

The HateGate Affair:

Unmasking Canada's Hate Industry



Caryma Sa'd & Elisa Hategan

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BY:

Caryma Sa'd & Elisa Hategan

In the midst of winter, I found there was, within me, an invincible summer.

Albert Camus

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Prologue

A public safety minister makes false and alarmist comments in a press conference; when pressed for details, he directs media to law enforcement, who scramble to produce evidence where there is none. An officer is tasked to produce a key briefing for top officials to help government decision-making, in only fifteen minutes. Intelligence Analysts taking cues from anonymous Twitter trolls involved in criminal harassment. Citizens' personal information is eagerly shared with international spy agencies, even as internal reports circulate acknowledging there is no evidence of terrorist activity.

An entire country's intelligence departments relying on a single source—a source that banks on the questionable judgement calls of inexperienced, ideologically-motivated activists cosplaying online as Nazis and Russian models to gather data and donations. A source that cloaks its researchers in anonymity and refuses to disclose their credentials, conflicts of interest, or track record, even as they are widely quoted in the media as subject matter experts.

Welcome to Canada.

Introduction

This story is a horror, tragedy, and farce, rolled into one.

Its ending as yet unwritten.

The only thing we can control is whether to tell the truth. And we do.

Democratic countries distinguish themselves from totalitarian dictatorships through the process of fair elections and by putting the power in the hands of the people. But what if a democratic government wants to stack the deck in their favour? They can't cart people off into the night, imprison them without cause, execute them at dawn. That would violate human rights by any standard. And it wouldn't look good for a leader who prides himself on being a nice guy.

The layer of insulation that buffers democratic governments from accusations of authoritarian rule is the pretense of deferral to experts, think tanks, consultants and academics who can provide perfunctory recommendations to rubber-stamp what the government plans to do in the first place. Oftentimes, the expertise is paid for by government money through military defence contracts, public safety and emergency funds, and other sources.

If the public resists any proposed policy or legislation, the state can magnanimously defer to the vast knowledge of experts who all concur in unison that, unless the bill passes, "harm" will occur. Danger. Terrorism. Destruction. The loss of your way of life as you know it. And if you still do not comply, stronger measures may become required. Those who resist are vilified through state-sponsored broadcast media and social media smear campaigns—these tactics serve the dual purpose of securing the public's acceptance, or at least acquiescence, and making examples out of dissenters in order to frighten critics into silence.

Democratic countries gain the public's compliance with buy-ins and manufactured consent, rather than bullets. A more evolved and civil approach, to be sure. But one that carries its own risks. What happens when you run out of villains to justify an escalation to emergency measures? When you want to spook the public into acquiescence, but your well of horrors has run dry?

You make them up.

This is the story of what can go wrong when such a strategy spirals out of control, and all levels of government and media are complicit in ruining innocent lives.

Diagolon is Not a Violent Extremist Group

“Does not pose a criminal or national security threat.”

- Royal Canadian Mounted Police

“The channels are REMVE + Conspiracy theorist in nature but **not accelerationist** and you’re right **no incitement of violence**. Some of the usernames have racist references/photos in them but **no criminality**.”

- Kristen Little to Ashley Chen, July 14, 2021, subject “Diagolon”

“Based on the source material and evidence I have personally viewed, we would have a hard time refuting the contents thereof despite how “Diagolon” is being portrayed in the media and the House of Commons. Just another example of why **our direction to investigators is to be evidence focused and not caught up in the hype of the media surrounding this matter.**”

- Simon Pillay, Inspector, OIC Ops1, Federal Policing National Security, February 2022

“We generally agree with the Key Assessments, 1) DIAGOLON is led by MACKENZIE, 2) based on current information, **DIAGOLON does not meet dictionary definitions of a group.**”

- Matthew Desjardins, March 16, 2022

“I’ve looped in Insp. Simon Pillay and A.Insp J-S Grenier who are the project Team OICs to assist with any discussions your NZ LO may wish to have on Diagolon. **We do not consider it a right wing militia group at this time** however assessment is ongoing as I understand it.”

- Eliane Caron, Director of Ops Team 2, Federal Policing National Security (FNPS), April 8, 2022

“Based on available open source information, IMCIT assesses that DIAGOLON is an ideological community which meets the majority, but not all, of the CSIS parameters used to define a group. [...] Although DIAGOLON is based on a set of satirical ideas, the community does not appear to have any coherent ideological purpose, objective, or cause. [...] It appears that **DIAGOLON as a distinct entity does not pose a criminal or national security threat at this time.**”

- Submitted by: Ideologically Motivated Criminal Intelligence Team / Approved by: A/Director General, Federal Policing National Intelligence”, May 19, 2022

“Based on available open source information it is exceedingly difficult to ascertain the extent to which Diagonon is a distinct group, with common ideology, a political agenda, and the cohesion necessary to advance such an agenda.

The Canadian Anti-Hate Network (CAHN) is cited as the main authority on the group by all mainstream media outlets; due to the fact that all information traces back to one source, triangulation and the verification of facts is almost impossible at the current time.

Based on the information that is publicly available, it is difficult to understand how CAHN can confidently assert that Diagonon is an ‘accelerationist movement that believes a revolution is inevitable and necessary to collapse the current government system’... Due to a lack of substantive open source material, operational information would be needed to supplement the profile.

- RCMP “Diagonon Profile” 2022

Caryma's Story

From an early age, my parents nurtured in me a sense of curiosity. They encouraged me to ask questions. I spent a lot of time immersed in books and learning. The first revelation given to the Prophet Muhammad was a command from Angel Gabriel to “Read!” That origin story always stuck with me, even as my personal religiosity has waxed and waned over the years.

My father was a charismatic imam (religious leader) in the community, whose duruus (lessons) were spirited and sometimes subversive in nature. He was a natural storyteller with a wicked sense of humour. He instilled the importance of striving for excellence: “This country will chew you up and spit you out, if you let it. You must be the best and have courage.”

This is me trying.

Mom was born Catholic and grew up in Jhansi, India. Dad lived in a Palestinian refugee camp until his family resettled in Jordan. He decided to pursue his studies in India, which is where they met— by his telling, he shoehorned himself into a date that was already in progress. I guess he won out.

Mom immigrated to Canada as a twenty-year-old orphan with almost no money. My father followed her across the ocean. They were married in 1974. My mom converted to Islam. They had my sisters in Toronto and moved to Mississauga as a young family. I was a near-fatal surprise over a decade later. I have been running on my own schedule ever since.

Identity was always a touchy subject in our household. My parents came from two different cultures and moved to a third culture. I belonged everywhere and nowhere at once.



I learned the word “terrorist” at around eight years of age. Police came knocking at our door to speak with my father. Apparently, someone threatened to blow up the nearby Tim Horton’s and signed the letter using his name. He was framed for words he never uttered. The situation was resolved after brief questioning, and the police left on good terms after concluding my dad did not pose any threat. This was before the Afghanistan and Iraq wars.

A few weeks after the 9/11 attacks, I was walking from the bus stop after school when a stranger yelled at me to “Go home!” I confusedly retorted, “I am going home”, not realizing that I was being singled out as un-Canadian for my hijab or skin colour. That naïveté was sadly short-lived.

The next two decades were rough for Muslims. Islam was widely treated as a monolith, despite the wide variety of denominations, languages, and cultures across the globe. Unfair expectations were placed on individual Muslims to apologize or account for other people’s criminal behaviour. Muslims were consistently targeted for surveillance, particularly at airports. Moral panic over misconceptions about Sharia led to proposals such as the Barbaric Cultural Practices Hotline. There were hate-motivated mass murders against Muslims, or anyone mistaken as Muslim. A “Muslim Ban” was upheld in the United States, prohibiting travel and refugee resettlement from predominantly Muslim countries. Western democracies banned hijabs, niqabs, and minarets. The list goes on.

Underlying all this was the erosion of civil liberties, and the development of a brutal state apparatus inimical to human rights.

It is no coincidence that another Muslim lawyer and I were predisposed to see Jeremy MacKenzie’s situation through the lens of public hysteria and state overreach. Or that Elisa and I recognized a smear campaign carried out by some of the same perpetrators who maligned her. Our paths intersect in unexpected ways.

Recently, I lamented the state of journalism: “Journalists are not supposed to be stenographers. Why aren’t they asking questions? They are not doing real journalism like they used to.” It was pointed out that I was longing for fearless and honest reporting that was always the exception, never the rule. It was false nostalgia—the fact is, mainstream media has lied to us about big things for my entire living memory.

Hasty, thoughtless articles—sometimes the result of erroneous information fed to gullible journalists by intelligence agents - have started wars and provided distorted justification for hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of (mostly brown) deaths around the world. There has been no acknowledgment, accountability, let alone apology, for leading us into bloody battlefields for no discernible reason. And despite tacit awareness of atrocities, authorities never said, “We lied, and repeated the lies, and this caused people to die.”

Is it any wonder a combat veteran deployed to Afghanistan might distrust the government, the media, and especially the two seemingly working together?

Jeremy's Story

In the early 2000s, seventeen-year-old Old Stock Canadian Jeremy MacKenzie joined the army. He was an infantry non-commissioned officer and did a stint with the elite Canadian Special Operations Forces Command. He was deployed to combat in Afghanistan, trained soldiers in Jamaica, did exchange programs with US Marines, and was stationed in Germany and the United Arab Emirates. He retired as Master Corporal after fourteen and a half years, decorated with a sacrifice medal (Canadian Purple Heart), a general campaign star from the Afghanistan war, and a Canadian Forces decoration for over twelve years of service with an unblemished record.

From a young age, Jeremy was fascinated by military history and culture. He was drawn to understand the human condition in extreme circumstances. He felt compelled to test his mettle.

He also felt weak. He was soft, small, sheltered. A tiny kid who got bullied a lot, but was determined to prove people wrong. Jeremy had a vision in his mind of the man he wanted to be, and knew that could not happen if he stayed in small-town Nova Scotia. And so, he set off in search of his future self.

Jeremy's Sacrifice

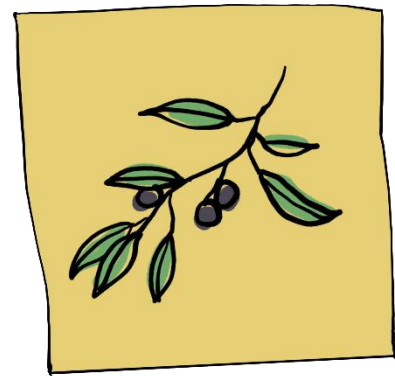
On September 11, 2001, Jeremy was a sophomore with a morning period spare. He watched the second tower come down live on television from the comfort of his home. That night at dinner he remembers his mom musing about a draft, "Thank god you're too young to go, and your father is too old." She was only half right.

Jeremy spent his early adult years fighting in Afghanistan to protect poppy fields and oil wells. He witnessed or was party to a range of extreme violence, killings, war crimes, and other horrors at twenty years old.

For many Canadians, the war in Afghanistan was barely more than an abstract thought, at best, even at the height of media frenzy. Unlike the Second World War, there was no collective sacrifice or solidarity. Losses were borne by resident Afghans and the diaspora, as well as NATO soldiers and their families: opposite sides of the same tragic coin.

27 men were killed on Jeremy's deployment, with seven of them being close friends. He has lost count of how many suicides, but knows it is at minimum fifteen or twenty.

Jeremy is legally deaf in his left ear from an incoming rocket-propelled grenade, an anti-armour weapon meant to destroy tanks and personnel carriers. An RPG-7, specifically. He had half a second to hit the deck and was saved by an olive tree that took the brunt of the explosion.



In July 2007, Jeremy and his fireteam spent hours administering first aid to wounded Taliban and Afghan security forces after an engagement. One of the injured was roughly thirteen years old. The boy's legs had been shattered and blasted apart like used firecrackers. His left foot rested under his own head in a twisted, mangled, bloody mess. There were splintered bones everywhere, and the burned flesh looked like slabs of cooked meat. (It took Jeremy a while before he could eat roast beef again.)

The boy had deep wounds in his abdomen and chest, but the gashes seemed to be cauterized shut – likely by the blast of a NATO soldier's 25 mm gun. The translator said the boy was begging to be fixed; nothing could be done.

Jeremy sat helplessly with this child and watched him die slowly and painfully under the hot sun, waiting for a helicopter that came too late. He has wondered about the boy's name, and whether his parents knew where he was or what had happened to him. He wondered if they would ever know, or whether they were dead, too.

This is only one of Jeremy's many traumatic experiences.

And for what? The war in Afghanistan was based on pretenses and lies. Canada's abrupt and messy withdrawal saw citizens and allies left behind to die. As much as Jeremy blamed the Taliban, he also blamed his own government.

A Podcasting Journey

Jeremy is charismatic, with a knack for hyperbole, dark humour, and silly voices. He started experimenting with podcasting and vignettes in 2016.

From the outset, Jeremy was interested in examining conspiracy theories. He started with a deep dive into 9/11. Fighting in Afghanistan profoundly impacted Jeremy's worldview. He became disillusioned by politicians and mainstream media beating the drums of war under the guise of freedom and democracy. The corruption and absurdity was almost too much to bear – he wondered, what else are we being lied to about? And so, he set off in search of truth and laughter.

His first livestream had a modest seventeen viewers. That gradually increased to hundreds of thousands of downloads per episode. He went from sporadic streaming to regularly scheduled shows. Over time, he started paying for graphics and overlays, and upgraded his equipment. He placed emphasis on engagement, developing inside jokes with his audience and building rapport by reacting to comments. What started as a side hobby evolved into a full-time gig. He covers a range of topics, including politics and current events. He is highly critical of the Canadian Armed Forces, and speaks candidly about his experience in combat and the treatment of veterans. One of his most-watched videos is a scathing critique of the RCMP response to the Portapique mass shooting; his take was largely validated three years later by the Mass Casualty Commission.

There is a method to the madness. An individual episode is meant to be taken in its entirety. Each performance consists of roughly three parts and is meant to end on a positive note. Despite tackling heated or bleak subjects in a high intensity stream of consciousness format, Jeremy strives to portray hopeful messaging. He is keenly aware of high suicide rates among veterans, and wants his viewers to leave entertained and reassured. The softness of this approach is sometimes camouflaged by the bluntness of military culture.

He jokes that listeners need to be fucked up to truly appreciate his work.

The Smear Campaign Begins

In February 2020, Jeremy protested a lecture featuring Omar Khadr. He considered it a travesty for Dalhousie University to promote an enemy combatant in any circumstance. The ferry he took to Halifax was named after Christopher Stannix, his former roommate who was killed in Afghanistan. Freelance videographer Peter MacIsaac was covering the event. Jeremy provided a passionate two-minute soundbite:

I have to be here to say this because many of the people in my platoon who were killed by Omar Khadr's little club aren't here to say that anymore. They're all dead... So I guess I'm the bad guy now. If that's how it's gonna be, then that's how it's gonna be.

That video garnered over five million views on YouTube.

Gavin McInnes saw the clip and reached out for an interview. McInnes is the co-founder of Vice Media, former Rebel Media correspondent, and Proud Boys founder (listed as a “terrorist entity” in Canada). He was the only media figure willing to talk. Jeremy seized the opportunity to share his message with a wider audience.

Within a few days, an account with the username Yellow Vests Canada Exposed published a detailed ARC Collective blog post titled *Jeremy Mackenzie: Nova Scotia-Based Extremist YouTuber Spreads Hate*. He was described as having extreme views, including that he “regularly espouses antisemitic conspiracies, parrots Holocaust denial lines, and disparages Jews and Muslims.” There were multiple references and comparisons to “accelerationists.” There was no clear evidence backing up these claims, just leaps and innuendos. The hit piece included over a dozen short, undated clips from various livestreams; it seemed he had been on someone’s radar for a while, even though his YouTube channel had under a thousand followers at the time. He was stunned.

Little did he know, the worst was yet to come.

Enter Diagonon

Stemming from Jeremy’s vivid imagination, Diagonon is a fictional country in a parallel universe based on a geographical divide he observed as far as the political response to COVID-19.



Again, there was a method to the madness. The Diagonon flag (a white diagonal line against a black background) worked as a branding mechanism. It allowed members of the fanbase to identify one another with the display of stickers and other merchandise. And the concept took on a life of its own as fans collaborated to develop a rich and absurd lore: the head of state is an evil, cocaine-addicted, time-traveling goat named King Phillip; the nation is at war with the fictional country of Circulon; there is a militant force

of bees bred to terrorize Diagonon’s enemies, and one bee (Jeffrey) died in a kamikaze mission when he was swallowed by Doug Ford during a press conference.

Satirical political commentary allows Jeremy to cope with civilian life through self-expression and connecting with other veterans. Humour is a way to work through heavy emotions. An outlet not unlike Kurt Cobain writing songs about suicide, or Francisco Goya painting scenes of brutal violence.

Case in point: Diagonon permits capital punishment, and Jeremy turned hypothetical executions into a game show. There’s “Dumpster Toss” which involves being tossed from a tall building into a dumpster; “Torn Apart by Wolves,” where the target is sent off on an ice floe with hungry wolves; and “Gun or Rope,” which gives the

audience a choice between a firing squad or the gallows. A bit gruesome, but “Probation or Public Apology” does not quite have the same gut punch effect. Jeremy does callbacks to old episodes but moves quickly from one joke to the next. The game show phase was short-lived. On the internet, out-of-context “Gun or Rope” sound bites last forever; they are used as evidence that violence is a core element to Diagonon.

Throughout 2021, Jeremy attended a few regional meet-and-greets with his fans across Canada. In his words, “It struck me... a lot of people feel very isolated and depressed. A lot of them expressed to me how much this meant for them to feel as though they had some kind of connection and kinship with other people that felt the same way as they did about the future and shared their fears and concerns.” This revelation led to the “Find Your Friends” campaign, intended to give people an opportunity to have face-to-face interactions and detox from screen time. This networking and community building initiative is the closest Diagonon has come to being a real thing.

Lacking membership, hierarchy, rank system, code of conduct, uniforms, or ideological cohesion, Diagonon is a podcast fan club, not a militia. Even the RCMP experts struggled with defining Diagonon: In an email dated March 9, 2022, with the subject line “Rejigging of my paper”, Kandi Piamonte asks Andrew Warden whether there is any specific quantifier or qualifier to define a terrorist “group.”

Even if Diagonon could be considered a “group,” there was never any prospect of violent insurrection to establish its borders. That would require overthrowing two provinces and defeating the United States in a land battle— they could no sooner colonize the moon or drain the ocean.

Jeremy thought it was self-evident that the whole thing was a joke.

But not everyone shares his sense of humour. The Canadian Anti-Hate Network (**CAHN**) misconstrued Diagonon to place it in a false, nefarious light as a “far-right separatist”, “anti-government”, “neo-fascist”, and “militant accelerationist group.”

