

Be Quiet! Games In Session!

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The idea of Olympic Games was born from the dream of uniting the entire human race, regardless of language, background, sex, or religion. The modern Olympic games were created in a way to bring all countries together and share love, joy, and friendship through sports and competition. Pictures taken from any angle within the Olympic Games setting are consistently filled with laughter, cheers, and joy. However, do we really see everything associated with this great sporting event?

With just over 12 months before the 2010 Vancouver Olympic Games kicks off, many issues related to human rights arise during the preparation process. Judy Rogers, a member of the Vancouver Olympic Organizing Committee (VANOC), and city manager for Vancouver, is making headlines in this matter. According to Blogger News Network, a network with English language analysis and editorials on current events, Rogers has reputedly abused her political power by banning hundreds of non-violent Downtown Eastersiders from approaching the Media Center for the games.

Downtown Eastside is one of the oldest neighborhoods in Vancouver; it is infamous for its high rate of poverty and other issues such as drug addiction, prostitution, and homelessness. The lower Eastside was a popular shopping district in the 80's but has since experienced vast amounts of urban decay, and if recent reports from academia and the media are accurate, is now undergoing a process of social cleansing through gentrification and aggressive police tactics.

The Media Centre that will serve as the headquarters to news reporters from all around the world during the games will be located merely six blocks away from the lower Eastside. However, some residents of the lower Eastside will be banned from exercising their rights to freedom of speech, or from support-

ing individuals exercising their rights to freedom of the press.

As part of the restraining laws, persons placed under arrest will have to serve their sentences before being provided with the eligibility to appeal. Following the appeal, all released detainees will have a criminal record with the City of Vancouver and will be denied the right to have the misrepresentation expunged.

A practice of Rogers' administration has supposedly been to ban her critics from freely expressing their opinions. William Simpson, a homeless human rights activist who has a very positive reputation in the Downtown Eastside as an active community member, was banned from Board meetings in Carnegie Centre, just after he was elected to the Board of Directors of the center, by a city manager who answers to Judy Rogers. Stories told by witnesses suggest that he was refused entry into the Center by security guards while meetings were in procession.

Carnegie Centre in Downtown Eastside provides a range of social, recreational and educational programs to the residents of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. Many locals consider it the community's living room. Speculation among board members of Carnegie Centre regarding Rogers' administration suggests that Simpson was banned due to his controversial website which feature links to the Downtown Eastside Enquirer blog which include criticisms of certain city management staff, including Judy Rogers. Yet the City of Vancouver has never identified one entry on the blog that they consider to be inaccurate - despite Simpson asking the management staff for this information. This raises the question as to the extent that intimidation has been used in the evolving relationship between city management and Eastside residents.

Though Judy Rogers was fired by new Vancouver Mayor Greg Robertson in December her legacy remains in place, and she still appears on the VANOC Board of Directors webpage. Rogers also remains the Chairwoman of 2010 LegaciesNow, the organization that

has been working to ensure that the Olympic development will leave a lasting positive legacy on the city, province, and country.

The 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympic Games are just 10 months away. While many Canadians are excited for, or in the very least intrigued about our time in the Olympic spotlight, many voices are being buried along with the issues under the debris of the ongoing gentrification of the Downtown Eastside.

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The Main Media Centre in Downtown Vancouver has been the site of numerous protests