

Jody Paterson talks about her work with PEERS

By Diane Walsh

The Prostitution Empowerment, Education and Resource Society is an umbrella-protection agency for both indoor and outdoor sex workers in the Victoria community.

Not everyone knows veteran journalist Jody Paterson of the *Times Colonist* served a three-year stint at PEERS. In fact she was their executive director until the end of summer 2007 at which time she stepped down as a staff member and became Victoria's best-known advocate for street issues' solutions.

Jody never did step away from the cause — far from it. Over these past months Jody's series on homelessness in the TC has inspired movement in the city toward addressing the problems in the downtown core.

Having had the tireless and impassioned Jody at its helm, PEERS is finally on the map. It's being recognized and given credit for "actually doing something", thanks to Jody's advocacy work. Hopefully funding will come in due course.

Interest in street-advocacy work is also gradually growing around town, including a recent fund-raiser for Our Place. We're seeing encouraging initiatives for solutions to homelessness, albeit with respect to the plight of sex workers (who are largely a female population) there are more than a few cynics out there still saying, "Let 'em rot!"

Funding support for PEERS is noticeably lacking — abysmal, in fact. One is tempted to ask whether this is accidental that an agency with a mission to protect sex workers is struggling so much. Nevertheless PEERS remains fiercely committed to a political strategy — organized social response to the inevitability of prostitution in society. Frustrating as this is for activists working on the many aspects of the bleak social-economic social picture, there is this nasty stigma standing in the way of any possible change for the better.

Indeed stigma is the repeated slap in the face of those struggling to improve the conditions in the sex trade.

There has been recent press coverage of the sex trade on the A-Channel (CTV) and the *Georgia Straight* in late 2007. Undoubtedly the political landscape is beginning to change. But not fast enough. More dialogue needs to happen.

In the spirit of outreach, Jody sat down for a candid discussion with me, in the hopes of promoting growing ties with sister/brother agencies around the city — frankly, any group interested in building a coalition.

Diane Walsh: *What was it like working for an agency that reaches out to sex workers?*

Jody Paterson: Obviously if you're an agency that works with sex workers, the people that are going to come in the most are those in crisis. So we know that our view of who the customer is, so to speak, is skewed as the people who are coming to see us are the ones who are in trouble. So, that's one of the groups that I'll talk about. But there's a whole other group that we are starting to make connections with who are in a much healthier place in their life.

People tend to think of categories or types of sex workers, e.g. the "strip club dancer", the "escort" or the "call girl" and then there's the known "street walker" or "hooker" as often seen in cold weather. Surely it's not a choice per se to work outside?

There are two very distinct groups. It more or less separates out into what they call "outdoor sex workers" and "indoor sex workers". But that's a ridiculous term because the reason people are outdoors is because they were forced there. It's not like they chose to work at three o'clock in the morning on a dark industrial street. They're there because they are extremely disadvantaged women — it's those primarily on the stroll that I'm talking about. The thing about the sex trade is, whatever your level of disadvantage, there's such a demand you can always find work. So the sex trade for that group of people is about paying the bills — surviving.

It's good to see some academics researching and talking about the sex trade. For instance, in BC who is there in mainstream disciplines?

John [Loweman] at Simon Fraser University calls them "survival sex workers", distinguished from "empowered sex workers". They're not pimped, at least not here in Victoria. They're not coerced. They're not being forced into the trade. But on the other hand, if there was an option, they'd probably leave the trade because it's not so good for them. Right? They've got mental health issues. They've got FAS (Fetal Alcohol Syndrome). They're living in poverty and they have an addict layer on top of everything else. And they may have very poor physical health — either at the beginning or once they've worked outside in those conditions, being beaten up and all the horrible stuff that happens to people out there.

Could you describe a bit more "those" on the street and perhaps how PEERS can assist them?

There's a group of people that we see up here at PEERS who are extremely disadvantaged women. And we help that group by social strategies that surround housing, upgrading their education, getting out from under their addiction — helping them lift all the challenges they've got over their lives so they can make a freer choice. You want to work in the sex trade, now you're going to make better decisions. You're not gonna have to get into cars with strangers. Maybe you can find an indoor job. Maybe you work independently. You can make healthier choices within the trade. Or you can chose something completely different and leave it because you never wanted to be in it anyway. So that's one group of women.

Do the indoor workers face all together different issues?

The other group is a large class. Eighty to ninety percent of sex workers are what we call "indoor sex workers". Here in Victoria, outdoor sex workers, there are about 100 women — and I'll talk about the men in a minute — but there are about 100 women and researchers tell us that's 10-20 percent. So there are 800-1,000 sex workers in the region. The vast majority work indoors — it's just so invisible that even PEERS, which is all about the sex trade (three-quarter of our staff come from the sex trade) — we should be as familiar as anybody, but the indoor industry is still very out of the way and unseen. We are just starting to make contact with that group of people now and we are doing focus groups around what we can do for indoor workers, because they are a totally different group.

What about drug use?

We know that drug use is here in the sex industry — drugs are just a common thing, right? They're a part of their work place. We know that there's lots of drug use but there is less addiction, we think. There's less violence. There's less extreme disadvantage. There's more real choice in working in the industry, for whatever reason. But there are still lots of issues around, everything from — well, after 40 it can be rough place to be. Maybe you don't want to be in the sex industry after 40. Can we help them make plans, future plans for nest eggs, build something with their money? That comes from the sex trade being cash in pocket, cash out, cash in, cash out, and goes down...Oh, I'm \$100 short on rent. I'll go stand here and there's a \$100.