In the absence of evidence, CAHN relied heavily on negative association and innuendo. The constant repetition of misleading or false information produces the illusory truth effect; repeat a lie often enough and people will believe it.

CAHN described Diagonon as wanting to establish a white ethnostate, although this idea was never articulated in hundreds of hours of livestreams. Jeremy’s fanbase was called “militia-like”—at some point the qualifier was dropped, then added back. In fact, there is no evidence of an organized group of armed civilians outside of CAHN’s imagination. An affinity for gun culture (which appeals generally to military-inclined people) cannot be conflated with the definition of militia. It may

warrant law enforcement keeping an eye on things, but essential to consider context and intent when assessing risk.

The more CAHN vilified a stubborn and defiant Jeremy, the more he doubled down with sarcasm. The joke became people not getting the joke, in a meta way. Community members began referring to themselves as “bigots,” intending to dilute the sting of a word carelessly misapplied. This was interpreted as an admission of intolerance. In November 2021, Jeremy circulated a group photo taken at a family barbeque gathering in Viscount, Saskatchewan. The ominous image depicted masked men with hunting rifles and the Diagonon flag. This was interpreted as proof of a weapons training camp.

The media started echoing CAHN’s far-fetched conclusions, despite unequivocal statements from Jeremy about his satirical intent. Poe's Law, a prominent adage in internet culture, posits that parodies or sarcastic portrayals of extreme perspectives may be misconstrued as genuine expressions of those beliefs. This principle can be manipulated by individuals who genuinely hold extreme views, using it as a shield when confronted with substantial criticism, and claiming that their statements were merely satirical in nature. When in doubt, consider the evidence, or lack thereof.

There was a degree of separation or less between CAHN and every news article about Diagonon. CAHN’s “Elizabeth Simons” was the primary spokesperson, making a range of speculative and unsourced claims about Jeremy and his fanbase.

Jeremy corresponded by Twitter direct message with CAHN Board member Kurt Phillips in the hopes of clearing up misconceptions about his podcast. The conversations were casual in nature, touching on surface level things like beer preferences. Jeremy tried conveying that CAHN’s approach isolates people who are already in precarious situations, and oftentimes severs any remaining connections to regular society. This only pushes people further into dangerous echo chambers. It becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. CAHN either manufactures hate by inventing it, or by driving vulnerable people down that path. Rarely, if ever, do they stumble upon actual Nazis.

Hysteria about Diagonon reached fever pitch during the Freedom Convoy, particularly after a homemade patch was spotted on a tactical vest purportedly seized in relation to an attempted murder plot in Coutts, Alberta.

Jeremy had never been to Coutts, nor was he in communication with any of the accused leading up to their arrest. He was nonetheless repeatedly connected to the weapons cache by media outlets citing CAHN. Documents obtained from the RCMP reveal heavy reliance on open source intelligence, including news articles. Government officials took their cues from both the media and law enforcement.

And the media reported on statements from law enforcement and government officials.

A veritable circle jerk.

Under oath at the Public Order Emergency Commission, Jeremy provided the following analysis:

It's my opinion that the foundation work by the Canadian Anti-Hate Network as pertains to targeting me as a previously government-funded -- has enjoyed a fair amount of government funding, to target and smear people that they, you know, consider perhaps politically inconvenient or people they just want to shut up, they regularly engage in defamatory statements... out-of-context statements, they'll take a clip here, a sentence there and stitch it together and make it appear as something that it is not...

From there, some media outlets, legacy media outlets, lazily—unfortunately, it appears—took it at face value, copy/paste, print the story then which is consumed by police officers, which again, unfortunately, rather than doing any digging themselves or investigating or asking me a single question, take these things at face value and compile these reports and up the network it goes until it lands on the desk of the public safety minister or you know, perhaps even the prime minister's office, where they're faced with these scenarios that have no basis in reality. I consider this entire situation entirely avoidable. This—none of this needed to happen, and it's absurd, and I consider the single most embarrassing and grotesque intelligence failure in national history.

For his part, Jeremy made numerous overtures to speak with law enforcement and try to shed light on the community everyone seemed so concerned about. Nobody ever took him up on the offer.

Freedom Convoy

Jeremy learned about the Freedom Convoy through social media hype. He saw aerial drone footage of trucks driving from Western Canada, and concluded this would be a big deal. Plus, he considered it an opportunity to get together with friends and escape the monotony of lockdowns. He encouraged his followers to be on their best behaviour, mindful the Diagonol fan base would be under a microscope.

Jeremy knew that he would be talking about the convoy on his show regardless and decided to attend in person. He drove back and forth from Nova Scotia twice. The distance was not daunting because he made the twelve-hour drive to Petawawa dozens of times while in the military.

He mostly stayed on a goat farm outside the city. (King Phillip predated the goat farm. The location was a fluke.) It felt like a multi-week house party, until the Emergencies Act was invoked. From that point onward, Jeremy stayed out of the Red Zone and watched the news like everyone else.



There was no doubt that Jeremy was flagged. He remembers seeing reconnaissance posts on the rural road outside Ottawa. They were parked for hours, even days at a time. One night, the farm dogs were barking uncontrollably. Jeremy figured there were probably cops surveilling the building. In the morning, sure enough, he found foot traffic in the snow, and empty coffee cups and cigarette butts. Jeremy knew that everything he said was being watched, but worried that only sarcasm was taken at face value and earnest statements disregarded as red herrings. He was not paranoid, but rather genuinely concerned for his safety. The escalations were scary— in his mind, the intense focus on his podcast by police should not have happened in any sane or rational world, so it was not a leap to imagine physical danger.

From law enforcement’s perspective, they were following a militia and perhaps assumed Jeremy was a mastermind trying to throw them off and cover his tracks to conceal the secret Nazis and weapons caches. From his perspective, “I’m literally a guy in sweatpants with a laptop— are you surrounding the property with guns? What are you doing?”

True to form, Jeremy did not make things easy for himself. He sarcastically captioned videos “Canadian Nazi Takeover of Ottawa”, “Urgent: Statement from Neo-Nazi Militia Commander”, and “Bury Me with My Boots On.” He also wrote a formal letter titled “Diagolon's List of Demands to the Canadian Senate” while the Emergencies Act was in force, with a view towards explaining that he is not a security threat. When Alex Vriend was arrested and released he posted, “Diagolon will not forgive this! You’ve gone too far now, pigs!”

One night, Jeremy and a few others were in a basement, laying on the floor in sleeping bags. Evan Balgord and Bernie Farber appeared on television singling out Diagolon as a potential source of violence, and the Fifth Estate was set to release an episode with a segment on Diagolon that week. The media attention had ramped up

and nobody knew what to do. It was like a boy's sleepover, with Jeremy and his friends scheming over candy bars in the dark.

Here is the plan they almost executed: There were two other guys approximately the same size and build as Jeremy and Derek Harrison. They planned to switch clothes and cell phones, send their body doubles into the crowd, and position themselves across the street with walkie talkies to see what happened. The cops would realize what happened too late and declare, "Oh damn! The switcheroo!"

In the end, Jeremy and Derek decided not to go downtown.

Jeremy laughingly imagines the fallout if they had gone ahead with it: "Marco Mendicino might have appeared on television describing Diagon as 'masters of disguise' and 'stealth experts.'" He recalls eating cereal on a milkcrate dumbfounded the morning the Minister of Public Safety declared that "Several individuals at Coutts have strong ties to a far-right extreme organization with leaders who are in Ottawa."

As much as Jeremy may not be a fan of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, he believes the Emergencies Act was an institutional failure. The role of law enforcement agencies and the Minister of Public Safety is to identify and triage national security threats and inform the Prime Minister accordingly so he can make proper decisions. If Trudeau is fed bad intelligence (such as portraying Diagon as a militia that poses a genuine threat to public safety), what is he supposed to do? Indeed, the responsible course of action is to be prepared and look foolish if nothing happens, rather than do nothing and risk people being hurt.

Jeremy finds it terrifying that law enforcement cannot discern comedy or trolling from terrorism. It is either blatant incompetence, or an attempt to crush political dissent.

Either way, the ones watching the gate cannot be trusted.

Public Order Emergency Commission

Jeremy was summoned to the Public Order Emergency Commission. The penalty for refusing to appear was only a \$400 fine, but Jeremy was eager to share his perspective.

His lawyer, Sherif Foda, made an application to Commissioner Paul Rouleau requesting an order to testify in camera, meaning without media coverage or access. The rationale was that Jeremy would likely be facing jury trials in the near future, and there was a risk of tainting public opinion. Several parties with standing objected to the application, claiming (among other things) that media coverage was important and necessary in the public interest.



The application to testify in private chambers was denied, but Jeremy decided to participate regardless. He defied everyone's low expectations, appearing dapper and clean-shaven despite his drab setting. He was the only witness who testified from jail; this did not impact his ability to speak cogently. He was thoughtful and eloquent in his testimony, and unshaken in cross-examination. At the end, Commissioner Rouleau wished him luck with his upcoming trials.



Jeremy's testimony painted a picture of an ordinary person caught up in extraordinary circumstances with no playbook. Although he was not a convoy organizer, he recognized that his platform could be used constructively. He implored his followers:

“If there's a speed limit on walking for some reason, then you will walk slower than that. Don't even litter. Don't spit. Don't even throw a snowball. Don't give anyone any excuse to point at you and say, 'Look what you've done. Look

what you've incited,' or created or fomented, and so on because that [would undermine] the entire purpose of... everything everyone was trying to achieve.”

Much of his testimony focused on the alleged connection between himself and the Coutts weapons cache based on his alleged connection to arrestee Chris Lysak, and the presence of Diagon patches on a tactical vest seized by the RCMP.

Jeremy testified that Lysak was a long-time fan of the podcast, and someone he met personally at meet and greet get-togethers in Saskatchewan. They took a photo together. Jeremy jokingly appointed him Head of Security for Diagon, which was a nod to his physical stature and otherwise a meaningless honorific. Apart from these encounters, there was never one-on-one conversation, though Lysak may have been in some larger online group chats for the fanbase. Lysak called Jeremy a couple of times since being arrested, and he offered words of encouragement. Jeremy did not know any of the other people arrested in Coutts, and no evidence was provided to contradict this assertion.

As far as the Diagon patches, Jeremy testified that they appeared to be homemade rather than purchased from his provisional supplier. Moreover, he personally had never travelled to Coutts, nor was he communicating with anyone in Coutts. He

testified that the use of Diagon imagery was about self-identifying as a fan or member of the community, akin to identifying as a Toronto Maple Leafs fan by putting a sticker on one's truck.

Jeremy also described receiving leaked screenshots from law enforcement group chats, including the RCMP celebrating violence against civilians. He explained, "At the time, and still presently, I'm very skeptical of law enforcement, especially considering the political nature in which there appears to be a lot of interference going on in the country."

The final five-volume Report of the Public Inquiry into the 2022 Public Order Emergency is marred by certain shortcomings. First, the Commissioner consistently took law enforcement at face value, despite issues with methodology and reasoning that have since been uncovered. Second, the inquiry's truth-seeking function was limited by procedural issues. Jeremy MacKenzie was unable to question any of the countless witnesses who made statements about himself or Diagon, meaning potentially false or misleading statements were left unchallenged. Jeremy's lawyer was not even informed that CAHN's Evan Balgord submitted an affidavit contradicting his client's testimony and had no chance to test its accuracy through cross-examination. The evidentiary value of such an affidavit would be next-to-useless in court, if not inadmissible altogether.

It was convenient for federal policing agencies that Jeremy happened to be detained on an RCMP-sourced Canada-wide warrant as the POEC unfolded, and worth noting that the underlying charges have since been stayed.

Still, Jeremy's POEC testimony marked a turning point in media coverage. His name went from being smeared for clickbait to barely being uttered. Despite submitting 30-page legal submissions about why it was so important for the media to inform the public about Jeremy's testimony, its substance was hardly addressed. No mainstream media outlets provided an in-depth summary or analysis. It was silent. "On the battlefield, silence is the sound of victory. You know, because your enemies are dead," jokes MacKenzie. He hastily adds, "Metaphorically."

The Prosecution of Jeremy MacKenzie

In January 2022, Jeremy MacKenzie was arrested in Port Hawkesbury, Nova Scotia with charges including careless use of a firearm. The alleged incident was the basis for a search warrant for his home in Pictou, Nova Scotia. The raid resulted in additional firearm-related offences. That matter is set for trial in September 2024.

In March 2022, MacKenzie was charged in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia in relation to protests outside the residence of Dr. Strang, the provincial Chief Medical Officer of Health. He spent four nights in custody before being released on bail. His release order included unusually strict terms limiting his ability to engage in certain forms of protest and speech against Premier Tim Houston's government. The presiding judge ruled in his favour on a motion in August 2023, ordering the disclosure of records of a meeting held immediately before his release that raises the specter of political interference. He is raising several Charter issues, including violation of his right to counsel, improper search and seizure, and abuse of process.

On July 18, 2022, an information was sworn against MacKenzie in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan in relation to offences that allegedly occurred in 2021. The RCMP did not provide MacKenzie or his counsel an opportunity to surrender, which would be best practice where a party is represented and facing charges in another jurisdiction. In fact, MacKenzie only learned about the warrant in late August, when he was contacted for comment by journalist Stephen Maher from iPolitics—Maher's source on the warrant appeared to be extremism and national security commentator, Toronto 18 informant Mubin Shaikh. The warrant was extended Canada-wide and enforced in September 2022.



In September 2022, MacKenzie made drunken, vulgar comments about Pierre Poilievre's wife, Anaida. The federal Conservative Party leader called for the RCMP to investigate. Days later, MacKenzie was arrested. The RCMP denied that Poilievre's complaint had any influence on the sequence of events. Still, they made a spectacle of hauling MacKenzie from Nova Scotia to Saskatchewan on a Canada-wide warrant. MacKenzie was denied bail, left to sit indefinitely in a jail cell thousands of kilometres from home. Additional charges were laid against him by Quebec RCMP for allegedly uttering threats and criminal harassment.

MacKenzie spent over two months in pre-trial custody at the Saskatoon Correctional Centre. He narrowly escaped being stabbed by a group of men who mistook him for a white supremacist based on unfavourable news coverage that repeated CAHN talking points. There was no escaping the smear campaign, not even behind bars.

Prosecutors in Saskatchewan and Quebec both relied on the same open source intelligence material from CAHN to justify MacKenzie's detention – this, despite the presumption of innocence, and his spotless criminal record.

MacKenzie connected with counsel willing and prepared to tackle his charges spanning three provinces. Lawyer Sherif Foda filed a bail review application in Saskatchewan, which was granted on consent at the eleventh hour. He also successfully obtained bail in Quebec after a day-long hotly contested hearing.

Getting out of jail was a significant turning point; after months of spiraling downward, Jeremy started to bounce back. His original charges from Port Hawkesbury have been stayed. The Saskatchewan charges have also been stayed. Jeremy entered into two peace bonds with no admission or finding of criminal liability on his part. As his lawyer told SaskToday, “Mr. MacKenzie is eager to proceed” on his outstanding charges.

There is curious overlap between characters popping up in his cases across multiple jurisdictions. The identities of complainants are protected by publication bans.

From Hero to Terrorist

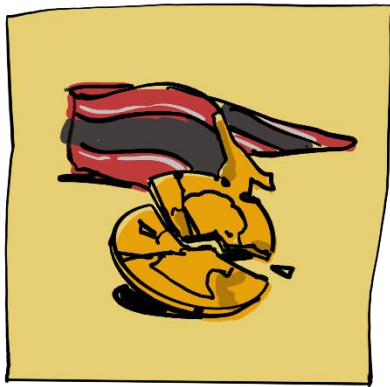
What happened to Jeremy is breathtakingly unfair, but he takes it in stride. “People think, ‘As long as I do everything right, if I don’t make any mistakes, I will survive.’ Like it’s a science. But war is not science, it is chaos. Nothing is fair. Nothing makes sense. You could be the best operator in the world and get killed without ever firing a shot. It’s hard to cope with. You have to accept, there’s things out of your control. This can end with you going home in a box, or not at all.”

One of Jeremy’s platoon members was vaporized by an IED, leaving behind only a boot (with his foot still in it), and the upper half of his rifle. Jeremy had eaten breakfast with him that morning. In a separate incident, Jeremy’s favourite sergeant was launched 100 ft into the air when the vehicle hit a bomb, and possibly had 5-6 seconds of airtime before he hit the ground, likely knowing he was going to die. His body was retrieved intact. The other six or seven soldiers who died in the vehicle were mangled; it took nine stretchers to remove all the body parts, not knowing for sure whose are whose.

Jeremy had a moment in the bathroom towards the end of his career, literally looking at his reflection in the mirror, sighing: “What did you do? Great, I’m the Empire. I’m a stormtrooper in the Imperial Empire. That is what I am. Holy shit.”



What were his sacrifices for? How did we get there? Why?



The reality is bleak: “You never get an answer, nothing makes sense. We move onto the next thing. Then, years later, we just walk away. You watch it all unravel on television. And not even an apology.”

By the time Jeremy retired as a veteran, he was training kids who were born after 9/11. They were joining a war that has been going on longer than they’ve been alive.

Many cannot fathom what it’s like to live through such trauma, only to face the ordeal of being vilified by the country you fought for. For Jeremy, there was no other option but to keep going:

You just have to continue. It won’t kill you, but it’s really gonna hurt and be uncomfortable. You’re not gonna die, this just really sucks... And once you figure that out, what’s the worst that can happen? I am going to have a horribly shitty day, but eventually it has to end at some point.

He recalls how during Special Forces selection, informally known as “Hell Week”, soldiers are tested to the limits of their abilities. There are no time limits, no way to know what to expect from one moment to the next. One day, he was instructed to face the wall and await further instructions. Nobody came back for sixteen hours. There was unknown distance marching, with a hundred pounds on your back and having to go until they said stop, for kilometres at a time. They made to pick up bricks and weights while submerged in water. Sometimes people drowned – he recalls one guy had to be resuscitated. There was never any reprieve or end in sight.

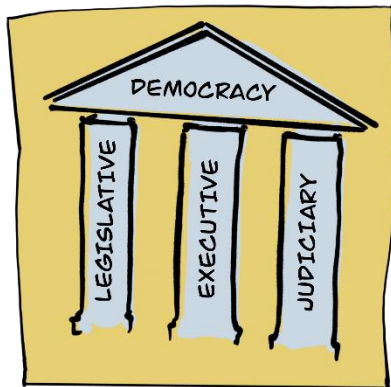
He learned perseverance from those experiences, how to mentally switch off: “The only way out is to continue until it ends, and when it ends it ends. You just can’t stop. Left foot, right foot, keep going. One day after the next.”

