

A PRAYER by Bud Osborn  
Insite Vigil  
May 6, 2008

“Every rebellion against suffering is fed by the subversive power of remembered suffering.” –  
Johann-Baptist Metz

the fight for Insite  
began in a political/rhetorical atmosphere  
of depraved indifference  
regarding overdose deaths and pandemic emergency

horrifying ghosts of human beings  
calling radio talk shows and actually telling me:

“why don’t they just string barbed-wire  
around the Downtown Eastside  
and let them infect each other to death?”

or

“the only good junkie is a dead junkie”

comments like those heard in Nazi Germany

I remember one welfare week  
eleven years ago  
sirens screamed lights flashed red and white  
all day all night

one hot afternoon that same week  
I met a friend of mine  
on the corner of cordova and main  
she’s a first nations woman and activist  
who told me when I asked  
how she was  
that her family was gathering  
to make another crucial decision

her cousin had fixed alone Wednesday evening  
in an SRO room  
and when her husband returned  
found her dead on the floor  
he made a noose  
with a long piece of cloth     hanged himself  
and soon was dead  
and because the couple had an infant son  
the family was gathering  
to determine the best disposition  
for the suddenly orphaned child  
and this entire unjust and tragic situation  
might well never have happened  
if INSITE was open  
but as my friend and I were saying goodbye  
a flame burst inside me

fueled by grief and rage  
like a fierce spontaneous combustion  
flashing up through my nervous system  
and roared in my head like a psychic explosion

because of another  
because of too many  
because of an unnecessary  
overdose death

yelled  
two words repetitively in my head

No More! No More! No More!  
of this heart-breaking family-shattering community-diminishing  
pain of overdose deaths

I immediately ran from that conversation  
to see mark and liz and kirsten at the old Portland hotel  
and with dave diewert ann livingston  
and several others  
planned a day of action  
we pounded 1,000 crosses into oppenheimer park  
blocked main and hastings with a heavy chain  
and distributed statistics of misery  
to commuters unable to get to work

1000 crosses memorializing just three years of overdose deaths

a cross is a symbol of political execution  
a cross is a symbol for social revolution

and that afternoon  
a battle to save lives was declared  
the battle to save the lives of those  
so many others wanted to die

and from that afternoon  
to INSITE's opening  
we've never ceased in our efforts  
to save lives and bring peace  
against the war on drug addicts  
war on the truth  
war on the most  
physically and mentally vulnerable human beings  
in our courageous community  
and because we wrote  
and because we spoke  
and because we protested  
and because we created  
an immensely successful  
injection site alternative

we achieved a facility unique in our history  
a beacon of hope for others beaten crazy  
in drug war corrupted North America

we began to transform  
that death-dealing rhetoric  
with a space made for dignity life and community

we made                    out of no way  
a way                    for real care            to take place

the word    vigil    to me

means bearing witness  
to our own powerful history of resistance

means bearing witness  
to all those we've known  
who've passed  
not as victims or losers  
but as transcendant martyrs  
still bearing witness        to our common efforts  
keeping vigilance        upon our accomplishments

our revolution in consciousness

now Insite is again under seige  
by federal government/DEA conspiracies

so, this prayer  
for a place that really saves lives  
this prayer  
for the means and strength  
    to defend  
    to protect  
    to sustain    with whatever it takes  
a most beautiful concrete expression  
    of care for all of us  
a prayer for those who gave their lives  
    for this  
a prayer that those hearts hardened against us  
    relent and approve  
a prayer for those blinded by fear  
    and their own vested interests –

that they may now see Insite as the beginning of hope  
not only for those who need it most  
but because everyone        suffers  
when compassion is undone