Lifeskills and money management is an issue for sex workers, as it can be for anyone really, right?

They have a very difficult time making that transition to the budget world of mainstream life. So there's lots of budgeting issues. For anybody, indoor, outdoor, however empowered they might be, there's an incredible stigma in our communities over sex workers. Just ever having been a sex worker becomes this scary thing in your past that you live in fear of someone finding out. You never talk about it, you find it difficult to sit around in a group of people and yak about being in the sex trade — unless you come to PEERS. That's where nobody bats an eye, and it's just normal.

So that's a little bit about them; but who they are as people? It ranges a great deal and everybody has their own story of how they came into the sex trade, and some of it is terrible, horrible abuse — like those really ugly stories of little kids and bad things happen to them. But sometimes it's naivety. Sometimes it's a clear decision as an adult that they made; sometimes it was a boyfriend or a girlfriend — someone who said, "Hey, you wanna make some money?" It's all about the money. For everybody, it's all about the money, why they're in the trade.

Albeit it may be a stereotype to say this...but people do wonder if there is such a thing as a type who is more easily drawn into the trade?

I often wish I could do Myers-Briggs on everybody who's in the trade. I think there's a personality type and it's very...they're dynamic. They like chaos. They're an intense kind of people. They can change on a dime — which is very handy organizationally, right? So that they can just go "snap-snap" and change the whole program on a weekend, which we've done several times. To work with people who come from the sex trade has probably ruined me for any other kind of workplace because it's such a great workplace with these dynamic personalities. They are all really distinctive. They don't like authority — and I'm kind of like that too!

What drew you to work for PEERS, to get behind its mission? You've been a journalist for more than [two] decades and so successful at it. Even now, what is or was the motivation factor to stay engaged in the flight? Grassroots causes...a feeling of still "being on the ground" as it were?

Yeah, and it was a big pay cut too! [Jody laughs.] Well, the thing with me is I'd have to go through this long story of being in journalism for 22 years, but it had been 22 years and anything after 22 years you've probably done it. So I was ready for change of some kind. In 1998 I'd done a volunteer stint with PEERS doing a project. We were organizing a conference for sexually exploited youth, and it was about nine months of planning and getting it all ready and having this conference and I was the media cocoordinator for them, and it was this wonderful experience from beginning to end.

Was there an all-women component or attraction? Yikes...the dirty "F" word: women's issues, as it were?

I'd never worked with all women before. The organizational committee was this no nonsense, put your skills on the table, and then go do what you know how to do. The whole work experience was terrific, and then of course the summit where you meet these youth that came from all over the Americas and you hear their stories, and your assumptions are challenged.

What did you go in expecting?

You go in expecting victims, really, I think, and even though some of the stories were just heartbreaking, those people aren't victims. Sex workers are not victims. In fact, they are kinda like the opposite of victims in a lot of ways. They're much stronger than that. I remember this one young woman who came up from—they sent them up from Brazil—and they managed to get all of the NGOs to fund their travel, their hotel and all of that. So they got all of that sorted out but they never gave them any spending money.

On the first day of the conference, there's the Brazilian girl standing on the corner right by Harbour Towers Hotel, working it so she can earn a little spending money because she's in Victoria. It's that kind a cheeky, survival orientation that I find, that I appreciate. That was a great experience and like I say, my own journey continues.

I get tired of journalism and my kids get to a certain age where they're grown, and I can cut my income, right? I'm not really a money person. It's just a career and I enjoy life. I started to think about "What would that be?" and "How would it look?" And then this job came open. I saw it in the paper, just in the classifieds and thought, "That's it!" It was like a light came on. PEERS—I'd had that great time with them. Writing about social issues over my 22 years in journalism, the sex trade had become—had instantly just got it. I instantly bonded with the issue.

Comment on being a woman and working in this milieu?

I think as a woman. If most women were being honest, I think they could understand the roots of the sex trade, the sex use as a commodity. I think women use sex as a commodity all the time. They just don't charge money for it. The sex trade is the end of the continuum where you're actually, you know — clear bill of sale and all of that. I can understand the sex trade, all of the women's issues; every woman's issue is rolled into the sex trade. It is the most powerful, uber women's issue of all time.

In terms of working for the underdog did this job fit?

I am very fond of an underdog. When you're in journalism, you tend to be, right? And there is no greater underdog, I think, than a sex trade worker, because of the stigma—the way that we view the sex trade and refuse to acknowledge its existence.

Could you place PEERS and the "praxis" work it is doing within the social movements (e.g. women's movement, workers' movement, homelessness movement). Then, could you contextualize how you feel it fits in each case?

Sadly it fits in all of those; yet none of those groups want anything to do with it. That is what I've discovered in my three years at PEERS. When I think back, I was so naïve when I came in, thinking of how I would go around and speak and people would understand what the sex trade really was, instead of what they think it is, and doors would open and things would change and it would all be this different world. In fact, I've done 120 speaks for PEERS in the time that I've been there. I've recognized that most of the people when I'm speaking to them hate the issue. I certainly place the sex trade in the women's movement, personally.

You'd think the woman's movement would be all over this, wouldn't you? I expect leaders and activist from all over would be helping PEERS if they knew what you or they were and are doing authentically.

