

Accommodate this! Report

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À propos du Rapport “Accommode donc ça!”...

Ce rapport est la culmination de la série d'évènements et de discussions anti-racistes « Accommode donc ça ! », qui avait pour objectif de remettre en question le climat de xénophobie entourant le supposé « débat » sur les Accommodements Raisonables au Québec.

Cette série d'évènement s'inscrit dans la foulée de la mobilisation anti-raciste qui a eu lieu à l'automne 2007 à Montréal, pour dénoncer la Commission Bouchard Taylor comme un forum de foire mis en place par le gouvernement basé sur des prémisses racistes et sexistes, et pour rejeter sa supposée fonction de « forum » alors qu'elle a agit comme une plateforme ouverte au racisme béat. Nous avons rejeté la Commission Bouchard Taylor et le débat sur les Accommodements Raisonables qui l'entoure parce que :

- ils ne reconnaissent pas le fait que le Québec et le Canada ont été établis sur des terres volées aux Autochtones, et ce que ces entités se sont développées à travers la dépossession et le génocide des peuples Autochtones.
- Ils sont basés sur une fausse dichotomie qui est à la base raciste entre le « nous » et le « eux », le « nous » étant défini comme la population blanche de descendance européenne, et le « eux » s'appliquant aux communautés migrantes et racialisées, perçues comme des « dangers » pour « l'identité nationale ».
- Ils utilisent le prétendu cadre du « droit des femmes » pour mettre de l'avant des arguments racistes et sexistes. Nous rejetons l'Islamophobie et le sexisme utilisés pour justifier la guerre à l'étranger – comme c'est le cas dans l'occupation militaire de l'Afghanistan – et l'attaque contre les communautés migrantes – comme c'est le cas dans le “débat” sur les accommodements raisonnables.
- Cette Commission, créée et parrainée par l'État, n'est rien d'autre qu'un processus de soumission, à travers lequel des groupes minoritaires sont forcés à justifier jusqu'à leur existence même au Québec, à coups d'humiliantes enchères à «l'intégration ». Elle ignore toutes les injustices subies par les communautés migrantes au Québec, tout en les obligeant à faire la preuve qu'ils sont de « bons Québécois ».

La série « Accommode donc ça ! » avait pour objectif de créer d'authentiques forums où des membres de communautés migrantes et racisées étaient libres de s'exprimer sur les véritables enjeux auxquelles nous faisons face chaque jour : le racisme, l'exploitation au travail, le sexisme, la précarité de statut, la marginalisation, les déportations, les détentions, l'appauvrissement, la brutalité policière, le profilage racial et le harcèlement par l'état.

Dans l'optique de déplacer le focus d'un supposé “débat sociétal” instrumentalisé vers nos réalités quotidiennes, en tant que communautés migrantes et racisées, et vers nos multiples luttes, nous voulions consigner les voix de ceux et celles qui vivent le racisme, le sexisme, l'exploitation et l'injustice au quotidien, et celles et ceux qui sont à l'avant

plan des luttes contre toutes formes d'oppression, dans un contre rapport, basé sur notre vision de justice et de dignité. C'est le rapport « Accommode donc ça ! ».

Ce rapport a pour but de mettre en avant certaines des nombreuses réalités de marginalisation imposées aux communautés migrantes au Québec, par le biais de témoignages des familles des hommes détenus sous des certificats de sécurité, de paroles de personnes sans statut luttant pour leur dignité, de déclarations provenant de migrants détenus au centre de « Prévention de l'Immigration » à Laval, de témoignages de victimes de brutalité policière et de profilage racial, des interviews avec des femmes racisées à propos de leur foi, ainsi que de discussions sur la double oppression raciste et sexiste imposées aux femmes migrantes et sur la lutte contre la violence faite aux femmes racisées.

Il se base également sur une analyse anti-coloniale et anti-raciste pour offrir une critique du soi-disant « débat » sur les Accommodements Raisonables au Québec comme une manifestation supplémentaire d'une Histoire continue de terres volées, de génocide, de suprématie blanche et d'exploitation de communautés racisées, qui utilise perpétuellement un discours pro-féministe corrompu pour justifier un projet impérialiste.

Finalement, ce rapport met l'accent sur nos efforts continus de lutte contre l'oppression et la violence institutionnelles dirigées contre les plus marginaliséEs, à travers notre travail de solidarité autochtone, les campagnes menées pour un statut pour toutes et tous, les mobilisations contre les soi-disant « mesures de sécurité » en Immigration, les actions anti-patriarcat autour de la Journée Internationale des Femmes, ainsi que les actions contre la Commission Bouchard Taylor comme telle.

Accommode donc ça !

About the “Accommodate this!” Report...

This report is the culmination of the « Accommodate this! » series of anti-racist events and discussions in Montreal, that aimed at challenging the xenophobic climate surrounding the so-called “debate” on Reasonable Accommodation in Quebec.