The mental battle he is going through now is reminiscent of those times. “They just kept piling it on. It started with that ARC Collective blog and Kurt Phillips. Then the arrests. The RCMP took me to Saskatchewan. Denied me bail. Stacked on the Quebec charges. And then I got debanked, and they screwed with my pension money. And they just keep piling it on, and I refuse to stop. Sooner or later, somebody is going to break. I know I’m not a criminal, so I’m just gonna keep doing what I’m doing.”

Against all odds, his sense of humour remains intact.

Jeremy believes he was being followed by law enforcement as early as summer 2021. Based on emails disclosed in a Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIPOP) request, there is evidence that he was on their radar during the federal election. Ever unserious, Jeremy started making fun of the RCMP officers he correctly presumed to be tasked with monitoring his podcast: “In case they’re listening, they have to hear this, and endure me – like, just making fun of them and mocking them. Constantly. All the time. And there’s nothing they can do about it. That’s probably what contributed to their enthusiasm.”

The FOIPOP and What We Discovered



The Canadian constitution divides power between three branches of governance: the legislative branch (Parliament and the provincial legislatures); the executive branch, which is responsible to the legislature (the Prime Minister and Cabinet); and the judiciary.

The legislative branch is foundational to democracy, as it is premised on the notion that power flows from the citizens to their elected representatives who are empowered to make laws that govern the population. The executive branch is also dependent on the will

of the people as expressed in the ballot box— the Prime Minister and the cabinet are chosen from elected members of the legislature, and enjoy power only so long as they have Parliament’s assent to critical legislation. The judiciary is independent of the legislative and executive branches. Its role is to decide disputes and ensure, when called upon, that these bodies exercise power in accordance with the constitution.

This roughly outlines Canada’s democracy. For it to function well, two rights must be safeguarded: the right to access information and the right to privacy.

Access to information is essential to informed debate, and acts as a check on abuse of powers. In the words of Pierre Trudeau, “the democratic process requires the ready availability of true and complete information. In this way people can objectively evaluate the government’s policies. To act otherwise is to give way to despotic secrecy.”

Privacy is linked to individual liberty. Section 7 of the Canadian Charter requires respect for the individual’s right to be free from arbitrary government restraint. The government collects a lot of data and personal details about its population, on a spectrum of sensitivity. The improper use of information, or even a fear of such misuse, can stifle political dissent as individuals fear reprisal by government actors.

In 1983, Canada adopted a twin set of quasi-constitutional laws to protect access to information and privacy. Under the Access to Information Act, any Canadian citizen or permanent resident may, for a nominal fee, apply to an applicable federal institution and request disclosure of information. The Privacy Act restricts the right of access, by prohibiting the disclosure of personal information to third parties. It also grants individuals the right to access, correct, and monitor the use of any personal information in the government’s possession.

National security concerns may limit the extent of disclosure of information to an individual and may permit intrusions into individuals' privacy. However, the courts require measures to ensure that people are treated with procedural fairness.

On September 1, 2023, Jeremy MacKenzie received the results of a Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIPOP) request to Federal Policing:

Any and All records, files (etc), documents, memos, e-mails, communication records, and reports on the subject of "Diagolon" or in relation or reference to the subject of Diagolon. Search term: Diagolon Also referred to as the Diagolon Network or Diagolon Militia. Timeframe: January 01 2021 to August 15 2022.

The request was submitted over a year ago, but a series of external consultations delayed the release of documents. It was worth the wait. The information validates Jeremy's apprehension about copy-and-paste police work, in which law enforcement accepts open source intelligence at face value without scrutiny or asking questions. Every falsehood and misrepresentation seems to lead back to the Canadian Anti-Hate Network.

What you see here is only half the story. We are still in the process of sifting through over a thousand pages of information that require careful analysis, and plan to release other findings and relevant material as we go along.

The FOIPOP packages reveal several outrageous blunders and oversights, which will be covered in the coming pages. But when it's all said and done, the lingering sentiments we are left with are a mixture of shock and disappointment over the sheer incompetence, displayed in full view. The magnitude of it. How it could have gotten this far without anyone stopping it.

Two years of inconsistency and ineptitude. A death by a thousand cuts.

Inconsistencies and Speculations

Our most consistent finding was the inconsistency—the casualness with which falsehoods were repeated without a second thought. The abject carelessness, coupled with a remarkable intolerance for ambiguity. Wherever there was confusion, holes in the narrative were patched with rumours, innuendos, and speculation.

The obsequious desire to be helpful, to impress one's colleagues, led people to offer opinions that were flat-out wrong. A hypothesis became a foregone conclusion. Nobody rolled it back. Words like "could", "might have", "could have happened", replaced actual proof. As a last resort, clickbait articles and tweets by CAHN and its constellation of anonymous twitter accounts, were offered up in lieu of proof by people with "Intelligence Analyst" in their signature line.

To see how painfully some law enforcement officers and researchers struggled to fit a square peg into a round hole, brings to mind Hanlon's Razor: "Never attribute to malice that which can be adequately explained by stupidity."

Conversely, Jeremy was considered a wily mastermind. The absence of any proof that Diagon is a violent extremist group rather than a make-believe concept, was not viewed as an exoneration or lack of culpability, but proof that further scrutiny was necessary. The idea of presumed innocence was not brought up once, in over a thousand pages. At every turn, we saw lazy conflation of Diagon with ethno-nationalism, white supremacy, and ideologically-motivated violent extremism.

A curious escalation of commitment happened. People who pride themselves on their intellect and objectivity refused to believe they were duped, or that they fell prey to their own biases. Instead, they strained to redefine Jeremy and Diagon as nefarious in some way, perhaps to save face.

People who thought themselves impartial did not exhibit a shred of good faith as they bent over themselves trying to define Diagon as a "group", while at the same time referring to it as a "movement", "accelerationist group", "militia", and even a "neo-fascist violent militia"—treating them as interchangeable terms.

These are not synonyms. In law enforcement, language must be precise for good reason. Definitions make all the difference in ensuring everyone is held to the same standards. The fact that after such extraordinary efforts, there still is no reliable, consistent assessment of Diagon or how violent they think Jeremy MacKenzie is, should be proof enough of his innocence.

Even when they concede that "Diagon 'doesn't fit the definition' of a terrorist entity according to Canada's Anti-Terrorism Act," researchers like Amarnath Amarasingham, whose work brings him into CAHN's radius, are averse to admit they might have been wrong. "The danger with Diagon, rather, lies with how its viewers might internalize the cynical worldview Mackenzie and other affiliated broadcasters present," he wrote.

We would argue the true danger lies in the speculation that an artist, author, or comedian, should be held responsible for what fringe elements of their fanbase might do.

Slippery slope fallacies are how we end up throwing books into bonfires. And yet there is a real possibility that groundwork is being laid out, through the efforts of state-funded academics, smarmy consultants, and think tanks powered by defence contracts, to make the case for holding influencers and content creators responsible for the actions of third parties. This, of course, has less to do with "harm prevention"

and more about censoring someone at will. What better way to kill artistic expression than hold an artist responsible for the actions of thousands of strangers.

Cultural and generational differences were overlooked by those who were surveilling, rather than understanding, the Diagon Alley fanbase. As external observers, rather than participants, they hadn't been initiated into the subculture. Imagine dropping in on a roomful of hardcore "Risk" players talking about armed conflict and conquests, and thinking they're for real. Or taking a Dungeons and Dragons session at face value. Or going to a Civil War reenactment where everyone stays in character, and interpreting cosplay fantasies as genuine plans for insurrection.

How could Jeremy Mackenzie become the founder of a not quite-ideologically motivated, almost-violent, could-be extremist group, not really-fascist, maybe-militia that doesn't meet RCMP and CSIS definitions of a "group", yet is still deemed dangerous enough to warrant special communiques going out to intelligence agencies across the globe?

Because nobody took the lack of evidence at face value.

Yes, sometimes it really is that simple.

Popularized in the blockbuster movie *Minority Report*, the idea of intercepting crime before it happens emerged from the eponymous sci-fi story by Philip K Dick, which was preceded by George Orwell's dystopian masterpiece *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Both serve as cautionary tales of an omnipotent authoritarian state marked by mass surveillance, social repression, and criminal profiling. If they think you're guilty, they'll take you out before a crime is committed. The State's word is Supreme Law, and no judgment can be appealed.

As laws crack down on freedom of expression, humour—often a person's primary defence mechanism when it comes to releasing tension, concealing pain, or speaking inconvenient truths—is the first to be sacrificed and reframed as wrongthink. Historically, those writers, poets, comedians who didn't censor their exuberance were the first to discover that satire comes with a heavy price.

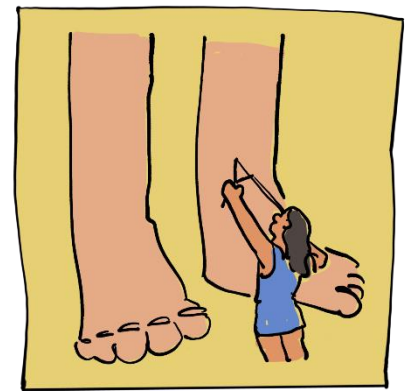
What was once science fiction is fast becoming reality, and nowhere more obviously than in the context of counterterrorism. Those cognizant of the effect of self-fulfilling prophecies have argued that, far from preventing crime, such measures produce the outcomes they profess to prevent. A crime prevention model might work well in theory. But if you're going to take strong measures to prevent crime from happening, you'd better be damn sure you have the right suspect.

Elisa's Story

Taking Down the Heritage Front

In the early 90s, sixteen-year-old Romanian immigrant [Elisa Hategan](#) (then Elisse) was held up as the innocent young face of an Ontario neo-Nazi, white supremacist group known as the Heritage Front. With over 200 members, including violent skinheads with convictions for aggravated assault, kidnapping and attempted murder, and implicated in firebombings, it was considered the most dangerous white supremacist group in modern Canadian history. Elisa was groomed as a media spokesperson to soften the image of violent skinheads, even appearing on *The Montel Williams Show* at age seventeen to repeat scripted talking points that concealed the group's hateful ideology.

It was a cynical, yet effective strategy. But the adult puppeteers failed to account for personal agency, nor for Elisa's identity as a closeted lesbian with Jewish roots, later confirmed through DNA tests. Elisa began to secretly provide information to anti-racist activists, at great personal risk, revealing details about illegal weapons and the identity of a Toronto police officer who was a group member. At age eighteen, she defected from the group, stealing part of [Holocaust denier Ernst Zundel's](#) membership list. Months later, her courtroom testimony was instrumental in securing the convictions of three Heritage Front leaders—a fatal blow that triggered the group's decline and eventual demise.



While the leaders were serving jail time, co-founder and second-in-command leader [Grant Bristow](#) was exposed as an undercover CSIS operative by Toronto Sun reporter Bill Dunphy, in part due to scrutiny that arose after Hategan's affidavits and testimony pointed to Bristow being an *agent provocateur* who directed criminal activity such as the It Campaign, a brutal harassment campaign directing Indigenous community leaders and anti-racist activists.

Despite having incurred serious death threats, including being questioned at knifepoint by Front members the day before her defection, Elisa was inexplicably denied entry into the RCMP's [Witness Protection Program](#). Grant Bristow, however, was promptly relocated to Alberta, given a home, cars and a generous monthly paycheck for years afterwards, despite the fact that his five years of work in Operation Governor had not led to the arrest and conviction of a single Canadian neo-Nazi.

Forced to live in hiding across Canada for more than two years, relying on kind strangers, homeless shelters, and dumpster-diving to survive, Elisa, a ninth-grade high-school dropout with a history of familial abuse and foster care, managed to earn a Nova Scotia GED and was accepted into the University of Ottawa's prestigious criminology program.

Motivated to understand how extremists target youth for radicalization, Elisa made the best of her second chance, engaging in volunteer work inside prison and youth detention centres, while working two jobs and relying on student loans to stay afloat. In 1999, aged 25, she graduated *magna cum laude* with a double major in criminology and psychology.

Behind the Scenes at ARC Collective

It was 2011, long after Elisa had returned to Toronto following a stint as an ESL teacher in Seoul, South Korea, when a Google search for figures from her past led her to a blogspot site called Anti-Racist Canada (**ARC**). ARC featured articles about Canada's far right and exposés of people the author characterized as extremists. Recognizing an individual ARC was trying to identify in an old Ernst Zundel photo, she left a comment. A correspondence with the webmaster, who called himself "Nosferatu200", followed, growing into a fast friendship.

The website was operated by Kurt Phillips, a Drumheller, Alberta high school teacher two years Elisa's junior, who had created ARC in 2008 as a hobby project to keep track of "Nazis." In an early email, [Kurt called himself her "fan boy"](#) and gushed about recognizing her name: "You, more than anyone else, took down one of the nastiest hate groups that had existed in Canada in years." He then invited her to join the ARC Collective and write for the blog, confessing it was mostly a one-man operation. Auxiliary support came from one other person, a female volunteer from Quebec.

[Elisa's first article was prefaced by Kurt's unreserved endorsement:](#)

Hategan, who did more to take down the Front than any Canadian government agency ever could (and, really, in spite of some government agencies). Despite the efforts from 2001 to 2005 to revive the group, Elisse's testimony essentially killed the HF as a viable movement in Canada and exposed the activities of CSIS to public examination.

The blurb was accompanied by a hyperlink to [Elisa's testimony before the Senate Parliamentary Committee](#) that investigated the Bristow Affair.

[Kurt visited Elisa in Toronto](#) in 2013. They spent two days hanging out and she took him to all the Heritage Front old haunts, such as Zundel's townhouse on Carlton

Street, where she had worked and sometimes sought refuge when homelife turned violent, and the building where leader Wolfgang Droege was shot dead in 2005. [Photos taken by Elisa](#) during the visit ended up on ARC's website; with all her blog entries now deleted by Kurt, they are the only visible reminder of her contributions to the Collective.

Although platonic, the two were close friends. Their phone calls and Facebook Messenger interactions were marked by affectionate exchanges and Elisa's confessions of severe childhood abuse, chronic depression, and history of suicide attempts. Kurt called himself "family" and assured her that if she ever needed him, he would drop everything and fly to Toronto. He sent her several gift packages and contributed hundreds of dollars to her book fundraising campaigns, enlisting his mother to also donate.

With Phillips' encouragement, Hategan published her memoir [Race Traitor: The True Story of Canadian Intelligence's Greatest Cover-up](#), in 2014. Phillips promptly wrote a 5-star Amazon review under the handle "[John Smith](#)", citing Hategan as "the key figure in taking down the leadership."

Their friendship allowed Elisa exclusive and unfiltered access to Kurt's sleuthing tactics, which included LARPing as a [Russian model named Anya](#) and cosplaying as a Nazi to extract what at times seemed rather dubious intel, such as hardcore erotica stories.



"Anya" was one of Kurt Phillips' alter egos – a hot, blonde Russian model who lurked in white nationalist chatrooms. Conversations with neo-Nazi Paul Fromm, also a (former) high school teacher, elicited erotic images and stories from Fromm, including a fanfic starring Rasputin which included the protagonist (bearing a passing resemblance to the imaginary Anya) fondly reminiscing about having anal sex as a child.

Kurt boasted about such conquests and disseminated screenshots like trophies to Elisa and the other female ARC Collective member. He talked about saving the information to be publicly exposed at the right moment, but nothing meaningful appears to have been accomplished – not even when Fromm sought to run for public office.

The shady research tactics didn't stop with the honeypot traps. Once, when someone threatened Elisa on Facebook, Kurt gallantly volunteered to "make some calls" and

“give him a reason to be frightened”. Elisa hadn’t seen that side of Kurt, but hints appeared when he shared plans to buy a silicone skinhead mask to [cosplay a skinhead](#) in online forums.



In 2015, Elisa’s depression spiraled into despair after abruptly discovering that, while she’d been in hiding, the CBC had culled lived experiences from her 1994 trial testimony and interviews with people who knew her, and released a 1998 movie titled [White Lies, starring Sarah Polley](#). Approximately 75% of the scenes can be traced to snapshots of Elisa’s life as described in print media, trial transcripts, and a 1994 [Vision TV documentary](#). Hategan was never credited or paid. Instead, the CBC misattributed the story’s inspiration, with Bernie Farber being thanked in the end credits. The film earned producers Gemini and Emmy awards; Elisa was picking for food through garbage cans while life rights were being sold to the CBC behind her back.

The shock of seeing traumatic events reenacted without her permission, coupled with her mother’s death within months of that discovery, pushed Elisa over the edge. The “family” support she had come to expect from Kurt never materialized. When she posted on Facebook that her only relative in Canada was dying, she recalls that his response was a sad face emoji. Suicidal and under the influence of alcohol, she wrote him an angry, abrasive letter accusing him of being no better than the Nazis he claimed to fight. She CC’d it to the other female ARC member (who Kurt was infatuated with at the time, and who subsequently left ARC), before blocking him on social media.

Within months of CAHN’s inception in 2018, Kurt scrubbed all of Elisa’s contributions from ARC, including a link to her memoir’s Amazon page, which he had assured her would never be removed. In Elisa’s view, the sanitization coincided with a new narrative being disseminated, one that clashed with historical facts as she describes in the memoir both Kurt and Bernie Farber once praised. She made several attempts to communicate with him, with no avail.

Soon after, Elisa sued two CAHN Board members, including Chair Bernie Farber, after Farber made comments on TVO’s The Agenda with Steve Paikin that, in her view, misattributed her singular role in the “takedown of the Heritage Front” in order to advance a narrative she believed was more profitable and favourable to Farber’s interests. She also sued TVO; the case was settled out of court, with the terms of the settlement bound by a confidentiality clause.

In December 2019, Elisa uploaded a 171-page affidavit to Scribd, which referenced her work with Kurt in ARC. Three weeks later, following an appearance on CBC's Fifth Estate where his face was inadequately blurred, [Phillips' identity was revealed on KiwiFarms by Bryan Trottier](#). Trottier had sourced the name from Elisa's affidavit, but it was not until he saw Kurt's face and distinct glasses on CBC, that he was able to match them to photos of Phillips available online.

Instead of assigning any blame to either the CBC or Trottier, Kurt placed all the responsibility for his “doxx” squarely on Elisa's shoulders. It was the beginning of a vicious online harassment campaign by trolls associated with CAHN that continues to today, turning a once-lauded heroine into a villain, while elevating someone who Elisa refers to as an “armchair activist”, into a hero.

After his identity was revealed, Kurt was featured in high-profile media interviews, gained thousands of Twitter followers, and was praised as a CAHN board member. He also incurred threats and harassment, as did Elisa, but there was no one to insulate her from the fallout.

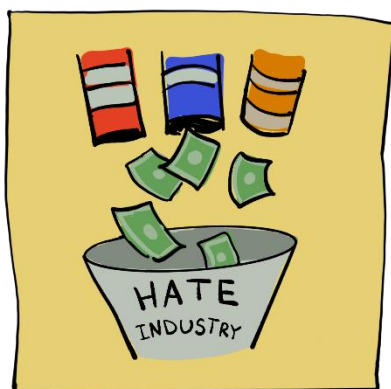
As Kurt's fame and popularity grew, he—a man who never shut down any hate groups or formally studied criminology and terrorism—was touted as an “expert” on the far-right, while the Jewish woman with formal training who had risked her life to shut down a hate group was smeared as a Nazi.