I mean, it's got health, power, sexuality, mental health, child bearing, pregnancy— it just goes and on. You name your women's issue; it's in the sex trade. Money, it's all in there. The violence, everything is rolled in there, so to me it's completely in the women's movement. But the trouble with the women's movement is it has become, since the 70s, very much about viewing prostitution as exploitation of violence against women. That's it. The only view is prostitution as exploitation and therefore the only solution for it, is to eliminate it. And when that's your total view, how does a sex worker find her place in the women's movement? When the women's movement thinks that her very

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Books and films reviewed: Derrick Jensen, writer, philosopher--a wonderful example of a generalist thinker

By Brian Mason

I'm a Derrick Jensen fan. He's the activist writer and philosopher who wants to see our industrial civilization brought down quickly – as the only way to save the planet.

Jensen's a wonderful example of a generalist thinker, a type we need more of these days. An engineer by training, buffered by a master's degree in creative writing, Jensen brings perspective and breadth to arguments. He's like a modern-day Socrates, respectfully engaging all comers in a gentle conversation about where our civilization is taking the planet.

In his two-volume *Endgame*, Jensen provides his philosophy in 20 premises, each one persuasive and compelling on its own. Take the first: "Civilization is not and can never be sustainable. This is especially true for industrial civilization." Or premise 19: "The culture's problem lies above all in the belief that controlling and abusing the natural world is justifiable." His arguments are strongly supported by the world of evidence around us – if you care to really look, that is.

As Jensen often says, I'm doing it for the salmon. But wait a minute, if someone is arguing to bring down civilization, doesn't he have a responsibility to at least sketch out a workable alternative? Or to provide some instructions for bringing it all down? Well, no, he doesn't. Does someone have to know how to rebuild a house before they can help save it from burning? Or to be an expert on sustainable fishing practices before being allowed to plead for an end to bottom-trawlers?

A complex culture such as ours, based on domination and exploitation, soon faces overwhelming problems. Continually taking and growing, while giving back little – save for garbage and waste – it lacks respect for the earth. Not exactly a recipe for survival.

We have no repertoire of alternative behaviours – or philosophies, stories and myths – to draw on in dealing with our self-inflicted crises. As Jensen says in premise 10, "The culture as a whole and most of its members are insane. The culture is driven by a death urge, an urge to destroy life."

Consider, for example, some commonplace facts. Worldwide, traffic crashes kill over 1.2 million people every year – as well as uncountable numbers of other animals (road kill) – and are the leading cause of death in people ages 10 to 24. Or arms sales: the United States has long been the largest supplier of weapons to the developing world, a market now valued at \$30 billion annually. Warfare, broadly defined, claimed around 200 million lives throughout the twentieth

century. Jensen himself has written widely on the atrocities of slavery, domestic violence and sexual abuse.

Ours is a violent culture. Period. Inured to its more familiar aspects, we decry "new" forms of violence on the margins of society (like the epidemic of homelessness) or in other countries (those car bombs!). Our own destruction of the planet's ecosystems, of indigenous peoples and of poor countries is somehow overlooked – or discounted entirely.

The single biggest difference between Jensen and other commentators on the planet's woes is huge and dramatic.

Others might bemoan what is taking place, exhorting us all to buy a hybrid car and vote for a left-leaning political party: business pretty much as usual, in other words. Only Jensen has an unremitting instinct for burrowing through the layers of lies and cover-ups to expose the twin foundational truths of industrial civilization: Not only is it unsustainable, it is irredeemable. And it's that final, crucial word, irredeemable, that sets him apart.

I recently read, by way of contrast with Jensen's work, an article in *New Scientist* on whether we in the developed world should even bother trying to reduce our personal carbon footprints (it concluded that it was), given that "a billion Chinese and most of the rest of the planet are jacking up their emissions as if there were no tomorrow."

Even if you were to go completely green in your personal life, barely half of your per capita carbon footprint would be affected. That's because the remainder comes from merely living in Canada, where powering our workplaces, maintaining our infrastructure and government, and producing whatever we do consume generates a background level of emissions. Yet never once mentioned in the article is the real culprit: industrial civilization. Its fundamentals went unquestioned. Just make a few adjustments, it seemed to say. Not so with Jensen.

He doesn't leave us completely adrift, however. Jensen values what he has learned about indigenous cultures as well as from the rest of nature, implying that humanity's best hope lies in these directions. But even Jensen – especially Jensen – doesn't pretend to know what would replace our unsustainable civilization when it comes down. All he knows for sure is that the salmon would be better off after it happens. I think he's right.

Brian Mason is a writer and philosopher living in Victoria. A longer version of this article appeared in Victoria's *Street Newz*.

Mother Tongue Publishing to fill void left by end of Raincoast Publishing's publishing department

While Raincoast Publishing, once one of the biggest publishers in BC, has terminated its publishing department, Mother Tongue Press, for 18 years a small private literary press on Salt Spring Island, has forged forward with a new name and mandate, leaping bravely across the chasm of the perilous trade to become BC's newest art and literary publisher.

The new Mother Tongue Publishing Limited Company will publish unique, bold and stimulating books of BC art history, fine art and literature. *BC Artists of the 20th Century*, their new and long-awaited series, is dedicated to recognizing unheralded BC artists and igniting an overdue discourse on their artistic and historic significance.

Mother Tongue's art books are written for the discerning collector, curator and dealer as well as public institutions, students, teachers and historians.

Two of the new books to be published in the fall of 2008 by Mother Tongue Publishing Limited will be:

David Franklin Marshall: Sculptor, by Monika Ullmann, the first in the *BC Artists in the 20th Century Series*, and *Rocksalt, An Anthology of Contemporary*

BC Poetry, edited by Harold Rhenisch and Mona Fertig.

