

D'TOWN BOYS, from page 5

more.

When people learn about this they're almost always against it.

J.M.: *What has been the reaction from your fans?*

V.R.: It's so hard because everything that's written about it is pretty much from the government perspective. The TPP says it's a trade agreement, but only a small part of it is a trade agreement, and it's really hard to make an everyday citizen understand. What that does is hide its relevancy to the everyday person who is just trying to make enough money for themselves or their kids, or just trying to get out of the criminal justice system or just trying to survive. I think our fight is to make it relevant.

I think that's one of the challenges we love the best, to try to make things relevant for the people who are coming to our shows and who are coming to a punk show to have to think about things outside of that show. Everything we talk about and everything we already stand for is related to the context and the system of power that the TPP is coming out of.

J.M.: *Victoria, you once worked for a public defender? How much of your experience there found its way into your lyrics.*

V.R.: I was a social worker for three years. I worked (in the public defender's office) for two and a half years, and I left so

I could go on tour more. In our job, we would interview people who were in prison or who had cases pending and we would mitigate their charges to try to prove to the judge that this person did not need to be in jail and there needs to be some other solution. I found that I completely disagree with the criminal justice system.

Most of the people I was visiting - I had a family member who looked like them, or a cousin or best friend who looked like a lot of the people I was talking to. Or they looked like people I grew up within my family's neighborhood in East San Jose. I think it was that connection. It is poor people and it's people of color that the system is trying to oppress, and that has pretty much made its way into all of the lyrics I've written with Joey, and a lot of the lyrics that Joey has written. There's this huge spectrum of impact, that the workplace, capitalism and racism has on us.

J.M.: *Do you feel musicians and artists have a certain responsibility to promote social justice issues?*

J.D.: Coming from the places that we do as a band and the experiences we've had, I think that's what naturally comes out. I think the focus on the role of the artist is something that's talked about a lot, but I think in whatever vocation or profession you're in, you can be pushing these ideals and pushing for social justice. If you're a teacher, if you're a bank worker, if you're a server, if you're an artist or a journalist - whatever you're doing you can be pushing



PHOTO BY COOLDADMUSIC.COM
Victoria Ruiz, lead singer with the band Downtown Boys, crowd surfs at one of their concerts.

social justice forward. I don't know if it's a responsibility because that feels like something that's very conscious as opposed to having to decide to fight for your rights and for standing up for what's right in the world. But I think no matter what profession you're in, people have to stand up. I think that's where real change comes from. It's not just from people showing up at the ballot box every four years. It's from people in their professions organizing in their unions. It's from artist speaking out. It's from journalists doing their job, and everyone in their own locations making it happen.

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