The Canadian Anti-Hate Network is Born

The Canadian Anti-Hate Network (CAHN) was incorporated in Toronto on March 30, 2018, as a not-for-profit organization that purports to be an antifascist and antiracist advocacy group. Its stated mission is to “monitor, research, and counter hate groups by providing education and information on hate groups to the public, media, researchers, courts, law enforcement, and community groups.” As part of its mandate, CAHN publishes articles and toolkits about identifying and confronting

the nebulous “far-right” and is frequently cited on mainstream media platforms as a de facto source of information on “hate” and extremism.

CAHN's founding members are Bernie Farber, former CEO of the now-defunct Canadian Jewish Congress (CJC), lawyer Richard Warman, journalist Amira Elghawaby, and Evan Balgord, former vice-president of the Canadian Association of Journalists.



At present, Balgord serves as Executive Director, Farber is Chair, Kurt Phillips, high school teacher and operator of the ARC Collective is on the board of directors, and “Elizabeth Simons,” an individual whose identity or credentials cannot be verified, is “deputy director”. The board of directors also include Nigel Barriffe and Sue Gardner.

There is also an Advisory Board that consists of Ontario Tech University professor Barbara Perry, ex-CJC director Len Rudner, and has included political pundit Warren Kinsella, and others. Its structure and purpose is unclear, as are the identities of most of its members. CAHN’s sphere of influence extends beyond the entity itself to include associated journalists or quasi-journalists, whether named, pseudonymized, or anonymous.

Armed with \$25,000 in seed funding from the Southern Poverty Law Center, CAHN quickly outpaced other fledgling non-profits by raking in sizeable donations, a significant grant from the Bank of Montreal, and a [\\$268,400 grant from the Liberal government’s](#) Anti-Racism Action Program. It certainly helped that two of the men at its helm, Farber and Balgord, had extensive media connections, which ensured that CAHN would receive the kind of widespread press coverage other human rights organizations with established track records could only dream of.



It might have been a new organization, but the ARC Collective’s modus operandi continued. A chimera of sorts, CAHN absorbed the blog archive, arbitrary targets, and questionable cybersleuthing tactics Kurt had relied on for over a decade, and transplanted them into a new incarnation - one that arguably turned the word “leverage” into a business plan.

Whatever CAHN lacked in terms of experience, expertise or credentials, they made up for by collaborating with academics and assorted journalists, riding on credentials and accolades that existed long before the concept took root in the mind of one ambitious, well-connected opportunist.

The “Dark Arts” behind Anti-Hate

To gain a rudimentary understanding of how ARC and CAHN’s roads intersected, you need look no further than the explosive allegations contained in the Twitter threads of Toronto journalist and antifascist activist Kevin Metcalf. Although incomplete, his recollections offer a bird’s eye glimpse of the obscure origins of the Canadian Anti-Hate Network.

[Metcalf first met Evan Balgord](#) in 2013, at Chrystia Freeland's victory party. As he recalls it, some time later, Balgord - who is rumoured to be Toronto ex-mayor John Tory's nephew - invited him for a beer at a bar "around the corner from the downtown condo his US banker parents' money was paying for," for a discussion centered around the "dark arts of politics".

According to Metcalf, Balgord "had a specific interest in twitter disinformation, sock-puppetry and media manipulation." After the beers, they went back to Balgord's place. That's when Metcalf claims that Balgord behaved in a way that made him uncomfortable, prompting his hasty exit. Save for a sporadic email exchange, they would not meet again until 2016.

One week after Metcalf was hired by the Canadian Journalists for Free Expression, Balgord, out of the blue, invited him to socialize. "He was suddenly my new best friend." Metcalf slowly warmed to Balgord, despite feeling that his communications suggested "a cavalier attitude towards the truth." He passed on scoops garnered from his work with CJFE, a move he now regrets.

Metcalf's bitterness is palpable, radiating caustically through his posts. Pointing to a [screenshot of Balgord's Muck Rack page](#), he asserts, "80% of his early work was cribbed directly from my notes, activism, scoops, sources (even leaks) I gave him. A lot of that can be proved from chat logs. Only one of us ever got credit for the work. I did the legwork, provided the consulting, referred sources, vouched etc. Despite that it had almost all been my own work, nobody made me "Vice President of the @caj". In fact, I got blacklisted."

In the beginning, Balgord seemed more interested in Metcalf's work against Bill C-51, the federal surveillance bill that became the Anti-Terrorism Act, than his antifascist work. That all changed after Trump's 2016 election.

Metcalf claims he provided advice and feedback on how to start a nonprofit, which depended on Balgord's ability to acquire Kurt Phillips Anti-Racist Canada website, which came complete with a decade-long archive and antifascist street cred. "Balgord told me straight-up this hinged on co-opting (sorry, professionalizing) ARC." To give credence to his statements, Metcalf's tweet is accompanied by a [screenshot of an email](#) where Balgord, if he authored the email, does indeed appear intent on continuing ARC, by morphing it into a Canadian rendition of the Southern Poverty Law Center.

In Metcalf's view, Balgord didn't intend to build an "antifascist" group, so much as co-opt other antifascists' work "to produce partisan "opposition research" targeting conservative political organizing in support of shady electioneering efforts."

In private conversation, Metcalf claims that Balgord traveled to either Alberta or Saskatchewan to meet with Kurt Phillips on several occasions in late 2017 – early 2018; we have no way to confirm when exactly Phillips and Balgord first met and under what circumstances.

He also claims that Warren Kinsella, Bernie Farber’s long-time friend and self-admitted “[brother from another mother](#)”, was the one to initially connect Balgord to Richard Warman by email, after being looped into an email thread related to Metcalf’s assault by the JDL. Afterwards, Warman allegedly suggested Balgord reach out to Farber in order to build social license to start CAHN.

“I was there for their meeting,” Metcalf says. “It was at a bar in Ottawa. But then I had to leave the room.” At the time, he shrugged off the snub. “I just figured I was too activist or whatever.” What seemed weirder to him was that Warman’s office was ostensibly located in the Department of Defence building, and he was introduced as a “DND Lawyer.”

“On the way home from Ottawa [Evan] told me that he needed to reach out to Bernie. That was two months before Charlottesville. I think Bernie just brought the license of the Jewish community. That's when Evan stopped trying to doxx the JDL.”

There is no way to independently confirm the accuracy of Metcalf’s account. Evan Balgord did not respond to our request for comment.

Things between Metcalf and Balgord soured after Metcalf was fired from CJFE for releasing a public statement that condemned Israel for the deaths of Gaza journalists. Metcalf believes he was blacklisted by the CBC and other mainstream press after that. CAHN stopped mentioning Metcalf in their articles, which prompted him to declare he “was going to criticize them for being co-optive.”

He was swiftly blocked. “And that's when the coordinated, malicious defamation started, with an attempt to brand me a "Russiagate conspiracy theorist" by a prominent network contributor,” Metcalf shares in his Twitter thread. “Over several months in early 2021, nearly anyone who liked my tweets received a message from various members/employees/affiliates of CAHN. The whisperers whispered in the ears of anyone with open DM's. It's called "Badjacketing". My follower count/engagement plummeted.

“When I tried to address some of the people spreading allegations about me, other affiliates accused me of "doxxing" for naming the individuals engaged in the active defamation. Others asserted I was an "anti-semite [...] They also widely circulated a false claim I was working with fascists, throughout their network, urging dozens or

hundreds of users to block me here, some going as far as to reach out to anyone who'd ever published me.”

Metcalf's ordeal rings painfully true to the authors of this article, because we have both lived through it. Although he declares that he dislikes me, which is his prerogative, he is forthright to relate a conversation where Morgan Yew, the author of a defamatory article about me published by CAHN, told him that “the reason he picked a fight with Caryma Sa'd over the Chris Sky event was that she was competition getting in the way of his selling content to @VICE. I don't like Caryma but CAHN did run an article written by a self-admitted competitor, attacking Caryma over the 2021 Chris Sky event, an event that same contributor helped organize a counter-protest to. That's a clear ethical breach/conflict of interest.”

To this day, Metcalf remains unequivocal in his characterization of CAHN: “This "network" is a malicious hivemind which turns friends into enemies in a bid to maintain its hegemony over Canadian antifascist spaces. That which will not be co-opted (or which lacks ongoing utility) must be marginalized and defamed.

“They're not JUST an anti-hate nonprofit, they're an unaccountable nonprofit spy agency and I say with some authority that I believe this was always the goal. I've tried to broach this subject in the past few months, and have been subjected to a campaign of harassment.”

The conflict of interest that Metcalf describes doesn't end with me. In fact, it's just the beginning.

The Business of Hate

Consulting gigs. Training seminars. Educational toolkits. There's big money in the business of hate. Groups whose livelihood hinges on monitoring and fighting "hate" would be rendered obsolete if hate disappeared overnight.

If all you need to establish a "hate group" is a couple of antisocial misfits exchanging racist memes in a discord chat, it's easy to see how Canada could have 300, 500, even a thousand hate groups. If you set your filters wide enough, that number is surprisingly easy to reach. Especially if a "hate group" can consist of only "[three or four members](#)".

[In a 2021 op-ed](#), journalist Jon Kay takes issue with CAHN Advisory Board member Barbara Perry's estimation that 300 hate groups operate in Canada. He requests to see the list, and suggests creating a public database where all 300 groups can be logged for easy reference. Moreover, he expresses dismay at how mainstream media regurgitates such numbers to buttress the idea that "Canada is on the cusp of some kind of full-on white supremacist apocalypse."

In May 2023, journalist Cosmin Dzsurdzsa reached out to Ontario Tech University and requested documentation of the 300 figure. [OTU refused to release the list](#), sending an email saying that Perry's "research" was not in their custody and citing the Privacy Act. Dzsurdzsa had already [written about his attempts to access the list](#). Frustrated, he tweeted, "Perry's extraordinary claims have been cited by the Liberal government, in committees and is informing lawmaking. It's been years and she's never produced a single shred of evidence. Effectively, without releasing the list, Dr. Perry's research serves as a carte blanche for lawmakers to fearmonger and clamp down on dissent under the guise of fighting hate. If these groups are indeed a threat, the public has a right to know who they are."

Inflated numbers. Dubious metrics. Smearing the competition.
Anonymous "experts" who refuse to provide credentials or evidence to
back up their expertise. Using others' work without permission. False or
unsubstantiated claims. Shady research tactics. Ignoring vicious
harassment campaigns by supporters against critics and competitors.
Backdoor influence from intelligence agencies.

These are all accusations that have been levelled at CAHN. Quite the impressive tally for an organization only established in 2018. And yet, despite mounting criticism, both this country's mainstream media and its law enforcement organizations continue to unquestioningly take for granted, what we consider questionable expertise.

The Canadian military is still haunted by the shameful spectre of the [Canadian Airborne Regiment](#), an elite faction that was disbanded in 1995 following the torture and beating death of Somali teenager Shidane Arone at the hands of two Canadian soldiers who took trophy photos with the battered, dying boy. The brutality sparked outrage and triggered the [Somalia Affair](#), which uncovered pervasive racism in the regiment and led directly to its disbandment.

There is no question that people with extremist mindsets are drawn to outlets where they can learn combat skills to put into practice in the event of widespread insurrections. Elisa remembers that Heritage Front leaders encouraged members to engage in paramilitary training, urging them to join the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) to gain knowledge about munitions and firearms that would be useful in a future Race War scenario. Two brothers who were HF members and part of the Airborne Regiment, offered to pass on their skillset to small cadres of hotheaded skinheads: they would get together on weekends to run drills and go shooting. The same brothers were later arrested and charged with the kidnapping and torture of a fellow HF member whom they suspected was a “rat”.

If you were around in the 90s, the graphic images of Shidane Arone’s bloody face are seared in your memory. When the words “racists” and “army” are paired, that’s what you flash to - acts of extreme brutality, confederate and swastika flags hung up in barracks, the top brass determined to cover up an embarrassing scandal before it became impossible to deny it. Not the mundane - yet more prevalent - racism that lingers and may never be fully eradicated: crude banter, offensive stereotypes, the kind of crass humour you don’t hear in polite company.

But the military learned their lessons all too well. Nobody wants to be caught with their pants down again. Their eagerness to prevent the recurrence of another Somalia Affair leaves them prone to overcorrect. If a similar scandal ever broke out, they won't be accused of ignoring racist behaviour - just look at what we’ve invested in sensitivity training and toolkits on how to deal with Nazis.

Clearly, detecting and preventing ideological extremism among its ranks is an ongoing concern for any armed forces. But it also opens the door for unscrupulous opportunists vying to sell snake oil solutions to a problem whose parameters they themselves defined.

If you’re in the business of “preventing hate”, nothing beats a country’s defense budget. The big bucks are in the military, and those who establish themselves as experts on the boogeymen du jour stand to make a pretty penny. If you’re clever enough, you can pitch just about anything:



developing informational manuals, staff training programs, research protocols, monitoring software—the sky’s the limit. The top commanders who sign the cheques probably know less than those who purport expertise. They simply want to show that something’s been done, boxes were checked off, the issue taken care of.

Setting aside the brutality that is inherent to the military, dangerous violent extremists are outliers within the CAF. But upholding an alarmist narrative is more lucrative. It also keeps the pressure on the top brass to continue bankrolling training seminars that ensure your cup keeps overflowing.

In such a competitive field, CAHN broke out of the gates early. One of their earliest collaborative pieces involved a Vice story about an ex-member of the Reserves accused of belonging to an armed neo-Nazi collective called The Base. The focus on the military continued, with CAHN appearing to seize every opportunity to be critical of how the CAF dealt with hate-related incidents. CAHN co-founder Bernie Farber seldom missed a chance to point his critiques at CAF’s Twitter accounts. His hyperbolic tweets accused the CAF of “fraternizing with known neo-Nazis”, attempting to “cover it up”, and “offering up a proverbial slap on the wrist” to soldiers “belonging to the most violent hate groups on the continent”.

Even as Farber’s complaints mounted, a June 2020 article publicized that CAHN Advisory Board member Barbara Perry, Director of the Centre on Hate, Bias and Extremism at Ontario Tech University, had [received \\$800,000 in funding from the Department of National Defence](#), to “develop a research-based network for exploration of the far right and hateful conduct in the armed services.” Her co-lead on the project was David Hofmann from the University of New Brunswick, who was widely quoted by CTV and other networks on Diagon. (The RCMP found it “difficult to understand” how Hofmann could assuredly purport that Diagon is “an American-style militia movement.”)

This was one of several grants Perry was awarded since hitching her wagon to CAHN: [\\$500,000 from Facebook](#) to research “violent extremism”, not long after a [2019 press release announced that Perry / OIT “received \\$366,985](#) over three years from the Government of Canada to examine the right-wing extremism movement through interviews with law enforcement, community anti-hate activists, and former and current extremists.” The OIT Centre was created in 2018 - coincidentally, the same year CAHN was born. By the fall of 2022, Perry was appointed [UNESCO’s Research Chair in Hate Studies](#). Not bad for someone who already earns an annual salary of [\\$203,859, according to Ontario’s 2022 Sunshine list](#).

Along with the grants come paid speaking engagements, [prestigious conferences](#), [fancy club invitations](#), [townhalls](#), academic [publications](#), and opportunities to garner

media publicity, such as meeting with the Prime Minister, which often leads to more consulting contracts.

With such significant funds pouring in from different sources to research “far right extremism”, a cynic might speculate as to whether researchers could be getting paid for what might be viewed, at least in part, as overlapping work. A cynic might also question the narrative of full-service providers who get to define a problem and supply the solutions to the same problem. But when it comes to the business of hate, cynicism is in short supply.

The Public Safety grant was in partnership with the London, UK-based Institute for Strategic Dialogue. Although the press release does not indicate if ISD received additional funding, Elisa Hategan remembers a conversation over lunch with a former inner-city gang member whom she’d met during her stint as a consultant with Against Violent Extremism (AVE), an ISD initiative involving former extremists. This colleague claimed he’d connected Perry with ISD, and shared details of the proposal before it was submitted to Public Safety. From what Elisa recalls, ISD was going for \$7.5 million and had pitched, among other things, the creation of learning modules on the far-right, but they needed a Canadian partner to access those kinds of funds from Canadian taxpayers.

Elisa’s AVE colleague then shared explosive details involving a high-profile Canadian government official who had allegedly traveled to meet with ISD the month before the grant was approved. “We were having a transatlantic conference call, and that’s when I heard [REDACTED] talking—he was right there in their London office, he flew all the way there to meet with them,” her colleague had raved. They’d looked at each other in shock, and in that moment they both fell silent, knowing exactly what that meant: there were very powerful forces at play.

That information could not be independently corroborated, but the news spurred Elisa to also put together a team, complete with academic and law enforcement experts from Ontario’s Hate Crime Unit and submit a proposal for the same Public Safety Community Resilience Fund. Knowing she was sure to lose if her bid went up against Perry’s, Elisa focused her proposal not on “far-right extremism”, but on LGBT youth and homophobic violence prevention in rural communities. It ticked all the right boxes and her team’s credentials seemed impeccable, but Elisa’s proposal was declined. She was perhaps too ahead of the curve.

When the Department of National Defence finally announced, in June 2021, the creation of a panel that would address systemic racism and “focus on anti-Indigenous and anti-Black racism, LGBTQ2 prejudice, gender bias and white supremacy”, Farber wasn’t satisfied. After meeting with advisory panel officials who informed him that antisemitism was not part of the focus, he was featured in an

Ottawa Citizen article where he complained it was “a major oversight in the battle against the far right.” The article was followed by an indignant tweet: “it baffles the mind that antisemitism training would not even be considered.”

In an increasingly polarized world that has seen a revival of century-old conspiracy theories about Jewish cabals and blood sacrifices, antisemitism training is crucial to combat hatred and stem violence. However, when there are huge sums of money at play, it becomes equally necessary to have transparent procurement processes in place, to ensure training budgets are allocated equitably.

In November 2022, a York Region District School Board purchase order was leaked, which showed that Farber was awarded a [YRDSB contract for \\$40,000](#) to conduct a total of “10 Antisemitism Professional Sessions” - three in person, seven on Zoom. There was no indication of duration; the sessions could have been an hour, or a half-day. Bernie Farber did not respond to our request for comment.

When Elisa Hategan asked whether there had been a contractor bidding process, so that consultants working in the same field (who could provide similar training at a reduced rate) had the chance to bid, YRDSB ignored her. The Board’s silence—at a time when they were cutting staff and eliminating student extracurricular activities—flew in the face of the [YRDSB Purchase Services mandate](#), which promised they were “accountable, ethical and fiscally responsible in protecting public funds.”

