500s sex workers have been organizing for more legal protections for sex work as a job. And although the terms transsexual and transgender are relatively new and developed from anglo understandings, people that do not correspond to European gender roles have been fighting against capitalist property relations and colonial domination since their inception.

As the Zapatista women said in their address to women around the world in struggle last February, “just when you think that they’re right, that we’ve been defeated, you’ll see that we still see you and that one of us, without you even realizing it, has come close to you and whispered in your ear, only for you to hear: “Where is that little light that we gave you?” The light shines bright for BRH and what it illuminates for us is the possibility for Indigenous and working class women and gender non conforming people to become protagonists in anti-colonial and anti-capitalist struggle.

It is with the strength of all our class struggle mothers, sisters, and gender non-conforming siblings and comrades that we continue to fight for the next generation. BRH wishes to pick the struggle up, raw, in the streets, dangerous, where STAR left it off because even though we lost a generation of our sister-fighters, we hear them call: trans liberation means revolution now!