It is the first anthology of BC poetry in 31 years, and is open to all poets living in BC. For submission guidelines email: s u b m i s s i o n s @ m o t h e r t o n g u e p u b l i s h i n g . c o m or visit the [w e b s i t e : www.mothertonguepublishing.com](http://www.mothertonguepublishing.com)

Mother Tongue Publishing Limited will also be having a BC Artists' Fundraising Art Auction in support of the new series of books on unheralded BC artists on April 24 at the Westbridge Fine Art Auction House in Vancouver. On-line auction and bidding will open April 1-24. Gallery viewing will be April 19-24. Live Auction will take place 7:30 pm April 24.

A complete list of donated historical and contemporary art is available. Artists, collectors and curators who donate art for the auction will be acknowledged in every book of the series as Patrons and Supporters of the Arts.

For more information, call Mona Fertig, at 250-537-4155, on Salt Spring Island, or email her at mona@mothertonguepublishing.com

Emily Carr is focal point of 2008 Festival of the Arts and Ecology

COLWOOD — Internationally renowned local artist and icon Emily Carr is the inspiration for a region-wide festival featuring local art, culture and heritage and celebrating sustainable community living.

The Emily Carr Community Festival of the Arts and Ecology is a natural fit. The famous artist, whose paintings can today fetch between \$500,000 and \$1 million, proclaimed her environmentalism and respect for culture and heritage through her art.

The spring festival aptly celebrates Carr's life and work in bringing community together for a series of events focusing on art, culture, heritage and learning about our amazing natural environment.

It was 100 years ago that Emily made her initial transformative trip to paint in First Nations villages on Vancouver Island.

Explore the life and works of Emily Carr at Emily Carr House, the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, and other activities including plein air painting excursions to some of Carr's favourite places to paint and enjoy nature.

Emily + Robert: A Student Art Show will interpret the worlds and works of Carr and Robert Bateman. *Robert Bateman: Canvassed* also runs during the festival, featuring a collection of his giclée prints.

"Emily Carr House is delighted to provide sponsorship and lend its name to the festival which so appropriately reflects the legacy of Emily Carr, champion of the arts and the environment," says Jan Ross, Emily Carr House curator.

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work is exploitation and she's *agreeing* to violence every time she goes to work, she can't find her fit in there and they don't find her fit and the women's movement has not even come close to embracing the sex trade. It's still extremely divided

The worker's movement should have something to say to this, no? You'd expect so.

So you move into workers' movement -- another place where it's a no-brainer: Who has the worst working conditions in the country? Sex workers! So if you're in a union movement, who should you see standing along side you -- your sisters and brothers of the sex trade who are enduring the worst working conditions -- even in the indoor world. The outdoor is just ridiculous. But even the indoor's completely unregulated. You get a good boss? Lucky you. Bad boss? Too bad for you. There's no control, no oversight, no acknowledgement. Is it safe in there? Is it clean? Are you being shifted properly? Do you get holiday pay? Do you get vacation pay? Do you work five days a week not seven? What are all of the requirements?

In fact we know within the indoor worker population there's huge exploitation financially around \$50--a minute--fines for being late, a \$250 coffee fund that's mandatory for you to pay into each month--all of these hidden fees that would never be tolerated in a regular workplace. But because the work place is completely out of everybody's sight and ignored--actively ignored--then those things can happen.

Have you tried to liaise formally with the workers' cause?

I have tried with the union movement and they're not interested either. Their problem is that the big unions, like the Canadian Labour Congress representing all the Canadian unions, have women's groups within them and those women's groups are divided on the sex trade.

I've heard you've tried quite hard to bring them on board. What was that like?

I wrote to the Canadian Labour Congress and said, "Please, consider this issue." I'd say that this is the most pressing workers rights issue in Canada. Say something. Come out. And they called back and said, "Sorry, our members are divided. So we can't take a position on it." The BC Feds, BC Federation of Labour here in BC, told me, "Well, we'll have you speak but we'll have you speak to the violence against women. We're having a violence against women conference and we'd like you to speak to them."

Do prostitutes face violence? Yes they do. And is that the only issue? No, it isn't. So why do they face violence? Because their workplace is so lousy! So you would address the issues of violence in the sex trade by addressing the workplace conditions.

Much more could be done it sounds like, if more people knew help was needed.

The movement that should be most interested in it doesn't want anything to do with it. So, that's the trouble.

What does the homelessness piece look like?

The homeless thing--I could go there too. Homelessness is different for sex workers. Part of us is in that issue, especially the outdoor...well it's never the indoor girls. The outdoor workers do experience chronic bouts of homelessness. On any given night, they can hustle up \$60 for hotel room usually. But they're still homeless in the sense that a hotel room that night is not "housing". It's just a temporary fix for the night. But at the same time, they still fall outside of the standard homeless parameters, which are around people rolled up in sleeping bags, sleeping in the doorway. Again, they don't quite fit.

This brings us back to stigma.

It's interesting. Every time I go anywhere, I start to feel as marginalized as the sex workers because I don't fit in the room. I just went to a big women's congress in Vancouver and I could tell I didn't fit in that room either. The sex trade issues are always just-- everywhere, they're in everybody's pot, but they're on the fringe, because everyone hates the issue. We don't have any champions, there are no champions.

For the conclusion to Diane Walsh's exclusive interview with Jody Paterson, watch for the next issue of the Lower Island News, coming out June 9. - Ed.

Jodie Paterson talks about stigmatization

By Diane Walsh

The Prostitution Empowerment, Education and Resource Society is an umbrella-protection agency for both indoor and outdoor sex workers in the Victoria community.