Elisa has a right to be upset. In February 2019, in a phone call with Cecil Roach, YRDSB Associate Director of the Schools, Programs and Equitable Outcomes, Roach acknowledged that Farber was someone he’d known, and at times worked with, since Farber’s CJC days. Roach also admitted that Farber had been contracted by their Equity & Inclusion office on many occasions over the years. He would not say why the YRDSB didn’t appear to open bids to other consultants who could offer similar training for far less. Elisa followed up with an email outlining her concerns over cronyism; her email went unanswered.

The irony was not lost on her. Back in 2015, when she was still on good terms with Farber, Elisa—who formally converted to Judaism in 2013—pleaded with him to help her fundraise for a book project that involved traveling to Romania to dig into her deceased father’s Jewish past. “Sorry to be begging for money, but I wouldn’t ask if it wasn’t absolutely necessary,” she wrote on Facebook Messenger. “Even a single dollar will help. Even a share of my link on your wall. Please consider it.”

[Farber’s reply](#): “Elisa I have made it a rule not to allow my social media to be used for fundraising other than registered charities. If I break the rules for one I d (sic) must do so for all. I hope you understand”. Elisa was hurt: “I understand very well. I think I understand you more now than I ever have before.”

She was wrong on that count. The trip to eastern Europe, paid for with borrowed money and a \$12,000 Ontario Arts Council writing grant, uncovered new familial connections. But it was not until December 2020 when, after uploading her family tree to genealogical website Geni's ancestry network, the final jigsaw piece fell into place: she and Farber were [distantly related](#).

Bias on Their Sleeves

In April 2022, as he and fellow CAHN Board member Barbara Perry appeared before a House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, CAHN Executive Director Evan Balgord was asked what seemed, on the surface, a simple question:

“Mr. Balgord, would you say that your organization is an objective organization?”

“We wear our biases on our sleeves,” Balgord replied. “We are very proudly anti-fascist, and we focus on the far right.”

While some might take issue with CAHN's single-minded obsession with the far right and argue that a group calling itself “anti-hate” should track hatred from all sides, choosing to focus exclusively on one extreme end of the political spectrum isn't the problem. It's how one defines “far right” that's being contested.

CAHN Chair Bernie Farber is assumed to be an untainted resource of information on what constitutes “hate”, yet he often makes negative or inflammatory comments about political candidates to the right of the Liberal party. His adversarial relationship with the Conservative Party poses another possible conflict of interest.

Farber's connection to the Liberal Party goes back decades and is no secret. In 2011, [he ran a failed campaign for a Liberal seat](#) in his home riding of Thornhill, and was [defeated by PC Candidate Peter Shurman](#).

Proximity to State Power

The fact that Farber has been repeatedly [contracted to train police officers across the province](#) about extremism in North America, shows how easily CAHN is able to shape not only public sentiment, but also law enforcement targeting.

Bernie Farber has had [meetings with Public Safety ministers](#) Ralph Goodale and Marco Mendicino, as well as other influential figures.

[A November 19, 2021, tweet](#) by Farber reveals that CAHN prides itself on being able to “guide public discourse on the state of hate in the country.” Given that such a position carries with it the risk that it could be used for unethical purposes, one hopes that persons with half the authority Farber commands would be more closely scrutinized. However, despite financial conflicts of interest in the sector, accusations

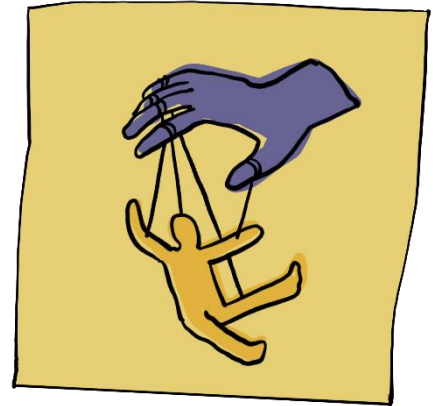
of misinformation, friendships with former CSIS employees, and the inclusion of an individual with a history of running election war rooms and disinformation campaigns for hire into CAHN's Advisory board, this has not been the case.

Like the saying goes, with great power comes great responsibility.

When you have what could be considered a monopoly on the mainstream media's understanding of far-right extremism and the very definition of hate, you gain the keys to a kingdom.

You hold the power to shape the prevalent narrative and manipulate said media to report your version of truth, with very little, if any, scrutiny of allegations made, or opposition.

But without scrutiny, it can be incredibly tempting to abuse that authority and legitimacy. One way you can eliminate all obstacles standing between you and a pedestal is to discredit anyone who questions your legitimacy. Tearing others down from hard-won pedestals and inserting yourself in their place, is another.



Civilian Undercover Operations

Here is an actual CAHN job description / casting call for people to play neo-Nazis “under assumed identities”:



Canadian Anti-Hate Network
@antihateca




We're hiring another reporter who understands far-right and white supremacist movements and isn't afraid to join their spaces under a pseudonym to get the info. Show us that you know the subject and have some news writing skills and we'll consider you. Plz share in your circles.

POSITIONS

INVESTIGATOR/REPORTER (\$55,000)

An investigator/reporter monitors the online activity of far-right movements and groups on a daily basis. Their understanding of far-right ideology and rhetoric allows them to join far-right spaces under assumed identities. They can conduct themselves professionally while interviewing far-right organizers, propagandists, and neo-Nazis. Their first responsibility is to be 100% factually accurate, especially when reporting on reprehensible behaviour. They are self-starters who can write two to three stories a week while continuing several investigations and multiple online personas.

In your application, please demonstrate that you are capable of pseudonymously joining hate groups/channels/chats, submit five writing samples, and pitch two story ideas.

 Are you passionate about this work but don't think you're fully qualified yet? Get that experience while pitching us stories at info@antihate.ca. We pay our contributors.

12:32 PM · 2022-07-04 · [Twitter Web App](#)

Whose bright idea was it to advertise an undercover operation?

Fun fact: recruiting people to cosplay as Nazis for a salary of \$55,000 per year is more than [Grant Bristow](#) was paid annually for his agent provocateur work, even when adjusting for inflation.

It is also \$5,000 more per year than Jeremy earned in Afghanistan, risking his life for his country.

CAHN founder Richard Warman is perhaps best known for going undercover using anonymous accounts to infiltrate far-right corners of the internet. He made prolific use of the now-repealed Section 13(1) of the *Canada Human Rights Act*, winning ten cases before the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (**CHRT**).

The Supreme Court of Canada endorsed the “hallmarks of hate” enumerated in *Warman v. Kouba* as examples of the types of “extreme and egregious” expressions and speech devices that reach the contemplated threshold of “hatred”.

However, in *Warman v. Owendyke*, the CHRT ruled that Warman’s posts, which he initially denied were his, could have precipitated further hate messages from forum members, describing this as “both disappointing and disturbing and it diminishes his credibility.” Warman maintains his posts helped him identify neo-Nazis, and says there was no “road map” for such investigations.

“With hindsight, he told the Ottawa Citizen in 2009, “things might have been done differently today.”

The Spy Who Got Left Out in the Cold

Critics who distrust CAHN’s claim of expertise on far-right extremism will cite a noticeable double standard—the penchant to reserve the brunt of condemnations for political opponents, while overlooking and even forgiving misconduct by peers

and members of their devoted fanbase. They point to situations where CAHN implies they are selective when choosing who gets publicly denounced as a bigot or extremist, and who is ignored.

For instance, relative unknowns get spotlighted and called heroes, even when there is no evidence to suggest they did anything to earn the accolades. To our knowledge, none of the former white supremacists promoted by CAHN has provided evidence of assistance to law enforcement organizations while still inside their hate groups. None testified against former comrades to help secure convictions.

There is arguably no better example to underscore concerns over CAHN's personal biases affecting what is purported to be expert research, than the enduring friendship between Bernie Farber and Grant Bristow, the undisputed co-founder and self-appointed "Intelligence Chief" of the Heritage Front.

Prior to her defection from the Heritage Front, Elisa Hategan submitted approximately 30 affidavits to the Ontario Provincial Police. Several involved situations where Bristow purportedly counseled Elisa—initially still a minor—to engage in criminal activity, such as giving her instructions on how to anonymously harass and intimidate left-wing activists, hack into answering machines to collect data, and spy on the Irish Freedom Association of Toronto.

She, along with scores of neo-Nazi skinheads and white supremacists, were given names, addresses and telephone numbers and taught how to use voter registry information to gather details about individuals on the target list, such as the names of everyone residing at that domicile.

Bristow also boasted about his intention to drive a lesbian Anti-Racist Action (**ARA**) activist to mental breakdown and suicide. "I want to pound Ruth's head in. I want to give her a facial massage with a sledgehammer," he is described as saying in one of Elisa's 1994 affidavits. He enlisted Elisa specifically because he needed a woman's voice for that particular job—to record messages on adult personal ads while passing as Ruth, and give out her address and telephone number.

Reluctant to obey his instructions, Elisa had asked him why he was so invested in targeting Ruth and other young women in the ARA. Bristow looked at her and laughed. "Women are more emotional. They're the first to break."

It was this specific targeting of an innocent woman who shared Elisa's sexual orientation that marked a crucial turning point in her beginning to identify with "the other side" and starting to spy on the Front. After her defection, her four month-long sleuthing uncovered the identity of a Toronto Police Services officer who was a Front member and attended KKK rallies in Arkansas; this information led to discreditable conduct charges. She also exposed a scandal involving Heritage Front

members infiltrating the Preston Manning's Reform Party in the hopes of overtaking the leadership. Furthermore, she confirmed that the Front was involved in a [Kitchener firebombing](#), although the specific details of the action had not been shared with her.

Elisa also volunteered to appear as a witness for the defence in the case of a black woman who had been a staff member at Runnymede House, a Toronto group home for teen girls that was [firebombed twice](#) after a resident with ties to the HF was kicked out for displaying hate content in the home. After the staff member was stalked, then sexually assaulted by a possible Front member, she reported her assault only to be charged with mischief afterwards because Toronto police did not believe her. On the morning that her lawyer Clayton Ruby announced Elisa as a witness, the prosecution dropped the charges.

After Bristow was unmasked as a CSIS operative, Clayton Ruby published an op-ed in the Toronto Star which cited Elisa, and criticized the Security Intelligence Review Committee (**SIRC**) for allowing Bristow to terrorize with impunity. He wrote a second column, specifically about Elisa, praising her courage and demanding to know why authorities had not prosecuted HF leader Wolfgang Droege based on her solid information.



[Clayton Ruby wrote](#): “What is Elisse Hategan? Chopped liver? Hategan is credible. She testified before Madame Tremblay-Lamer in the Federal Court of Canada in the course of a contempt hearing against Wolfgang Droege and Gary Schipper. Justice Tremblay-Lamer explicitly accepted her evidence as credible and ultimately sent these men to jail.”

In 1995, Elisa testified in front of a [House of Commons Senate committee](#) investigating allegations that the SIRC Report had whitewashed Bristow's criminal involvement. Her affidavits, which were subsequently shared with Farber, captured the explicit details of Bristow's hands-on role in directing skinheads to target anti-racist activists for harassment and threats in what became known as the “It Campaign”. Some of the victims, including ARA leader Kevin Thomas, shared their harrowing experiences and how Bristow appeared to relish the abuse, in a [1994 Fifth Estate episode titled Good for Business](#).

In private conversations with Elisa, Farber never disputed Grant Bristow's actions within the Heritage Front. He called him a “schmuck” and openly praised Race Traitor, going so far as taking Elisa to lunch in 2014, soon after her book's release. [He also emailed an unreserved endorsement of the memoir](#) to one of his

connections, a senior editor at Random House, after Elisa suggested that if he could help her secure a print deal, he could write the Foreword.

Their budding friendship would not last. In early 2015, soon after Elisa discovered that her lived experiences had been appropriated and reenacted without her consent to form the bulk of CBC's [White Lies, she confronted Farber](#). They had a terse meeting at his office. At the time, Farber was with Gemini Power Group, a company created by his friend, billionaire Michael Dan, that sought to partner with Indigenous communities to build power plants on reserves.

“It’s been so long, what do you want? Money?” she recalls Farber asking as she walked in. Elisa didn’t want money—all she asked was that Farber reach out to White Lies scriptwriter and CBC producer Dennis Foon, a Facebook friend of his, to add a line to his website and the [film’s IMDB page](#) crediting her as an inspiration.

A single line—to her, a gesture that she existed, that her trauma had not been exploited and monetized by others to make a movie that would not have existed without her, while she was homeless and dumpster-diving to survive.

“I’ll get Dennis on the phone,” Farber reassured her. But nothing changed.

In 2017, within one month of Elisa starting a speaking tour billed as “[The True Story of Canadian Intelligence’s Greatest Cover-up](#)”, the Toronto Star published a front-page article about Bristow by Jennifer Yang, a journalist who has interviewed Farber on multiple occasions. Yang’s piece significantly downplayed, and at times omitted, Bristow’s most egregious actions as Heritage Front co-leader, framing him as an imperfect hero. Bristow’s name had not appeared in the press for many years; for Elisa, the timing was too much of a coincidence.

Although the [Toronto Star’s IP was captured](#) by tracking software on Elisa’s blog within two weeks of her fundraising talk for the international Jewish women’s organization Hadassah-WIZO, lingering repeatedly over several posts citing Bristow and criminal activity, no journalist reached out for comments. Instead, when the article came out, Bernie Farber’s endorsement of Bristow was front and center: “[He was actually a man who wanted to do something real good for his country](#),” he said. Admitting he still considers Bristow “a friend”, Farber claimed that Bristow had averted a plot on his life. Elisa denies such a plot ever existed, and points to the fact that nobody was ever charged or prosecuted.

But for the sake of playing devil’s advocate—even if there *had* been a nefarious plot against Farber, that does not in itself justify the glowing endorsement of a man who, according to the SIRC’s sanitized report, “tested the limits of what was acceptable.”

Bristow's unsubstantiated tip about a possible attack on Farber conveniently seemed to come to light after he had been outed and was already under fire for allegedly directing skinheads to commit illegal acts that fanned flames of hate in this country.

And what about all the other people who came into Bristow's crossfire? Are they all collateral damage? Is an "End justifies the means" strategy all that matters?

How many others, like Jeremy Mackenzie, have been crucified by CAHN and its predecessor ARC, for far lesser sins than what Bristow got away with? How many have been unjustly smeared as "Nazis", while CAHN's Chair boasts openly of his friendship with a former leader of Canada's most dangerous neo-Nazi domestic terrorist group in modern history? Why the double standard?



After Farber's comments on The Agenda with Steve Paikin downplaying her singular contributions to destroy the Heritage Front, Elisa felt she had no choice but to engage in litigation. In her mind, it was a battle for her life - for the integrity of her lived experiences and her right to be the only person to profit from her own traumatic past. Others saw a former neo-Nazi who had once been called a "wretched little immigrant girl" by one of the litigants, go up against the former CEO of the Canadian Jewish Congress, a well-connected man who had provided expert witness to the courts on countless occasions - and laughed.

Elisa was outmatched financially in the protracted court battle, spending approximately \$50,000 up against \$300,000 according to legal documents. She lost her right to appeal (purportedly due to time delays), leaving in place a ruling that takes most of its verbiage directly from the defendants' harshly worded written submissions with minimal accompanying analysis, and a permanent prohibition on speaking about the case, at risk of contempt.

Forbidden from sharing what she considers incontrovertible evidence that would exonerate her, she silently faced an onslaught of harassment from taunting CAHN supporters who mocked her loss, her Romanian surname (calling her HateAgain), and characterized her as a "vexatious liar" and Nazi.

Elisa then discovered that Farber, Bristow, and Bristow's former CSIS handler, now operating a "Public Safety and Risk Consulting" group, were all mutual Twitter followers. Indeed, Bristow's ex-handler was among the first to retweet celebratory

posts about Elisa's loss. It was a visceral gut punch for Elisa, who remembered CSIS sources shared with the Fifth Estate that after she told the truth about Bristow, his livid handler's first reaction was, "We'll tear her to shreds."

Thirty years later, CSIS' narrative had won out.

Top Shocking FOIPOP Revelations

Information-Sharing with Five Eyes

The Five Eyes (FVEY) is an intelligence alliance comprising Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States. On April 7, 2022, an email lands in the inbox of Washington-based RCMP officer Sean Gordon. The subject line: “RESTRICTED Canadian Protests - eDiagolon.” The Sender’s name is redacted from the correspondence, but the domain is @Police.Govt.NZ. The message has been redacted as well; all that is visible is the greeting, “Hi Sean”.

Seven minutes later, Sean sends it up the food chain to Guillaume Croisetiere. “Could you please reach out to FPNS for this? There must be an analyst with us (or maybe OPS?) that has looked into this group.”

Sean’s reference to Diagolon as “this group” indicates some level of unfamiliarity. Still, New Zealand police wants intel for their files, so let’s give them what they need. A couple of minutes after that, Guillaume forwards it to Alvin Tang: “Would you be able to assist me with that? It’s from New Zealand. I’ll double back with FPNS once I hear from you.”

Alvin’s reply comes promptly. “I reached out to our IMCIT team (Ideologically Motivated Criminal Intel) and they did not work that group during the convoy protests. It’s my understanding that FPNS had visibility on that group.”

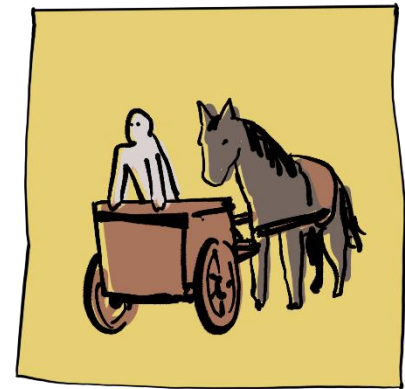
Shortly afterwards, Guillaume emails Eliane Caron, Director of Ops Team 2, Federal Policing National Security (FNPS), saying he was referred to her by Alvin. Parts of his message are redacted. Her reply, dated the morning of April 8, is as follows:

Yes, all information sharing in relation to operations and NS-related groups nationally is covered by FNPS. I’ve looped in Insp. Simon Pillay and A.Insp J-S Grenier who are the project Team OICs to assist with any discussions your NZ LO may wish to have on Diagolon. **We do not consider it a right wing militia group at this time however assessment is ongoing as I understand it.** [Emphasis added]

Also on April 8, Inspector Simon Pillay emails Lisa Ducharme to request a report that describes what is currently known about Diagolon.

We understand your group has a Diagolon work up of some kind. Not the association chart but rather a report that describes what is currently known. The reason I ask is that **due to the media attention this group has incurred, NZ authorities are asking if we have any information we can share.** [Emphasis added]

Let this sink in: CAHN's fabrications about Diagon, parroted by a gullible Canadian press, then get picked up by international intelligence agencies, who demanded access to the intel files. Trouble was, there was nothing the RCMP could provide other than perhaps a vague "association chart".