This series came in the wave of the anti-racist organizing that took place in the Fall 2007 in Montreal, to denounce the Bouchard-Taylor Commission as a state-sanctioned pseudo-forum based on racist and sexist premises, and reject its supposed role as a “forum” while it acted as a platform for racism and bigotry. We rejected the Bouchard-Taylor Commission and the surrounding so called “debate” on Reasonable Accommodation because:

- They fail to recognize that Quebec and Canada are built on stolen Indigenous land constituted through the dispossession and genocide of Indigenous peoples.
- They are based on a false and racist dichotomy between “us” and “them”, where ‘us’ is made up of white people of European descent, and ‘them’ is made up of migrant and racialized communities, perceived as “threats” to “national identity”.
- They use the so called “women’s rights” framework to advance racist and sexist arguments. We reject the Islamophobia and sexism that are used to justify war abroad -- as is the case in the on-going military occupation of Afghanistan -- and the attack on migrant communities – as is the case in the “debate” on reasonable accommodation.
- The Commission, sanctioned by the state, is a process of submission, whereby minority populations are forced to justify their very existence in Quebec. It ignores all the injustice faced by migrant communities in Quebec, while forcing them to defend themselves as “good Quebecois”

The “Accommodate this!” series aimed at creating true forums for members of racialized and migrant communities to address the real issues we face every day: racism, exploitation at work, sexism, precarious status, marginalization, deportation, detention, impoverishment, police brutality, racial profiling and harassment by the state.

In the vein of shifting the focus from the so called societal “debate” onto our lived realities, as migrant and racialized communities, and our on-going struggles, we wanted to record the voices of those at the receiving end of racism, sexism, exploitation and injustice, and those who are at the frontlines of the struggle against all forms of oppression, in a counter-report, based on our vision of justice and dignity. This is the “Accommodate this!” report.

This report attempts to collect some of the many realities of marginalization imposed on migrant communities in Quebec, through testimonies from the families of the men detained under Security Certificates, accounts from non status people fighting for their dignity, statements from migrants detained at the Immigration “Prevention” Center in

Laval, testimonies from victims of police brutality and racial profiling, and discussions about the double layer of racist and sexist oppression imposed on migrant women and on fighting gender violence targeted at racialized women.

It also draws from an anti-colonial and anti-racist analysis in offering a critique of the so-called “debate” on Reasonable Accommodation in Quebec as yet another manifestation of an on going history of land theft, genocide, white supremacy and exploitation of racialized communities, that continuously uses a co-opted pro-feminist discourse to justify an imperialist agenda.

Finally, this report highlights our on going organizing efforts against state oppression and violence targeted at the most marginalized, through Indigenous solidarity work, Status for All campaigns, mobilizing against so called “security measures” in Immigration, as well as organizing against the Bouchard-Taylor Commission itself.

PRINCIPES DE BASE:

Accommode donc ça! Mobilisation contre le Racisme, le Sexisme et le Colonialisme

La lutte contre le racisme doit attaquer les raisons qui font en sorte que le racisme existe, de même que les manières concrètes dont le racisme affecte nos vies quotidiennes. La lutte contre le racisme n'est pas une lutte du passé puisque l'idée de « race » -- et le processus de « racisation » des cultures et des peuples – continue d'être utilisé pour déterminer qui est « des nôtres » et qui ne l'est pas, qui souffre de la plus atroce pauvreté, qui est criminalisé, qui a la mobilité la plus restreinte, qui est plus exploité, qui subit le plus de violence et de contrôle des institutions de l'État, et quelles voix sont le plus marginalisées. La fausse notion de « race » -- et la réalité tangible du racisme – continue de déterminer la quantité de pouvoir nous avons pour changer nos conditions de vie.

Il est trompeur de parler de multiculturalisme, de tolérance et d'intégration comme des réponses au racisme. Nous ne demandons pas d'être « mieux intégrés » à une société fondamentalement injuste, où seulement nos coutumes, notre cuisine et nos traditions sont perçues comme divertissantes et acceptables. Nous mettons en avant une vision pour une société où les injustices fondamentales seraient éliminées, et où les histoires de colonisation de nos différentes communautés ne seraient pas perçues comme des erreurs du passé, mais plutôt comme les fondations du racisme d'aujourd'hui, et les bases des injustices actuelles. Nous défendons une vision pour une société où les populations marginalisées reprennent le pouvoir et éliminent l'existence d'élites.

L'anti-racisme n'est pas la lutte pour des termes politiquement corrects, il n'est pas non plus une lutte visant à transplanter les communautés racisées dans les rangs des élites, ni une lutte pour que certaines communautés racisées oppriment d'autres, ni une lutte pour s'intégrer docilement au sein des systèmes sociaux, économiques et politiques existant et porteurs d'inégalité. En partageant une vision pour une société où la justice et la dignité existent pour toutes et tous, nous mobilisons contre le racisme, le sexisme et le colonialisme autour des principes suivants :

*** Nous nous engageons à soutenir activement les luttes des populations Autochtones à la terre sur laquelle nous vivons, et à oeuvrer en vue d'un processus de décolonisation. Cela signifie se poser en solidarité avec les peuples Autochtones dans leurs luttes contre l'usurpation de leur terre et de leurs ressources, contre la violence étatique, pour la souveraineté et pour la préservation de leurs communautés, tout en s'engageant dans un processus d'autodétermination mutuelle.**

