

Trouble (A Report on â€œOrientalâ€• Activities Within the Province)

Description

With the support of the Canadian Worker Coop Federation, Seize the Means of Production Video Co-Op commissioned a new public window display by Clare Yow, entitled â€œ*Trouble (A Report on â€œOrientalâ€• Activities Within the Province)*.â€•

This artwork features archival images and newspaper clippings that reflect the systemic racism faced by Asian migrant labourers in Canada at the start of the 20th century. The project aims to centre the history of racialized worker movements, and to highlight parallel values of worker co-ops, such as equity, equality and solidarity. Clareâ€™s artwork thoughtfully illuminates these stories of struggle and shared resistance â€“ themes that continue to echo and resonate in the present day.

Excerpt about the work by Clare Yow:

â€œCommissioned by Seize the Means Video Co-Op and VALU Projects, these street-level window displays â€” at the Lim Sai Hor Kow Mok Benevolent Association building in Vancouverâ€™s historic Chinatown â€” documents a fragment of the history of Chinese, Japanese, and South Asian labourers who organized and struck against racist and substandard working conditions in the early 1900s locally and provincially.

Indigenous and racialized workers in British Columbia faced pervasive racism in their everyday lives, a symptom of broader white supremacist ideologies and xenophobia that sought to control and restrict Asian immigration in order to preserve a â€œWhite Canada forever,â€• as the 1900s song goes.

[â€¦] These sentiments were perpetuated by unions and workplaces that deliberately excluded, barred, and undercut non-White and â€œOrientalâ€• workers. For instance, the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council (VTLC) organized boycotts of Japanese-Canadian businesses as they believed cheaper Japanese-Canadian labour undermined union workers. Furthermore, members of the Canadian branch of the Asiatic Exclusion Leagueâ€”formed under the auspices of VTLCâ€”were behind the days-long September 1907 anti-Asian riots which injured many and caused extensive damage to Chinese and Japanese businesses in

Vancouverâ€™s Chinatown and Japantown/Paueru-gai ãƒ‘ã‚¦ã‚¨ãƒ«è¡—. These riots resulted in the Vancouver Chinese community calling a general strike of all Chinese labourers days later, a story previously unknown to me, found documented in a newspaper article seen on the rightmost window display.â€•

To read the full artistic statement, please visit https://clareyow.com/portfolio/trouble/

To further explore these themes of racial exclusion and collective organizing, Seize the Means Video Co-Op also produced a webinar panel with Poet-scholar Rita Wong and Clare which features a conversation around race, labour and solidarity in social movements today. In this webinar, David, Rita and Clare grapple with the themes of the piece â€œTroubleâ€•, and reflect on intersectional issues that their communities face today, including xenophobia, colonization, eroded labour rights, and other struggles for liberation.

The public artwork is on display at the UCI Studio at 525 Carrall Street in Vancouver.

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