In the last issue of the *Lower Island News*, independent journalist Diane Walsh introduced readers to Jodie Paterson, the veteran *Times Colonist* journalist who had recently retired from a three-year stint at PEERS. In fact she was their executive director until the end of summer 2007 at which time she stepped down as a formal staff member and became Victoria's best-known advocate for streets issues' solutions.

In Part 2 of her interview, Walsh continues to probe Paterson's experience with PEERS and her hopes of promoting growing ties with sister/brother' agencies around the city – frankly any group interested in building a coalition.

Diane Walsh: *From what you're saying, I gather that as a society we permit the devaluation of sex workers. Within the very movements you'd think would embrace "labourers", you see similar devaluation – it's right across the board, isn't it? Very depressing. Have you found a paralyzing pessimism permeating community grassroots agencies like PEERS because of these walls...this ineradicable stigma we've been talking about?*

Jodie Paterson: Oh yeah. I'm done as executive director, and the biggest reason, the biggest burnout factor has not been the people coming through the door with all of their challenges. Like the sad stories that you sometimes heard and saw. The terrible things that you saw happening to people — you get through that. What becomes the greater burnout is the rest of the community and the inability to move anybody to do anything. Now I know the names of the people who are suffering and being beaten — and it isn't because the sex trade is violent, that's the part that gets me the most. They call it a high-risk profession.

Tell me the crux of the issue?

The only reason it's high risk is because it operates outside of the norms of other kinds of workplaces. Sex and violence do not go hand in hand. Most people have sex without violence. There is no link between sex and violence.

Why or how is this able to happen?

The only reason it happens to sex workers is because they're set up by us to live in, or work in, this place where sick people can come and find them, take them, beat them, leave them somewhere, and they're so devalued that no one reports them missing for years and so shrugs when they're gone. That's how the Pickton thing happened. All of those people! If there had been seventy 7-11 clerks killed in the lower mainland, there'd be a Commission. There'd be a study. There'd be people just going crazy over how can it be that so many 7-11 clerks are being killed. But if it's a sex worker?

Sounds like we've hit on the theme of the social ostracism of the issue itself, of street prostitution, suggesting this is undoubtedly the first stumbling block in the way of any change forward. Your analysis addresses the closing-out of any positive changes that could be made for the trade if people simply saw things differently. The issues you raise, on a macro level, are willfully ignored.

No one wants to touch the sex trade topic politically, albeit government and communities of people alike are prepared to accept the inevitability of streetwalkers exploited rampantly, when this does not *have* to be the case.

There are solutions, yes? Is it extremely difficult (I'm imagining) to proceed with any in-depth discussion of the environment sex workers work in, when the topic is not even on the political radar and has yet to be admissible as an issue for the fighting agenda of the labour movements we've discussed?

Everybody's reaction is just a great big, "Well, she shouldn't be in the sex trade then." And I think that's what I want to do: I want to push the working conditions thing. That's become the thing that has left me just incensed—three years on—is just how very, very, very wrong it is to leave them with these conditions. *This is intolerable!* And they're working for our brothers and sisters across the country. Based on what we've got in terms of sex workers in Victoria and extrapolate that per capita and you've got 75,000 sex workers in Canada. That's a significant work force, and I just want to see the labour movement stand beside us, and start to make the changes that need to happen in the workplace. Now when the workplace changes, that doesn't solve anything else, but it eradicates some of the stigma—also the terrible working conditions, and by saying to Canadians this is an industry—OK little different quality—but it is still an industry.

What do you think we have to do to lift the stigma?

The stigma starts to lift when all of those things that we've been talking about—the women's groups, queer groups, all those people that perhaps don't want to be associated with this stigmatized population— rethink their views. Lifting the stigma and treating sex trade work as work becomes the avenue to address all the other issues that are underneath it.

How exactly does the stigma work?

The stigma is such that you can't address any of the issues fully because of that stigma. Like health issues are certainly a pressing need, particularly among the outdoor workers. The fact is that when they go to the hospital, sex workers are treated completely differently. And they're re-stigmatized quit actively. They're under-medicated for pain, because they are seen as drug-seeking. And honestly who *isn't* drug-seeking when you're in pain? Show me the person, and it becomes a negative experience all over again. And therefore they withdraw from the health services and their health suffers as a result. And what is the answer to that stigma? It isn't more health services (unless it's more health services with people that understand sex workers). It's to de-stigmatize them so that they can go, just like the rest of us, and access the services that the rest of us access. They can't go to the police. They can't go to the sexual assault centre.

Could one part of the dilemma facing sex workers be that services that are available (i.e. women's centres) tend to stigmatize "women of the trade" from the outset, hence sex workers may chose to avoid such centres when, in fact, in terms of funding and mobilization, feminist groups may prove one day to be useful coalition allies?

Some of them, like the one in Vancouver, consider all prostitution to be rape. Well, how are you going to go get your sexual assault counselling done and admit that you used to be a sex worker? Their view is that you used to be raped every time you worked. Where do you find your personal level of safety in that environment? So the services that are widely available to all of us are denied to sex workers because of the stigma.

Ideally, if some of the social movements or special interest groups were to get behind this emerging street-issue/poverty movement in Victoria that we've been talking about (in some way to help better regulate the working conditions of sex workers) do you think that could have an unintended consequence of infringing upon the privacy currently "enjoyed" by men (primarily men, but not exclusively) buying sex services as we speak?

If the labour movement (hypothetically) seriously contemplated taking on "protecting

sex workers" as a cause, perhaps buyers may feel at risk of being "outed". In fact I'm thinking this *may be* one of the reasons why no one wants to take this issue up. Vested interest wants it kept underground—out of sight, out of mind. Buyers don't want to be outed. Nor should they be if we all accept as a community that sex work is a natural part of human society.