Inspector Simon Pillay's statement makes it clear that Jeremy Mackenzie's information ended up circulated to international police agencies because of mainstream media attention, and not because police had classified Diagon as a "right wing militia". Police took their cues from media who cited CAHN.

As he's waiting for Lisa to get back to him, Simon keeps Guillaume in the loop with a quick note on April 9: "As this is a fairly new matter we don't have any products ready for international dissemination but I am making some inquiries elsewhere and will get back to you when I hear."

On April 11, Lisa Ducharme replies to Simon: "Yes our IMCIT team recently completed a written assessment on Diagon for OA; it's based on open source material so it should not be a problem to share with our FVEY partners. It's in the final quality control stage - can we get it to you once completed? Should not take too much longer."

In case you didn't catch that, "open source material" is whatever they scarp from the broadcast media news channels, newspapers, even dubious intel sourced from anonymous Twitter accounts. In other words, it is not intelligence derived from actual police investigations.

On April 12, Guillaume writes back, undeterred. Reading between his words, it appears the New Zealanders are pushing for the information: "Who can I refer the NS LO to at FNPS to discuss? Or do you want to keep [Washington-based] Sean Gordon as the middle man?"

A couple of email exchanges establish go-to contacts, then Guillaume emails Simon Pillay, Mike Saghbini, and Jean-Sebastien Grenier: "Gents. Hope all is well. As mentioned earlier last week The NZ LO in DC is asking (see below) for more information on the group a/n. I would need a contact at FNPS that I can pass on to my LO in DC (Sean GORDON)."

On April 14, Mike Saghbini emails Simon and JS: "Hey boys. Have you replied to Guillaume? Will you be directing him in the right direction?" The following sentence is REDACTED, with Mike adding "My two cents" at the end.

Clearly, those who directed Guillaume were under the impression that “the boys” had the intel NZ was itching to obtain. This does not appear to be the case.

Everyone does the prudent thing: nothing. Until May 12, when Lisa Ducharme receives an email from Washington-based RCMP officer Sean Gordon, titled “RESTRICTED Canadian protests - Diagonlon.”

Hi Lisa,

I’m finally catching up with some old emails from a bunch of leave/COVID/travels.

I’m just curious whether the Diagonlon product is finished? If so, can I get a copy that can be shared with a FVEY (New Zealand) partner?

The next morning, Lisa emails Ashley Chen: “Would you know how the Diagonlon paper is doing? Can I get an ETA for review? I’m hoping to see it Monday.”

Ashley replies within the hour: “The DIAGOLON paper has been completed by Kandi’s side of IMCIT (please see attached). This version is Pro B and I will discuss with Garrett about making a FVEY shareable version for next week.”

Eight days later, on the morning of May 20, 2022, an email from Ashley Chen went out to Eliane Caron, cc’ing Garrett Morawiec, containing an attached document. The subject line was “IMCIT DIAGOLON Assessment Paper.

As was the case with most of the attachments contained in RCMP emails, the FOIPOP Package does not include the attachment.

Good morning, Eliane, I hope you are doing well.

Please find attached the Intelligence Assessment on DIAGOLON produced by IMCIT for FPNS. would you mind reviewing and confirming whether this product can be released to RCMP DCAS/DIOs as well as external partners in Public Safety, PCO, CSIS, ITAC, CBSA, DND/CAF, and CSE? IMCIT would also wish to share it with Five Eyes law enforcement partners.

For the version shared outside of RCMP, IMCIT will remove the following sentence on Page 2 in the PURPOSE section: “This paper has been produced in response to a Federal Policing National Security (FPNS) request for an intelligence assessment on DIAGOLON.

If you have any questions please feel free to reach out or give me a call.

Thank you,

Ashley Chen

At 3:24 PM that same afternoon, Lisa Ducharme emails Ashley Chen:

Hi Ashley,

Have you heard anything back from Eliane on whether we can share the DIAGOLON product with the Divs, GoC, Five Eyes?

Reason I ask is - Sean Gordon LO Washington is waiting to share it with the US.

Ten minutes later, Ashley writes back:

Hi Lisa,

I have not heard back from Eliane or anyone from FPNS about the product. I can send a heads up to her to let her know LO Washington is waiting for the product.

Exactly one minute later, Lisa replies: “Please - we’d like to at least get it out to the Five Eyes today as [REDACTED].”

Just to reiterate the facts: as of April 8, 2022, according to a FNPS Director, Diagolon was not classified as a “right wing militia group.” Over a month later, RCMP was intent on sharing intelligence reports to international spy agencies, presumably including information about the purported leader who happens to be a Canadian citizen war veteran with no criminal record and no history of terrorism.

Since the report was redacted, there is no way for us to know what was said. But if the repetition in other documents is any indication, the material shared may affect innocent Canadians as far as crossing international borders and prompting additional surveillance. This, based on salacious headlines and clickbait reporting.

What if that was you?

This is a chain of events that shows, in real time, how Canadian media’s hype about an imaginary nation posing an imaginary threat, ended up disseminated across the globe. And when international intelligence agencies came knocking for the intel they assumed was in the RCMP’s possession, the RCMP acquiesced and produced a report based on “open source” material they gleaned, in essence, from the Canadian Anti-Hate Network, with sycophants in Canadian media as their proxy.

Privacy lawyer David Fraser (who did not review any documents related to this matter) says that any personal information related to a Canadian citizen in the hands of the federal government is protected by Canada’s Privacy Act, even where the data is collected through open source intelligence. However, he notes that police are generally unrestrained in sharing information with other law enforcement. There are

formal mutual assistance treaties that may apply to cross-border information sharing, and more casual exchanges of information.

“It is difficult to say whether it crossed any lines, or if there is an approval process,” Fraser says. He adds that information obtained with a warrant, such as wiretaps, would likely require additional diligence and scrutiny.

Is ambiguity an acceptable standard for intelligence agencies? What could justify sharing prejudicial non-information with foreign spy agencies? Jeremy MacKenzie has no criminal record. Why did nobody approach him directly to investigate?

Copy-and-Paste Policing: The 15-Minute Report

An email thread dated February 14, 2022, titled “Urgent WHAT WE NEED” culminates in the RCMP compiling a key briefing for top officials in only fifteen minutes. The report was sent to Adriana Poloz, Executive Director, Intelligence and International Policing, RCMP, and lists Diagonon among Ideologically-Motivated Violent Extremists (IMVE) adherents, along with Three Percenters and Canada First.

Short-turnaround projects are not uncommon in fast-paced, high stakes work environments. What makes this insidious is the incomplete analysis. Diagonon is described as a “meme-based and satirical movement.” Furthermore, it is said that Diagonon “adherents express desires to form a country based on right-leaning Canadian provinces and US states.” A high-level official reading this assessment might easily conclude that a real threat to territorial sovereignty exists and should be taken seriously because Diagonon operates “under the guise of humour” to conceal its real intentions. The perception of threat outpaces any actual danger. In this way, alarmism was passed up the chain of command amid the turbulence of the convoy.

The response comes after a rush-order request from Poloz, which is not included in the FOI disclosure, to which Lisa Ducharme answers: “Will do our best but this is quite a lot of analysis and writing to do in 15 minutes.”

Fortunately, Ashley Chen—with Ducharme providing auxiliary cut-and-paste assistance—saves the day and delivers one for the team. Ducharme rushes it over to Poloz, who responds by thanking everyone: “the effort and professionalism demonstrated by you and your team has been outstanding.”

An email titled “Kudos to Ashley”, in which a gushing Lisa Ducharme commends Ashley on the huge impact the fifteen-minute hatchet job will have on top brass decision-making:

WELL DONE ASHLEY!! Talk about an amazing intelligence ‘pull it together in 15 minutes’ assessment! Thank you so much.

Your work has been shared at the highest level over at PCO. This request originated from a pressing tasking from the National Security and Intelligence Advisor for such information to help inform senior government decision-making.

Talk about work impact! Well done Ashley, and thank you again for the outstanding work.

Best regards,

Lisa

The pressure to expedite such a significant assessment, one intended to inform senior government decision-making, is counterproductive. It virtually guarantees there is no time to review updates or fact-check new information.

We have no doubt that the team did their best to meet the rushed deadline, under the circumstances. But to do so, they were forced to rely on the same old, erroneous content sourced through the broken telephone chain of broadcast media, from a single apparatus pumping out inaccurate and alarmist statements to maintain a foothold in the highly lucrative, competitive market of hate group expertise.

The Mendicino Scandal

Among the most egregious examples of overreach that we uncovered in the FOIPOP packages, the shocking incident described in an email thread dated February 16, 2022, stands out. Both for the gravity of what went transpired, and the heedless way in which a man’s reputation was judged expendable.

Around 3:30 PM, an email from RCMP officer Lisa McDonald-Bourg landed in her colleague Leslie Sohm’s inbox. The subject line: “protests and far-right groups - Michael Talbot - CityNews. Importance: High.”

Hi Leslie,

We just received another request for the remarks made by Mendicino re: far-right extremism.

Deadline: ASAP

Again, I’m looking for your advice on this.

Thanks,

Lisa

Request:

During a news conference today, Minister of public safety Marco Mendicino said the following:

“Several individuals at Coutts have strong ties to a far right organization with leaders who are in Ottawa”.

When pressed further, he advised media to direct questions to law enforcement.

A few questions then:

- Can the RCMP confirm a link between the individuals arrested at Coutts and members of the Ottawa protests?

- Does the far-right group the Minister referred to have a name? Can you provide any info on this group?

Any other info on this statement made by the Minister would be appreciated.”

A flurry of emails between RCMP officers followed. Leslie Sohm forwarded the request to Inspectors Mike Saghbini, Simon Pillay, and cc'd Lisa McDonald-Bourg.

Hi guys,

Media request related to the Minister's recent statements about the protests.

I am not in a position to guide Lisa on the appropriate response to either of the questions posed by the reporter - if in fact we are even in a position to respond.

Can you please assist and if these questions we are not in a position to respond to (as in we don't have the knowledge) please advise.

Thank you!

Inspector Saghbini's instinct was to leave the whole thing alone. He covered for the lack of knowledge by suggesting they ignore the query and get on with their day.

Hi Leslie/Lisa,

I don't think we at FPNS should be responding to this. It's an ongoing investigation.

Undeterred, Leslie pressed Mike further, insisting some kind of response was necessary. Remember, other media requests had already come in, and the pressure was starting to weigh heavily.

We *have to* provide a response - what it will say, still remains to be seen and this is where Lisa needs some assistance.

Leslie offered Lisa a helpful hint as to where she can look to “find” the needed evidence to back up Mendicino.

Lisa - if you want to start crafting from your standing “ongoing investigation” lines and the IMVE standing lines, that should give us something to work with.

Give us something to work with. Let that sink in.

Inspector Simon Pillay finally weighed in with a solution:

“I [...] think we could acknowledge what is already publicly available.

- Adherents of ideologically motivated violent extremism often share terms, symbols and concepts including fluid and unspecific anti-government sentiments.
- Symbols linked to the “Diagolon” ideology were found among exhibits in the Coutts file.
- Already made public so this info is open source:

He provides a hyperlink to a [globalnews.ca](#) article that had come out just a day earlier, titled “[Anti-hate experts concerned about possible neo-fascist involvement at Alberta trucker convoy](#)”.

The Global News article relies heavily on quotes from “anti-hate expert” and CAHN deputy director “Elizabeth Simons”, whose credentials cannot be verified. All we can say about Simons is that she is likely a female, going by the voice. We were not able to find any records of her appearing in person or on camera.

We cannot verify that the moniker isn’t shared by multiple individuals in CAHN. Given Kurt Phillips’ predilection to adopt both male *and* female personas while cyber-sleuthing, is it really outside the realm of possibility that several CAHN employees are running “Elizabeth Simons” as another “Anya” – a disposable NPC-like character to be scrapped at the first whiff of a defamation lawsuit.

You can’t serve someone if they don’t exist.

Inspector Pillay added: “My two cents but nothing in the above could hurt a criminal investigation as long as don’t get into the weeds about the Coutts file.”

He couldn’t be more wrong. He forgot that there was one other person in this equation – a man who had nothing to do with what happened in Coutts, but was about to be hurt. All because of the carelessness of a Public Safety Minister who

made irresponsible comments during a press conference and, when pressed for details by reporters, directed media inquiries to the RCMP.

Jeremy Mackenzie, Public Boogeyman Number One, is in the process of having his life destroyed by a repeated, reprehensible association to four men on the other side of the country, only one of whom he'd met in a group setting, and only twice. All because a patch that replicated his imaginary nation's make-believe flag, but wasn't manufactured or sold by him, had been stuck on body armour, along with other patches indicating affiliations with other groups.

None of the other patches got media attention.

Indeed, only one set of patches looked like it could be linked to someone who had been in Ottawa during the Freedom Convoy. So that's who they pinned it on.

Forced to scramble and invent a story to cover for Mendicino's recklessness, a team of stressed RCMP staff googled news media articles to quote right back to news media, in order to cover for their own lack of knowledge in the matter. By doing so, they circulated a version of reality that might have been amplified by other journalists who continued this infernal game of broken telephone.

A game of broken telephone that goes all the way back to 2008, to the shady tactics of an anonymous account created by an untrained, lonely, middle-aged school-teacher in a small Alberta town, who spent nearly all his spare time online cosplaying as an armchair Nazi-hunter.

For this – for Marco Mendicino, for Kurt Phillips, for Bernie Farber, for the sake of saving their own face – the RCMP offered up Jeremy, a decorated combat veteran with no criminal record and no history of terrorist behaviour, as a sacrificial lamb.

In a world where the weight of truth depends on the perceived worth of those who speak it, this is a tragic testament to how the lives of those most powerless and unconnected, can be destroyed on a dime.

Overreliance on Media by Law Enforcement

The FOIPOP documents heavily suggest that RCMP intelligence takes their cues from the press, relying on second-hand information rather than presenting as the originating source of information distributed to the press. One wonders how much of their “intel” simply consists of scouring daily news and disseminating it through regular “MEDIA SCAN” emails.

The Canadian press, for their part, typically churn out reporting that fits into an exceedingly short time slot. That is the nature of their work. There is no time to inject nuance and qualifiers when the segment on “far right extremism” is only four-

minutes long and the goal is to grab as many eyeballs as possible. Polarization sells; oversimplified platitudes are geared to the lowest denominator. Trading on pearl-clutching and scary speculations is how they pay the rent.

You could be working for the most prestigious intelligence agency in Canada, with an ivy-league pedigree and a fancy job title in your signature line. But if you get the bulk of your intel from the six o'clock news, and the twentysomething intern tasked to line up interviews routinely taps a single source for "expert" soundbites because everybody else is doing it, what's the point?

The FOIPOP files we reviewed contained an email with an attached report on "Accelerationism". The email sender was forwarding the report to an RCMP colleague, saying they'd received it from an academic who presented it at a "CSIS Expert Briefing" on the topic. The sender made the casual observation that the "expert" making the presentation had appeared "ill-informed".

To a cynic, the concept of "accelerationism" may sound like the kind academic gibberish slapped together to secure a million-dollar defence contract or garner positive peer-reviews for a publication. If the so-called expert CSIS hired to train agents on "accelerationism" can't bluff their way through the concept without sounding "ill-informed" to people who don't even know the subject, what hope is there for the future of "countering violent extremism?"

A Filtered Version of Truth

Media sources should never be considered standalone reliable open sources by intelligence services. What viewers get is not absolute truth, but information that may or may not be accurate, which has been filtered through an editorial lens. That lens is invariably primed to favour some stories, and some people, more than others. Especially if the editor in charge goes way back with a recurring guest and takes what they say for granted.

When Elisa Hategan tried to reach out to TVO's The Agenda to inform them that the program they planned to air contained what she believed to be a fraudulent narrative, producers ignored her. Later, internal emails revealed producers had dismissed her pleas while simultaneously fawning over their important guest and apologizing profusely for the inconvenience of having to ask for clarification.

The clarification, of course, was simply asking if what Elisa was saying was true. The assertions were baldly denied. On that alone, producers declined Elisa's offer to send them a motherload of evidence to the contrary.

A lawsuit could have been avoided. Government-funded TVO could have saved thousands of taxpayer dollars in legal fees if producers unfamiliar with the subject

matter had not made an instant judgement call in which one person was automatically dismissed, while the other greeted with a red-carpet rollout. It was a breathtaking display of bias in action.

In a [June 2019 email exchange with Steve Paikin](#), Paikin admitted to Elisa that he had known Farber for 25 years. Paikin expressed sympathy over Elisa's predicament, going so far as offering to ask people he referred to as "the deciders" and "the top brass" if she could come on the show. As just the figurehead, he didn't have the power to make that call. His request was declined. Paikin stopped answering Elisa's emails; in her view, he was docile to speak up on her behalf.

Was Bernie Farber automatically believed because of the power of his name brand? If so, there is no way to escape an insidious self-fulfilling prophecy – those who trade on the name recognition of the organization backing them up (such as the defunct CJC, and now CAHN) will always have an unfair advantage. Accolade builds on top of accolade, and before long there is an insurmountable chasm between the connection-havers and the have-nots.

Everywhere Elisa turned, she hit a wall – and its name was Bernie Farber. On the power of his word, journalists published boldfaced lies that splashed the front pages of national newspapers.

His reputation preceded him to such a degree that nobody flinched, even after Jewish journalist Jon Kay caught him in March 2022 [tweeting the photo of an antisemitic flyer](#), supposedly taken by his "friend" at a freedom convoy event in Ottawa, which turned out (thanks to a reverse-image search) to originate from Miami Beach.

In any other iteration of reality, the idea that someone appointed to Prime Minister Trudeau's "expert advisory group" on online safety could possibly fabricate evidence to smear Liberal government critics as antisemites, would warrant scrutiny.

Not in Canada.

During the course of her lawsuit, Elisa Hategan contacted hundreds of Canadian journalists across the country. She emailed them documentation of what she considers irrefutable proof of a conspiracy to exploit and monetize her bravery as the only woman to shut down the Heritage Front. Less than a dozen people replied. Among them, two female journalists wanted to cover the story – one was with [CBC Toronto](#), the other with [CBC Ottawa](#). In both cases, higher-ups killed the story.

She followed up with both reporters; neither wrote back. Going from friendly phone calls to being snubbed without explanation was jarring. She became convinced that they had been told she wasn't credible - her, the woman whose testimony as a 19-year girl prompted a Human Rights Commission judge to write: "Based on the

evidence of Ms. Hategan alone, I am convinced beyond a reasonable doubt that the defendants are guilty.”

For the daughter of deaf Romanian immigrants, the silence was deafening. “At least Romanians KNEW we lived in a corrupt system where people were bribed/bought to rewrite history & silence dissent. Here, people choose to become deafmutes,” she [tweeted](#) in 2022.