The conundrum is how to protect the worker without destroying the life of the buyer by making him/her out to be a pariah for "purchasing" various kinds of pleasure, rather than being able to find someone to give it to them voluntarily as it were.

Indeed, the problems which emerge from an unregulated sex trade (rings/gang crimes/drugs/diseases) is not actually out of sight, as some people like to suggest it should be, precisely because the sex trade is growing and therefore the activities associated with street sex trade are more visible – studies have shown that more and more people are entering the trade. More poverty in our city means more people on the street and the women falling prey to "streetwalking".

We don't have to have a society which protects the buyer and necessarily exploits the worker, just because we know "she's" vulnerable and can be exploited.

What's your take?

It all comes back to the buyers, but I don't think they have to be "outed". You can have a safe workplace and still be discreet, right? It doesn't mean that we have to say, "Here are all the brothels in the neighbourhood," and say, "Here's Betty's Brothel," written on the side or anything. You can still have a discreet operation that wouldn't "out" the buyers. Lifting the stigma, buyers could actually—perhaps—come out themselves, and acknowledge it. I see that they hold very many of the mysteries of the sex trade. I don't know why men buy sex at the volumes that they do. And I can tell you there have not been any studies that determine that.

My question is: does any highlighting whatsoever of sex work impact buyers negatively who may prefer the trade to remain underground? Could you talk more about the discretion piece? There are those "empowered" workers who are self-employed and entrepreneurial (and not addicted to crack!) who may not be interested in "regulation".

It's all so secretive around the buyers that there would be things that we could do that could improve the situation. Using the information provided by buyers, we *could* improve the situation for sex workers, too, right? We don't get information from buyers, but we do need to find out, someone needs to find out why men buy sex. Not to judge them, not to shame them, not to put their names in the paper and list their licence plates—just to tell me about that, tell me why that is. This is the great mystery for me. Why I can flip open the yellow pages and I can find in Victoria 12 escort agencies. I can phone and have somebody sent to me in my hotel or house or wherever in five minutes—flat. So, why do I go down to the stroll and buy sick desperate women covered in sores from injection drug use, why do I do that? Now what most people think is because it's cheap.

Perhaps it's a "kink" in itself – people wanting to feel "dirty"?

There is certainly a "cheap" element to it, but it's way more complex than that. It's about power, it's about risk, you know? A guy with a baby seat in the back, and a family at home, buying a really, really sick girl down on the stroll. And he shoots up heroin while she gives him a blowjob—like what is *that* all about? (OK, imagine being that guy's wife being back at home and not knowing any of that!). But there is something about male sexuality that sends men to the outdoor stroll. And if the outdoor stroll is seen as a problem in our communities (and I'm going to say that it is—both for the sex workers, and for the communities that host the stroll), dealing with the needles and the noise and chaos, and the police, and everyone, the outdoor stroll is a negative thing, right? So to get at that outdoor stroll is not just about removing those women to some other place, it's about understanding why are men doing [it].

Do you think getting information from the buyers, as it were, is part of the strategy required to get to the heart of the issue?

The key to some of those strategies to move forward—involve hearing from men. We didn't get funded for it but we actually put in a project to have sex workers interview their clients. They're not going to—just—interview. I don't picture this drug addicted girl and this dangerous guy: "Excuse me, mind if I ask you a few questions?" A lot of regulars would have been very willing to do an interview. But the only people they're going to do any interviews with are either another guy who is a buyer or a sex worker right? They're not going to be coming to me, "I'm holding a little focus group. Would you like to tell me about the time you bought a prostitute?" They're just not going to do that. The men—the buyers absolutely, there's much that needs to be heard from the buyers.

If it could be shown that the buyers would be ensured a safe(r) environment where they can buy services, then do you think that would go some way to convincing labour leaders to get on board with regulating trade work?

Building sympathy for the buyers is probably just about the only thing that is trickier than building sympathy for the sex workers. So I think what you would have to do for the buyers would be just to rely on strategies for good business.

Is the answer to make it "good" or "better" for buyers, to improve sex worker's working conditions?

A brothel that would have all the proper regulations—safe workplace, and all the rest of that—and the profits beyond the cost of running the business going toward a program (like PEERS) to support the disadvantaged sex workers who want to get out. So, now you have a proper workplace, and you have the money—which is a whole other issue, right? Trying to find the money: I say again, all the people that don't like this issue—imagine trying to find money to run your non-profit organization from donors and what not. So you begin to generate your own revenue to help the ones who do want out, to build homes and treatment beds and all the rest of the things you could do if you had the money. And meanwhile, you think of this brothel— what does this brothel need to do from the buyer's perspective?

What would that look like?

It needs to be an excellent brothel, it needs to be a good business, and it needs to be a place where a customer—just like any customer service industry—a customer feels comfortable, welcome. And if discretion is a big deal, then it has to be really discreet and the women have to be healthy and empowered and happy to be there, non-exploited—choosing to be in the trade. So to me, you serve the buyers—if you're talking about that level—you serve the buyers through customer service. And I think the sex trade is like any other customer service industry. There's the "Wal-Mart's" and there's the "Holt Renfrew's" and the customers accordingly go to those different businesses. But I think the public case for a better business for the customers is a long way off.

Do you think the Labour Movement could/would ever help to bring things to task?

I don't think the labour movement (I mean I could be proven wrong)—I'm certainly

Please turn to Jody Paterson talks about her work with PEERS, page 23

Books and films reviewed:

War in Colombia: Made in U.S.A., Toledo, Rebecca, Teresa Guiterrez, Sara Flounders and Andy McInerney, editors, 2003, International Action Center, www.iacenter.org New York, USA.

Reviewed by Theresa Wolfwood

"Cultural intervention can alter a whole society, destroying traditions, customs, values and mores developed over centuries...Far beyond its economic exploitation, cultural intervention destroys the aspects of life that best identify a whole people from all their history, imagination and character..."

Psychological intervention invades the mind, telling its subjects what they are to believe and be."

— Ramsey Clark in his opening essay

Some years ago I was struggling to understand the situation in the former Yugoslavia, the conflicts, wars and disintegration of a nation. I came across the IAC's book *NATO in the Balkans*. It made the situation clear to me; the post cold war naivety that infected many of us was stripped away and I could grasp the power of US global dominance.

While much of our global attention is focussed on conflict in Asia, economic and environmental disasters, the US is continuing its many decades of intervention and sabotage in Latin America. Colombia is the launching pad for the US's economic, political, military and environmental attack on Latin America. The 38 contributions in this valuable guide are organized under themes; US intervention in Colombia, Voices from Colombia, US intervention: the regional picture, the world responds to Plan Colombia and the people of the US say No.

Altogether, the writers not only make clear the domination of Colombia by the US but also the superpower's past and future designs on Latin America – seen through the eyes of US activists, Colombian resisters in many organizations — unionists, peasants, indigenous peoples, human rights workers and intellectuals — and the viewpoint of other Latin Americans and Europeans.

The topics range from the phoney "War on Drugs" to the machinations of "Plan Colombia" to personal stories of those who choose armed resistance, those who struggle at great risk in trade unions, the future of coca agriculture, to essays and speeches by leaders in Cuba, Venezuela, Ecuador and the actions coming out of major international conferences.

As Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador challenge the US, politics are heating up daily in Latin America, and the US beefs up its 16 known military facilities inside Colombia to threaten both Bolivia and Venezuela. That leaves the Colombian military and paramilitary to control its population – from taking peasants off the land to assassinating any resistance activists who oppose the US -backed regime.

Of particular interest is the campaign against Coca Cola – the symbol and active presence of the US everywhere. A boycott of CC organized by Colombian unions (whose

At the Door of all the East: The Philippines in United States Military Strategy, Focus on the Global South, The Philippines, by Herbert Docena, 2007.

Available in print from www.focusweb.org or in electronic copy:
www.focusweb.org/at-the-door-of-all-the-east.pdf
 Word doc file: www.focusweb.org/at-the-door-of-all-the-east-doc.doc
 Text file: www.focusweb.org/at-the-door-of-all-the-east-doc.doc

Review by Theresa Wolfwood

The Philippines gives us a base at the door of all the East.

— US Senator Alfred J. Beveridge, 1900

Herbert Docena's excellent research reports are on the cutting edge of modern documentation. Much more useful than whole books with long publication time lines and limited availability, these reports are available in print and many electronic forms soon after completion and are readily accessible.

This is the latest of his reports from the respected group Focus on the Global South which is an integral part of the social movements in the Philippines and globally. These reports are models of presentation and content; they have excellent graphics, photos, charts, maps, etc., and clear precise prose, all well laid out and easy to read with extensive endnotes for both veracity and more detailed study.

(See www.bbcf.ca for a review of his previous report: *UNCONVENTIONAL WARFARE: Are US Special Forces engaged in an 'offensive war' in the Philippines?*)

While much activist attention is rightly being focussed on Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine and western Asia, Docena has documented the build up of the US's military in the Philippines as part of its long-term policy on its real perceived enemy – China.

Beveridge's statement held for most of the 20th Century as the US used the Philippines as a colony, then as a base after independence in 1946. Its strategic location and history made the country a vital part of US military campaigns in Korea, Vietnam and interventions elsewhere, including within the Philippines.

Other countries, while friendly to the US, are too close to China to consider allowing a US military presence; others are not well located. On page 92, a map of the region displays all the possibilities and inherent problems of their political and geographic positions.

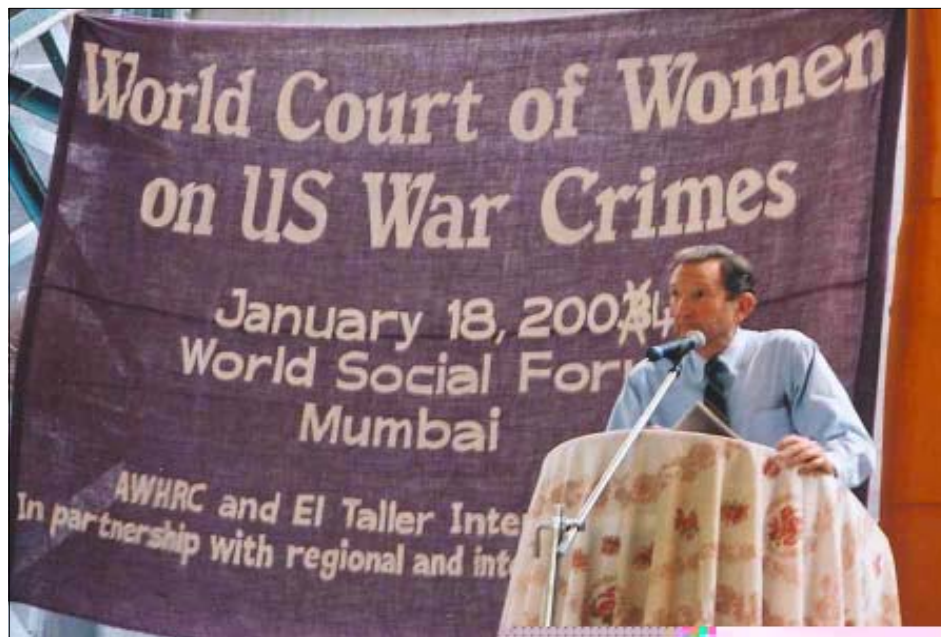
In 1991 the forces of change swept the Philippines and as result, political decisions were made that reevaluated the country's relationship with the US and there was a closing of bases and a much diminished US military presence in the country. Although there are not supposed to be any permanent US bases now, recent more friendly government signed a Visiting Forces Agreement in 1998, and *"a steady stream of US troops has been arriving in the country for regular and recurring military exercises..."*