The mainstream media blackout served its purpose, censoring any hopes she had to generate outrage in the court of public opinion. But nobody came to her aid. A momentary flicker of hope emerged when actress Sarah Polley, who remembered Elisa’s name floating around on the set of *White Lies*, [tweeted a public apology](#): “I am very sorry you were not consulted or paid for details of your life. It must have been awful and bruising and even though I was not aware of all this I am very sorry!”

Sarah Polley’s apology made no difference. By the time she and Farber squared off in court, his narrative was the only one that counted.

What you see on the news isn’t reality as it unfolds around us. It’s a filtered reinterpretation of reality after it has undergone editorial pasteurization and was marked “safe” for public consumption. By “safe”, we mean congruence with the partisan affiliations of the broadcasting corporation’s culture.

What makes the front page is just as important as what doesn’t. “News” is manufactured through a process of selection that involves everyday judgment calls made by people under pressure to choose politically-fashionable talking points and discard anything that rocks the boat, thereby infusing journalistic biases and projections into what you think is accurate and impartial reporting.

The fickleness of the industry’s changing tastes often mirrors the contemporary administration’s spin. The events of September 11, 2001, shifted the attention of media and law enforcement almost overnight from white nationalism to a tenacious focus on brown terrorism. Because it justified the horrors to come.

The focus lasted nearly two decades, before Charlottesville turned the spotlight back to far-right extremism. Had neo-Nazis suddenly vanished on September 12, 2001? Of course not. But the instant pivot shows how selective reporting can generate a public’s buy-in and manufacture consent for atrocities faster than you can spell “Noam Chomsky.”

If you want to get into journalism, you do as you’re told. You tell the stories that earn you a gold star, not ones that challenge your editor’s worldview. But in a world where growing numbers of people hunger for nuanced analysis and a diversity of viewpoints, mainstream media – which was built on the authority of government-

funded information gatekeepers who reflected the politics of their masters – has lost its ability to command widespread attention. At times, it is indistinguishable from propaganda.

For a journalism student, the existential threat posed by legacy media's evaporating viewership means there are less jobs to go around. You're competing not only with your cohort, but with savvier, more experienced freelancers recently laid off across the Postmedia network. Any job positions that open up require experience, and how are you going to build up a portfolio of published work if you don't already have it? Luckily, the Canadian Anti-Hate Network has thought of that, offering many budding journos the opportunity to get bylines and make a quick buck.

Desperation breeds obedience, which might explain the curious case of Toronto Metropolitan University (formerly Ryerson) hosting a panel discussion in November 2022 about the online harassment of women journalists. The event advertised "Hazel Woodrow", another one of CAHN's experts whose credentials cannot be verified.

As a journalist who has been the victim of a two-year vicious harassment campaign waged against me by primarily anonymous online accounts, some of which appear affiliated with CAHN, I registered for the event and tweeted my concerns about CAHN's pattern of obscuring the identity of its "experts" and dismissing requests for transparency as the work of bigots.

For that, I was subjected to an immediate barrage of harassment that targeted my race, skin colour and gender. The journalist leading the pack was Erica Ifill, one of the panelists invited to discuss harassment against female reporters, who reacted to my query with the unequivocal declaration that I am "a plant for white supremacy".

The irony was lost on her. A brown, Muslim woman questioning the narrative of anonymous, white representatives of a state-funded organization headed by privileged white men who work with law enforcement, whose Chair boasts of being friends with the CSIS-salaried former leader of Canada's most notorious white supremacist organization in recent history – a "plant for white supremacy". [The harassment prompted me to sue Ifill for defamation](#); the case is before the courts.

When did we go from questioning authority, especially one that delivers its dictates from the shadows, to defending their right to conceal evidence and silence dissent? Martin Luther King Jr. once said, "The greatest purveyor of violence in the world is my own government." In February 2023, Malcolm X's family announced they would sue the CIA, FBI and the NYC Police among others, for \$100 million, accusing them of playing a part in his 1965 assassination.

With irrefutable historical records showing countless prominent civil rights leaders and activists under surveillance and subjects of intelligence dossiers, how can Canadian left-wing activists so rabidly defend the State? Are the sycophantic opportunities for photo-ops with CAHN's leaders – maybe they'll throw some scraps your way (a recommendation letter, a friendly word with an editor) – worth it?

For all we know, “Elizabeth Simons” and “Hazel Woodrow” could be disbursing their pearls of wisdom about far-right insurgency from their offices in CSIS/DND's Ottawa headquarters.

There are no sacred cows in journalism. Fact-checking should be the Number One Rule for people who aspire to report news and guard against misinformation. Yet as the lines between government, intelligence agencies, and state-funded media broadcasters grow increasingly blurred, conflicts of interest are inevitable.

When your editor tasks you to interview Bernie Farber about the antisemitic flyer he says his buddy saw in Ottawa during the Convoy, do you stop to reverse-search the image and risk annoying your boss (who's tapped Farber for soundbites for 25 years), or do you simply do what you're told? And when you don't have a choice in the matter, do you really want to know the truth?

The absolute, unquestioning deference to CAHN by TMU's J-school students flies in the face of CAJ's own guidelines, which instruct journalists to “make every effort to verify the identities and backgrounds of our sources, as well as “seek documentation to support the reliability of those sources and their stories” and “distinguish between assertions and facts.”

What a fantastic coup for its Executive Director. Within 4 years of CAHN's inception, despite being plagued with accusations of inflated numbers, shoddy methodology, and outright lying, and currently facing two lawsuits in federal court, the grasshopper had surpassed its master. Evan Balgord's propaganda machine had overtaken the authority of the association that had once elected him as vice-president. In effect, the Canadian Association of Journalist's mandate that “We do not allow our biases to impede fair and accurate reporting” had fallen to an organization that proudly “wore its biases on its sleeves”.

In the weeks following Charlottesville, Elisa Hategan met for coffee with then-Macleans editor Q (formerly known as Andray Domise) to discuss his plans for a column on the re-emergence of the white supremacist right. Q related that after he'd joined Macleans, his editor told him to direct any questions he had about antiracism to Farber. The directive rubbed him the wrong way. Why should he defer to the so-called expertise of a white, privileged boomer who hadn't lived through the

indignities suffered by a person of colour growing up poor in the inner city? Because his equally-white, equally-privileged boomer editor always deferred to Farber? For a black man who'd experienced racism first-hand, "That's how we do this" wasn't going to fly.

Q chose to cover antiracism in his own way, and Hategan respected him for it. Because, no matter what you think of anyone's politics, it takes guts to have an original voice in a country where the unspoken marker of success is breathtaking cowardice.

Who Gave CAHN the Right?

Who gave CAHN the right to declare themselves definitive arbiters of what is acceptable, vis-à-vis extremist, behaviour? And how did they pinpoint the meridian?

What percentage of the population need to fly the Red Ensign flag from their pickup trucks and hold right-wing views, as opposed to those whose attachment stems out of its historical context, before it shifts from being the former flag of Canada, to a hate symbol? Who came up with the calculation, and does CAHN really know how to do the math?

How can we take at face value, the declarations of someone who refuses to show their face?

Who appointed CAHN ultimate arbiter, and judge of character and intent, when the identity of their “deputy director”, along with other staff, is kept anonymous due to unspecified concerns over unspecified threats from unspecified “Nazis”?

Countless academics and journalists throughout the years have investigated fringe extremist movements and lived to tell the tale. When it comes down to something as serious as destroying reputations, is asking for transparency really tantamount to a “fascist” attempt to “doxx” the accuser?

In a fair and democratic society, we have the right to know who our accuser is. As English jurist William Blackstone once said, “Better that ten guilty persons escape, than that one innocent suffer.” Surely erring on the side of innocence is worth something? On a balance of probabilities, is the risk of someone who claims to be a researcher (but offers no credentials to prove it) maybe experiencing something that has not even happened, worth more than a life that will permanently be stained by unverifiable accusations?

Who gave CAHN or their rabid acolytes the right to arbitrarily shut down discourse under the pretext that it is “extremist”, even as the goalposts keep shifting? The right to suggest that engaging in conversation with a political adversary makes you “fash-adjacent”? The right to equate countering polarization through dialogue, with platforming hatred?

Who gives anyone the power to browbeat you with reductive jingles and thought-terminating clichés? The power to shame you into staying silent, because speaking out against injustice committed by your side makes you a traitor...and therefore a “Nazi”?

You did.

Every time you buy blindly into a narrative that you then repeat without examining the evidence behind the accusation, you empower those who stand to gain from your oblivion.

Cowardice

It is difficult to fathom the profound sense of betrayal that Jeremy MacKenzie and Elisa Hategan must feel at how their country threw them to the wayside in favour of a more advantageous narrative.

For Jeremy, the homeland he risked his life to fight for, framed him as a criminal. For Elisa, the adopted country that rallied around a CSIS agent provocateur, threw an eighteen-year-old girl trying to do the right thing, to the wolves.

It is a testament to Jeremy and Elisa's character that they have not allowed the extraordinary injustice they suffered to detract from how sincerely they carry themselves. No one would blame them if they turned irredeemably bitter and angry, which would have played into the hands of those who portrayed them as such, who would relish the opportunity to say they were right all along.

But Jeremy and Elisa are not your average people. They could not be bullied into being ashamed or questioning their own reality. They were determined to survive through their ordeals, to do like Jeremy did as a young soldier—left foot, right foot, keep going, day after next—as they walked through the darkest nights of their lives. “Probably the only reason I didn't kill myself is, I didn't want to give them the satisfaction,” Elisa says. “Sometimes the only reason I got up in the morning was to spite them.”

She finds irony in the fact that her parents thought they were escaping Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu's communist authoritarian rule by emigrating to Canada when she was eleven, only for her life to be destroyed before it ever got started.

“I was erased from history, erased from my own work, from my own articles, erased from a movie that monetized my hard-fraught experiences, erased by a world that rendered me inconvenient because I spoke the truth about government corruption that was deliberately suppressed for thirty years.”

On her [Substack blog, she writes](#):

Just because they win, doesn't mean you are a loser. Because what is loss, in such an artificial setting? Throughout our lives, we've seen people who win while losing their integrity, compromising their beliefs, ignoring their conscience, siding with liars and sycophants, sacrificing Truth for an illusion in order to please and appease powerful men from whom they hope to extract favours— an illusion that gets them success and accolades, things that this world considers indicators of what makes one human being better than another.

From cradle to grave, we are pushed to bend, to become warped by categorizations of perceived value, a valuation of a human being's worth filtered and imprinted into your psyche by the society and culture you're born into.

What kind of win is that? Winning the right to pass a lie as truth, will never make it true.

There is a scene in the iconic film *V for Vendetta*, where a tortured, broken Evie emerges from the darkness of her prison to stand on a rooftop and lift her arms toward the sky as rain washes over her, symbolizing her rebirth. To Elisa, her ordeal has been a baptism by fire that led to a powerful awakening.

Her career destroyed, her Amazon page hit with scores of 1-star reviews, countless journalists and academics unfollowing or blocking her without explanation, a Wikipedia page created in her name falsely stating she lost her lawsuit on the merits of an appeal, rather than procedural delay. But in the end, what did any of it matter?

“If our society wasn't structured around making a competition of such artificial rewards, if the measure of success wasn't counted by the number of followers, retweets and clicks a story gets, our reality would be a whole lot more authentic. It's about standing on that stage and speaking your truth, even if the theatre is empty. Your conscience is your audience.”

When asked about being exploited, irreparably harmed, and discarded by the state, Elisa and Jeremy both point to the same loathsome characteristic of Canadian society: cowardice.

Canadians are too cowardly to be outraged about things that matter. Like CSIS covering up a botched operation by rewarding the perpetrator while punishing the whistleblower. Or politicians pushing for immoral wars from behind the safety of their podiums. Or the symbiotic relationship between subsidized media corporations and the government that they depend upon for sustenance.

For many, the idea of disloyalty to a cause or political party is a frightening prospect, backed by the assumption that if you're not with us, you're against us. Because we've all seen what happens when others strayed outside their lanes. The policing that goes on in activist circles, the ever-deepening purity spiral.

The fear that if you challenge the central orthodoxy, you'll be excommunicated. Worse yet, you might be called a Nazi. And the purging is always retroactive. You were never one of us. You never deserved a seat at the table. You're a traitor. Your crime never has any mitigating factors, either—only pure malice can be attributable to the noncompliant.

Is it any wonder then, that in a time when people are silently afraid of slipping up, laughing at the wrong joke, being accused of wrongthink, that it seems so much safer to outsource critical thinking to “experts”?

But it is the countless tiny acts of cowardice by bureaucrats and journalists that allow bad behaviour to go unchecked: parroting false information, failing to ask critical questions, turning the other way to ignore inconvenient truths. Our institutions are only as strong as the people running them, and the checks and balances in place.

Guess what happens when you see wrongdoing and choose to look the other way? You enable it. As most of the population cowers in fear and remains silent so as not to accidentally offend, the loudest voices left standing come from fringe extremists on both ends of the political spectrum.

Canada is a unique country where huge scandals are ignored or buried due to cronyism and corruption. No place on earth is completely free from corruption, but at least citizens in most places know about it and demand change. Some make it a hobby to complain about crooked politicians to their neighbours or at the local cafe. Everyone knows how nepotism works. Here in Canada, we are too complacent and satisfied by scraps and distractions. Bread and circuses rule the day. But the worst part is the unshakable, endemic self-righteousness that we can do no wrong. “We’re too civilized, too polite. Things like that just don’t happen here”, accompanied by the unspoken belief that “We’re better than those people.”

And like it or not, complacency leads to complicity.

Indifference is the scum floating at the top of this cesspool. Deeper, there is actual complicity and coverups. It all goes back to cowardice, whether motivated by fear, insecurity, greed, or misplaced loyalty.

Elisa believes the indifference masks a deeper problem:

Believing the worst about those you don’t want to help allows you to walk away with a clean conscience—because the wounded animal in the road either isn’t really that hurt, or is beyond saving.

The most sheltered tend to be the most inflexible and unforgiving. They’re the ones most likely to accuse the sufferer of exaggeration or manipulation. You must vilify the Other to justify why you won’t help, even if helping is within your means. The cruelty of indifference gives you peace of mind; it allows you to sleep at night.

Conversely, those who’ve known hunger will always be the first to break bread. Those who have encountered trauma will most readily understand suffering and pain, because they’ve lived it. Some of the kindest, most

selfless and forgiving people I've ever met – people I credit with saving my life, once upon a time – were poor themselves, were immigrants or visible minorities, were people who had experienced hardship and recognized it on my face before I ever had to ask for help.

There's a saying that goes, "When an honest man discovers he is mistaken, he will either cease being mistaken, or cease being honest."

Which of those do you count on being?

The Courage to Have Second Thoughts

It should not be up to the victims to correct grave errors made by powerful institutions. But a signature trait of being among cowards is that nobody ever admits they were wrong. Instead of an apology, we sweep our dirt under the carpet and pretend our living room is spotless. The "dirt" are the expendable ones; the "carpet" is our denial and sense of decorum.

Kristen Little, RCMP Intelligence Analyst with the Ideologically Motivated Criminal Intelligence Team (IMCIT) gently raised concerns on February 14, 2022:

I don't mean to bother you... but I have some concerns which u may as well [sic] about including diabolon and Canada first in paragraphs using "imVE... Apologies if I am overstepping here. But maybe we shouldn't rush on trying to put something out considering it appears our reports are going out to so many agencies... Just a suggestion, again..not trying to overstep but just trying to think of what our "value added" can be due to the numerous reports coming from rcmp as well as other agencies.

Reading between the lines, it seems she was hesitant to rubber stamp a research document that lacked nuance:

I know the content of the report is seeking to answer some higher questions and this isn't a criticism at all of the hard work done by Ashley and James under what have no doubt been stressful circumstances but before our unit's name is on something I want to be sure we are giving accurate historical context and a full picture.

A very Canadian email, overlaid with apologies. Still, a notable outlier among her colleagues considering the overall lack of pushback, and apparent willingness to adopt copy-and-paste as an investigative technique.

A comprehensive 16-page RCMP report titled "Diabolon Profile January/February 2022" states that it is "difficult to understand" how certain conclusions were reached with confidence despite the lack of substantive evidence:

Based on available open source information it is exceedingly difficult to ascertain the extent to which Diagon is a distinct group, with common ideology, a political agenda, and the cohesion necessary to advance such an agenda.

The Canadian Anti-Hate Network (CAHN) is cited as the main authority on the group by all mainstream media outlets; due to the fact that all information traces back to one source, triangulation and the verification of facts is almost impossible at the current time. Based on the information that is publicly available, it is difficult to understand how CAHN can confidently assert that Diagon is an “accelerationist movement that believes a revolution is inevitable and necessary to collapse the current government system... Due to a lack of substantive open source material, operational information would be needed to supplement the profile.

If anyone else questioned or critiqued CAHN’s narrative, premised on dubious assertions, it is not apparent from over a thousand pages of documents reviewed in the FOIPOP.

Abject cowardice is the reason why charlatans have been entrusted to define “hate.”

The Courage to Speak

As Elisa told me while we worked on this daunting project:

The biggest lesson I learned over the last eight years is that nobody comes to your rescue when you live in a country of cowards. When you can’t offer anything in return. When you have no doors to open, names to drop, favours to trade on. You have to save yourself, because nobody else will do it for you. If not now, when? If not us, who?

Cowardice is not having tried at all. Rolling over and giving up before trying to fight.

Buttressed by its façade of moral superiority and banal platitudes, CAHN gives those who love to hate a powerful outlet to rage for a good cause. Within its radius, CAHN’s quest to purge “fascists” has attracted certain clusters of personalities looking to destroy others in good conscience, or as Aldous Huxley wrote, “to behave badly and excuse it as righteous indignation.”

This is the antithesis of countering radicalization.

If your policy is not to “engage with fascists”, all possibilities for understanding, conversation, even deradicalization, go out the door. The moment you determine someone is, in your eyes, a Nazi, then that person has lost all right to dispute that conclusion. Since you refuse to speak or listen, once the label has been cast, they

have no hope for an appeal. You took away that opportunity when you prioritized your interpretation over their truth.

Some might call such an inflexible mindset, totalitarian.

Do you really believe that some people become more dangerous on others' say-so? People and symbols are not that different from each other. We affix labels and meaning to everything we experience, as part of encoding memory. If you can label a flag a danger, you most certainly can, a human. As the world becomes more complex, everyone's bandwidth cranks to capacity and it's ever more tempting to reach for simplistic, black and white answers.

Why risk blurting out the wrong opinion, when you can let the "experts" do the thinking for you?

An Unholy Alliance

Based on the work of renowned American psychologist Jennifer Freyd, **DARVO** is an acronym that stands for “Deny, Attack, and Reverse Victim and Offender.” According to Wikipedia’s [definition](#):

1. The abuser **denies** the abuse ever took place
2. When confronted with evidence, the **abuser** then attacks the person that was abused (and/or the person's family and/or friends) for attempting to hold the abuser accountable for their actions, and finally
3. The abuser claims that they are actually the victim in the situation, thus **reversing** the positions of **victim** and **offender**. It often involves not just playing the victim but also victim blaming.”

All three of us—Jeremy, Elisa and myself—have been the victims of DARVO campaigns, both on social media and in real life, to varying degrees. The most insidious effect of being forced to face an endless barrage of psychological attacks intended to break you down and make you doubt your own perception of reality, is the gaslighting. Its aim is to make a person feel defensive about fighting back against his or her own exploitation.

And then there’s the tested and true formula of **Anonymity**. Among the shrewd arsenal of tactics used by proponents of anonymity to shut down requests for transparency is the accusation of “doxxing,” which carries the implication that you are putting the culprit in danger if by demanding to know who is behind a malicious accusation. In the age of character assassination by social media, any attempt to uncover and confront one’s maligner is inextricably entwined with the accusation of “doxxing”. When combined, they create a remarkably effective form of DARVO.

The Oxford Dictionary defines doxxing as “search for and publish private or identifying information about (a particular individual) on the internet, typically with malicious intent.” Open-source intelligence (**OSINT**), on the other hand, is defined by Wikipedia as “the collection and analysis of data gathered from open sources (covert and publicly available sources)”.

Over time, however, and largely the result of contrived accusations of misconduct advanced by anonymity proponents, a gray area has emerged between the two, rendering the charge arbitrary and frequently used as a tool to preemptively silence demands for transparency and accountability.

Nowadays, an accusation of doxxing can mean anything from identifying the owner of a social account by their real name, to posting publicly available information about

them, to sharing personal or private information such as an address or contact details. A great deal depends on who is targeted. Some so-called researchers take pride in OSINT, but claim the same tactics are harmful and inexcusable when used against them. It gets even murkier when anonymous accounts produce material about real people that itself becomes OSINT.

Any discussion about doxxing and social media is apt to be intertwined with the debate over anonymity and its abuses. Nameless trolls regularly reach into their targets' real lives for ammunition to use in a cyber battle, while themselves remaining anonymous. When they can't fight a fair fight because they're objectively wrong, many choose to launch a covert attack that is part distraction, part bullying, part intimidation into silence.

How are anonymous accounts able to sway so many people to believe them over real-name accounts? Why do so many Twitter users seem to have a positive bias toward them, and judge real-name accounts with more cynicism and suspicion?

A lot has to do with how we're wired, and how incredibly difficult it can be to separate ourselves from our social programming. We have biases built into us by the society we're born into, preconceptions that shape our responses and which can become ingrained reactions. Our brains constantly evaluate contradictory information flooding in from our environment and make split-second decisions that can impact our survival. But in a virtual ecosphere like Twitter, where you are not presented with the same amount of tangible information you'd encounter in real life, this evolutionary feature can be a downfall.

The reality of online platforms is that it is nearly impossible to avoid the temptation of making assumptions about a stranger based on 280-character interactions stripped of context and other sensory data. It requires a fair bit of intellectual humility to recognize that the people with whom we interact, as well as ourselves, are not one-dimensional characters. Context and backstories matter. This doesn't mean truth is relative, just that we must be cautious about leaping to conclusions.

Anonymity holds the promise of something special, a treasure trove of exciting possibilities, and perhaps this is why we tend to give anonymous accounts the benefit of the doubt far more often than they deserve to be trusted. People project heroic attributes onto accounts purportedly fighting for good causes— since you don't know who they are, your imagination makes up all sorts of stories about who they might be: an edgy hacker, an underground resistance fighter, a Guy Fawkes-masked hero.

We respond positively to images that represent causes and ideals we already embrace. If you want to be noticed by a particular target demographic, all you need to do is upload a banner image and profile photo that conveys solidarity with a cause du jour,

and you've primed your target audience to treat you like an in-group member, a fellow activist who shares their values and ideals.

Most people believe themselves savvy enough to avoid being catfished by extremist ideologues and garden-variety trolls, but are they really? How do you know who is behind that rainbow flag, the BLM hashtag, the Antifa banner claiming solidarity with Indigenous causes? Could you tell if you were engaging with an incel LARPing as a knight in shining armour? Are they every bit the activist they claim to be?

Social justice movements have a history of being infiltrated by agitators, saboteurs and government agents who seed division and incite criminal activity to derail progress. And yet, among many Twitter activists, anonymity is not just commonplace but encouraged and even expected.

It is naïve to assume that law enforcement and intelligence agencies would not take advantage of the anonymity afforded by online platforms. Why are we not asking ourselves how the normalization of concealment in social justice groups plays into the hands of nefarious actors?

For two years I battled bullies from all sides of the political spectrum, people who wielded anonymity like a shield as they tried to erase who I am and publicly disseminated an alternate version of me, a construct of their imagination. It was a crowd of people playing pretend, while seeking to redefine activism to suit their narrative and make themselves out to be greater heroes or greater victims. They claimed to fight for justice but harassed with impunity, assembling through Twitter flash mobs in pile-ons that often started with a single troll siccing the pack onto a particular target.

The more they veiled themselves in anonymity, the more I pursued transparency—only to realize that accusations of “doxxing” are entrenched in an arsenal of tactics used by cyberbullies to gaslight their victims into not naming their harassers or demanding accountability, lest they be smeared as “doxxers”.

There is something perverse about being forced to take relentless abuse and not seek to identify your abusers. It's the epitome of gaslighting. The culture of secrecy in some circles appears at odds with a movement that claims to advocate for people's intrinsic right to live without persecution and mistreatment.

Why would any social justice activist be expected to abide by an Omertà code that commands everyone to keep silent and not discuss abuse “among our own”, or risk ostracization? Who decided this? And why does it seem like the worst abusers of anonymity are also the ones who wield the “doxxing” accusation most freely?

I do not believe it is “doxxing” to identify by name someone who incites harmful or criminal activity. While there are valid reasons to keep one’s identity private, hiding behind anonymity while attacking real people is cowardly. I reject the premise that self-identified “antifascists” who make a hobby of online harassment are, in fact, the ultimate do-gooders. Their actions do not align with the basic principles of leftism, which advocates for justice and fair treatment of all human beings.

People who claim to fight for justice yet harass and try to destroy others using shady tactics, are self-deputized gatekeepers who believe that rules of fairness and respect should apply to them, but not their foes. Benefit of the doubt only goes one way. They use buzzwords that elicit strong emotions (“Nazi”, “fascist”, “TERF”), sometimes for weeks and months on end, and repeat them until they stick, counting on the fact that most online users won’t be bothered to investigate the source and context surrounding the original accusation.

In large part due to anonymity, social platforms have become caustic environments where smack talk, vicious comebacks and mockery are viewed as entertainment. Many users show up for a fight—either to fight it or to watch it—and whoever lands the best insult wins.

The Social Colosseum

In a virtual arena like Twitter everyone plays a part, and what you do is as important as what you don’t do. An audience that feeds off bloodshed and trauma, however passively, will invariably contribute to the antagonistic climate that sustains it.

Remaining silent while you witness pile-ons and cyber-harassment is not a neutral stance—it is complicity. When you amplify an insulting tweet, you encourage and abet the account holder to keep behaving recklessly. Likewise, looking away without saying anything is a role in itself—the role of a cowardly spectator.

If you would not tolerate the same comments if they were made by people “on the other side”, then you are part of the problem.

Most people are afraid to stand out and voice unpopular opinions, so they get their carnage vicariously. Through likes and retweets, they can amplify things they don’t have the courage to speak aloud, even as they know, deep inside, that the content they choose to disseminate is malicious or nasty.

In the Roman colosseum, no moral blameworthiness could be attributed to the lions or slaves. The emperor may have been cruel, and some warriors battled for sport, but ultimately the biggest culprits were the audience.

Two thousand years have passed, but human nature is predictable. I suspect social media trolls would not behave as they do, were it not for the encouragement of an enabling crowd. Emboldened by the acceptance of silent onlookers, nefarious users project their rage and obsessions to an arena where the spectators are never held accountable.

Any perception of fairness is an illusion, because nothing is fair about this fight. It's torture and punishment disguised as public discourse. To fight against an onslaught of malicious trolls, acutely cognizant that every word you speak will be dissected, reinterpreted in bad faith and examined under a microscopic lens a thousand times over, is like being in the arena with a hand tied behind your back.

Real-name accounts are scrutinized and held to a higher standard of perfection because people's careers and reputations are at stake. Conversely, anonymous users lack that responsibility because they have no real names and reputations attached to disposable accounts. This endows them with a vast advantage—anonymity means bad actors can use deception to harass those whose real-name persona prohibits them from responding in kind.

Progress happens when people come together to bring about positive change, not to destroy others in order to feel superior. This puts social media colosseums inherently at odds with peacebuilding. The combative nature of Twitter shapes its culture as much as it sabotages true discourse.

Forgiveness and compassion are the antithesis of vicarious entertainment, and easily discarded in an arena where punches are thrown via slurs intended to pummel psychologically. Empathy, mercy, or mitigating factors are reserved only for "our" side, never our adversaries.

Nothing I have ever done warrants the vicious attacks on my character or my right to exist in public. Nothing can justify my friends and supporters being scared on my behalf, and for themselves. The relentless surveillance, misrepresentation of my every move, the escalating harassment carried out physically and online by malicious or misguided individuals role-playing as revolutionaries, has irrevocably changed my perspective on anonymity.

We cannot allow ourselves to be persuaded to accept secrecy as a legitimate practice. Doing so eschews accountability and any semblance of objectivity. Lies and misinformation spread by masked character assassins carry real-life consequences, both for those unfairly targeted by false accusations and those who are swayed by the lies. Pretending this is not happening is a disservice to the truth.

Our Stories Merge

I lost my father to COVID-19 in March 2021. He was a pandemic skeptic, but that was not something we talked about. The unexpected loss propelled me to want to connect with similar people on a human level— not to persuade, but to try and understand. I was also interested in the discussion around balancing individual constitutional rights with emergency measures imposed upon the population.

I started becoming methodical about documenting “freedom” rallies, mostly as a fly on the wall. I posted on social media because it felt like a matter of public interest that was not being tackled meaningfully by mainstream media. I documented an emerging political subculture with boots on the ground. Over time, I grew creative with the gimmicks and vignettes. My videographer and I showed up, were polite, and never concealed the camera. Our footage, as well as my commentary, has been used by national and international major broadcasters.

In April 2021, I produced a comic featuring Chris Sky. He took offense and encouraged hundreds of thousands of his followers to brigade my account. The hateful messages kept coming and would not stop. Being piled on every few seconds was a surreal experience. The constant one-star Google reviews. The non-stop barrage of hostility. In response, I made more comics. I am not one to be silenced.

The Canadian Anti-Hate Network reached out to me privately after the first comic. At the time, I thought the organization did good work. I was asked about producing comics on a regular basis for their website. We discussed it over the course of about a week, before I ultimately declined to provide content as CAHN had invited.

And then, a strange thing happened. Positive messages started being mixed in with the hate mail. My feed was bringing people out of their respective echo chambers, and encouraging the exchange of ideas—to me, it does not matter if we disagree, just that we talk. I challenge deep seeded assumptions simply by being myself.

A disheartening phenomenon during the pandemic was the normalization of dehumanization. Dialogue and common ground can change minds. The accusation of “platforming” is premised on paternalistic assumptions of gatekeeping access to ideas because people cannot be trusted to think for themselves. There is value in trying to forge a dialogue across the political divide, so we might figure out ways to live together in peace.

In July 2021, I invited Chris Sky to a live podcast recording to be held outside my rented commercial unit in my neighbourhood. I deliberately scheduled the show at the tail end of the lockdown, before restrictions loosened up the following week, so I could purposely limit the audience to 25 invited guests. I was prepared to

accommodate uninvited spectators in the upstairs plaza overlooking the stage and hired private security as a precaution.

What happened next changed the trajectory of my life. A group of masked strangers, dressed head to toe in black, blockaded the venue entrance. Their intention was to stop me from talking to Chris Sky. To stop me specifically—Sky had appeared at numerous rallies prior to my event, never with any resistance or counter protest. Nor was Chris Sky ever blockaded again in Toronto.

Their target wasn't the man they called a fascist, but the left-leaning, brown Muslim woman who dared to challenge him to an in-person interview. Me stepping outside the demarcation lines of my political affiliations was viewed as an existential threat to people I'd never engaged with before.

What should have been a riveting and thought-provoking show quickly devolved into a street brawl. In the aftermath, I was blamed for two separate groups of adults cosplaying as revolutionaries on the street. This marked the beginning of a concerted smear campaign against me, justified by many as punishment for my audacity to host an unpopular event. Blockade participants soon retreated to mostly-anonymous Twitter accounts to misrepresent the situation.

Within days, CAHN published an article chastising me for hosting the event, spotlighting an anonymous organizer who misrepresented the situation by exaggerating or inventing my missteps while downplaying their own contributions to violence. The article was authored by a man who had been surveilling and distributing photos of my unit. He was also part of the blockade. CAHN made some revisions to the article after I flagged serious issues, but the editor's note lacks specifics. The article has been cited countless times to establish that I am a "danger to communities." In other words, it was a hit piece.

Things escalated from there. Over the next two years, the vitriol morphed into malicious attacks against my personal and professional reputation, amplified by other nameless accounts gleefully jumping on the bandwagon. I saw a lifetime of hard, honest work at risk of destruction by a handful of malevolent trolls using anonymity as a shield to harass and dehumanize me through derogatory lies and degrading memes and flyers targeting my race, my character, and my professional reputation.

All arising from a single event that never actually took place.

I don't know how I made it through. There are battle scars, but I emerged stronger. If they had it their way, I would have quit documenting protests. I moved in the other direction, big time. Did I mention I hate being told what to do.

It was a fluke that I was able to attend the duration of the Freedom Convoy; it was only made possible because the relentless harassment pushed me to spend a season outside of Toronto. Using Perth, Ontario as a homebase allowed me closer access to the Ottawa region. I was there to watch the police wave the first trucks into place, and there to see the last ones get towed away. I was willing to go where others dared not. And I did it with a smile, even when I felt afraid.

I was interviewed on the Fifth Estate episode about the convoy to share my observations; the interviewer focusing on my comments about the interactions between protesters and law enforcement. Kurt Phillips was also tapped as an expert. One segment of the final product was about Jeremy MacKenzie.

A subset of the population got fed up with what they perceived as too much indulgence towards the convoy movement and inched towards vigilantism. An institutional failure by police led to ordinary citizens exercising arbitrary power against other citizens. The creation of a “convite” class was used to justify concerning behaviour, including gang-stalking and gang-harassment coordinated over Discord, Facebook, Twitter, and Twitch.

On my part, I continued to attend and document public protests and fringe social movements. I covered the emergence of counter protests, sometimes to the chagrin of counter protesters. I began using the term “antifaux” to refer to antifascists more interested in performative activism than upholding progressive values.

After enduring nearly a year of harassment from CAHN-adjacent accounts and individuals in silence, I tweeted an invitation to anyone with similar experiences to contact me. That is how I initially connected with Jeremy MacKenzie.

It was April 2022. Everything I knew about him came from second-hand online sources, so I was apprehensive about being in contact. But I pushed past my assumptions and reservations and took a couple of hours to listen to his experiences. I spotted patterns that gave me food for thought. After the call, we continued our separate ways. I watched what looked like a downward spiral from afar. I noted the heat Jeremy attracted first-hand after posting a [couple of comics](#).

In October 2022 I travelled to Saskatchewan on my own initiative to observe Jeremy’s bail hearing. Watching the proceeding unfold, I saw a man being railroaded. It did not sit well with me. However unpopular a person or their cause, everyone deserves a fair shake. I have followed his legal proceedings closely since then, including reporting on a disclosure motion as it happened.

Public hysteria thrives on a boogeyman. Emotions take precedence over evidence, especially if the bad guy makes it easy to dislike them. The court of public opinion can interfere with the rule of law, particularly where institutions are complicit

(wittingly or not) in spreading the smear and fomenting panic and outrage. Think of the Martensville Satanic Sex Scandal. Interestingly, the judge who denied Jeremy bail in Saskatchewan was one of the Martensville prosecutors.

I have observed and documented people radicalize in real time, while others move in the opposite direction. Individual trajectories are influenced by personal life circumstances, mental health, loneliness, and the media they consume. Radicalization can happen at either end of the political spectrum.

A 2022 ruling from Ontario's Small Claims Court determined that CAHN has obtained financial support, assisted a violent political movement, used its financial support to influence a violent political movement, and that the violent political movement was "antifa", so-named for its anti-fascist motivations.

These findings came out of a defamation lawsuit filed by Richard Warman against journalists Jonathan and Barbara Kay over a handful of tweets that did not mention Warman by name. The judge characterized Warman as a controversial figure and accepted that he has used litigation to silence critics in the past. Ultimately, the statements were found not to be defamatory. The judge added that even if Warman had succeeded in his action, only nominal damages of \$5,000 and \$500 would have been awarded against Jonathan and Barbara Kay, respectively.

The decision is being appealed.

Although none of their writers seem to be on the ground to cover events as they unfold, CAHN published materials geared towards counter protesters, or self-appointed "community defenders" and "guardians." CAHN specifically encouraged counter protesters to "ice out fake journalists" at events through noisemaking, and the use of banners and flags to create visual and physical barriers. I have been subjected to in-person harassment at rallies by counter protesters employing such tactics. I am suing CAHN in Federal Court for trade libel and unfair competition.

The case is pending.

Conclusion

Fundamentally, we are in a war of competing narratives. On one side, elites with connections to political leaders, mainstream media and law enforcement. On the other, people deemed expendable. A brash working-class man with conservative political views who criticizes the military and policing industrial complexes. A “wretched little immigrant girl” who destroyed an intelligence operation. A lawyer who refuses to play her assigned role.

How can such an unbalanced battle result in truth or justice prevailing? It would take a miracle. But to Elisa, sometimes hope is all you have left. After they break you down and throw you in that gutter where they say you belong, all you have left is the choice to lift your head and look up at the stars:

You know the truth because you lived it. Everything else you’ve heard about yourself and the world around you is a subjective interpretation filtered through someone else’s lens – which is shaped by their own biases, interests, (sub)conscious influences and value judgements, and the biases of those who, in turn, shaped them. The biggest fight is to not allow them to replace who you know you are, with their projections of who they think you are.

The world is one gigantic courtroom – and everything is persuasion. Those who are born into privilege and can buy their way into positions of power and authority, most often get to decide the outcome of the external story. They can certify and endorse each other’s version of reality and impose it through brute force or majority-rule, but it does not make it the truth.

Always trust yourself. You are the only first-person witness to your story.