Since 9/11/01 the US presence has steadily increased beyond any idea of "visiting", as Docena documents in his previous report (see above). This has happened under the constant mantra we have all heard, a mantra that has invoked major changes in human and civil rights legislation of other countries, including Canada and the UK: **the global war against terrorism.**

Docena concludes with a wider and longer view of the future of the Philippines' policies and position in a new global order. As he points out, "The Philippines' continuing support for US military objectives is also by no means predestined." It may well be that future politicians may see China as a better ally or choose not to align their governments with either power.

"What is sure, at this stage, is that the Philippines has become even more crucial to US military strategy than ever. Whether US military strategy is critical to the Philippines, however, is the more fundamental question...As this report has tried to show, the Philippines plays a key role in underpinning the US's larger goal of containing China and assuring its own pre-eminence. The question, therefore, is whether the Philippines should continue to support the US strategy of permanent dominance and whether a world ordered by one permanent superpower is the kind of world that best serves the interests of the Philippines. Because of the critical role it could potentially play in contributing to sustaining or thwarting US military ambitions, the answer will have global implications."

There are about 150 countries in the world where citizens should be asking those



Theresa Wolfwood photo

Founder of IAC, Ramsey Clark, speaks at World Social Forum, Mumbai.

leaders are regularly disappeared and murdered) and US unions should be one of the most effective global boycotts ever – CC is guilty of many transgressions, not only in Colombia, to say nothing of rotting the teeth and stomachs of millions. The power of advertising and lobbying seems to prevent people world-wide from really endorsing and joining the boycott.

All these varied and important contributions come together to give a clear picture of the almost 200 years of the US's (and Canada's, more recently, from our trade deals to our gift of ruthless advisors to Colombian presidents) cosy involvement with a protected and ruthless regime in a land of rich resources and a majority population whose millions live in poverty and insecurity.

Theresa Wolfwood is Director of the Barnard-Boecker Centre Foundation in Victoria. See www.bbcf.ca for more articles and reviews.

questions about their nation's involvement with the US, particularly in Canada. Docena has done a brilliant job of framing issues that are extremely important for many peace activists everywhere, while setting the problems so clearly in his own country.

Theresa Wolfwood is the Director of the Barnard-Boecker Centre Foundation in Victoria. See: www.bbcf.ca for more reviews and articles.

Jodie Paterson talks about stigmas

from page18

willing to try to get the labour movement interested in just about anything—so maybe I should try that one.

Where should the exact focus be?

On two fronts—from the workplace and from the money to help the people. I'm sick of begging for money from people who are not interested in giving. Let's get the money from the customers—working for sex workers in a different kind of way.

This tapping into the customers as the resource for improved working conditions in tandem with a strategic coalition with labour and women's groups sounds mildly promising. I mean there's got to be somebody out there who cares and wants to get on the bandwagon! It's not like the ancient sex trade is ever going to be eliminated. Should we not be motivated to curtail the social problems associated with prostitution?

To eliminate the trade—they've never been able to do that anywhere in the world—for anything, ever! And yet do they—ever once talk about the buyers? No! It's like they don't exist. I've got these 20 points of why the sex industry shouldn't be legalized. And one of them was the increase in sex workers drives men to buy sex more...ugh, give me break! I've been surprised at the depth of the stigma in terms of getting other groups to work with us. I don't mean groups like AIDS Vancouver Island, and Street Link, and KOOLAID, and groups that are working on the streets—no problem. We have no problem where we can share a client base. It's the bigger movements—it's the places where we might fit better where we can't seem to find the interest and—I don't know. I mean I don't get it, I really don't! I knew there was a stigma over the sex trade and people would be resistant to hearing about it, but I had no idea it was this deep, this entrenched, this all-encompassing! I can't even find one group of people where they really get it!

Have there been efforts to coalesce with health agencies organizations?

Oh yes. PEERS does joint funding with FAS. We've done a project in collaboration with them. We've worked in the past with AIDS Vancouver Island. We're happy to do joint funding stuff and, in fact, these days in the non-profit world you better be happy to do it because everybody wants you to partner with somebody. But a program is not the same as lifting the stigma. I don't think you could have—well, I suppose you could have—just a "Wow" ad campaign that went over, say, two years. I think it would be on the level for sex-work—it is way bigger than drinking and driving or wearing your seatbelt—where you would have to change first the way people think and then the way they behave. That's a 10-year process to change that. So, there is no program—no collaboration. I'd love to collaborate with the women's movement or the labour movement but so far that hasn't happened. Start the shift in attitudes and thinking!

Ideally, if one could choose a group to work with—who would that be? Or what would that be?

Well, if I had my choice I'd choose the labour movement. That's who I'd choose because I see that as the opportunity for greatest change in the quickest period of time for sex workers.