Etre en solidarité signifie reconnaître que l'injustice première sur cette terre est celle du génocide des peuples Autochtones, l'usurpation de leur terre, et leur déplacement massif. Tous ces processus de colonisation continuent aujourd'hui et créent les fossés en matière de pauvreté de violence auxquels font face les communautés Autochtones. La solidarité signifie que les communautés non-Autochtones s'engagent à soutenir activement les communautés Autochtones dans leurs luttes pour défendre leur terre, organiser leurs communautés et déterminer leurs propres futurs. Cela signifie établir des

alliances respectueuses avec les communautés Autochtones tout en reconnaissant que nous sommes sur leur terre, et en s'engageant dans un processus d'autodétermination mutuelle, comme migrantEs, comme personnes déplacéEs et comme colons.

La décolonisation entend la reconnaissance de la véritable histoire des peuples Autochtones, la création d'alliances basées sur la solidarité – en écartant l'État de nos rapports avec les peuples Autochtones – et modifier de manière fondamentale nos pratiques quotidiennes qui contribuent à la perpétuation de la violence faite aux communautés Autochtones. Elle entend également la reconnaissance de toutes les manières dont nos existences sont colonisées par des forces oppressives et des systèmes de domination, tout en luttant activement contre ces derniers.

***Nous luttons contre le capitalisme, et nous nous battons pour un système social et économique à l'intérieur duquel tous et toutes peuvent faire vivre leurs communautés dans la dignité et sont libres de toute forme d'exploitation ou de précarité.**

Le racisme a été, et continue d'être, l'un des éléments principaux du système capitaliste. Ce système valorise les humains sur la base de leur capacité à produire et exploite ceux et celles qu'il considère comme des commodités. Historiquement, ce système a permis l'accumulation des richesses dans les nations de l'Ouest par le biais de processus comme l'esclavage, le travail forcé, et l'exploitation des ressources et du travail humain à travers la colonisation du Sud Global. Au Canada et au Québec aujourd'hui, les communautés Autochtones et racisées figurent parmi les plus pauvres. Les travailleurs et travailleuses migrantEs sont les plus exploitéEs, travaillant dans les secteurs les plus précaires, recevant les salaires les plus bas et constituant la plus grande portion de la main d'œuvre temporaire en expansion. Les programmes de travail temporaire et migrant – des formes contemporaines d'esclavage, continuent à s'élargir, de même que l'établissement d'ateliers de misère localement et à l'étranger. En bref, le racisme se manifeste quotidiennement dans l'économie, dans nos lieux de travail, dans notre pauvreté, et dans une réalité où les privilèges d'une petite élite repose sur l'exploitation de populations majoritairement racisées, au Nord comme au Sud.

Notre lutte contre le racisme fait partie intégrante d'une lutte pour un système économique et social où les êtres humains sont valorisés et dignes, et non considérés comme des machines à produire. C'est une vision où toutes et chacun peuvent vivre et faire vivre leurs communautés de manière digne, où la justice écologique et environnementale sont fondamentales, et où toutes et tous peuvent bénéficier de ce qu'ils et elles produisent, par le biais d'une distribution juste, de systèmes d'aide mutuelle et de solidarité.

*** Nous luttons pour une société dans laquelle les problèmes sociaux, politiques et économiques ne seront pas aggravés par la criminalisation, l'emprisonnement et la brutalité policière, mais seront plutôt réglés via l'éducation populaire, la prise en charge, l'inclusion, la participation des communautés et le pouvoir populaire. ****

Le racisme s'exprime également dans les prisons et les centres de détention. On le voit quand on regarde les statistiques sur les arrestations et les peines données, et quand on regarde les cas de brutalité policière. Dans toutes ces situations, il y a surreprésentation des personnes racisées.

Historiquement, les forces de l'ordre et les autorités policières ont ciblé les personnes racisées et/ou vivant dans la pauvreté. En effet, une grande partie des actes jugés par la société comme étant "criminels" sont de nature économique. Une personne pauvre fera de la prison parce qu'on l'aura prise à faire du vol à l'étalage, alors qu'au contraire on félicitera pour son sens des affaires le chef d'entreprise qui aura fraudé pour des millions de dollars.

De plus, à travers le Canada, ce sont les peuples Autochtones qui forment le groupe le plus surreprésenté dans les prisons. Au Québec, plus de 50% d'entre eux et elles sont en détention préventive - c'est-à-dire que ces personnes n'ont pas encore été condamnées pour quoi que ce soit.

À Montréal, la répression policière dans les quartiers ouvriers et immigrants est à la hausse. Les jeunes racisé-es de Montréal sont de plus en plus la cible d'abus policiers, sous le prétexte de la lutte contre les gangs de rue. N'est-il pourtant pas clair que la police et le système carcéral ne font rien pour diminuer la soi-disant criminalité? N'a-t-il pas été démontré que les prisons constituent en fait des lieux propices au développement de la violence, de l'exclusion sociale et de la pauvreté?

*** Nous luttons pour mettre fin au système d'Apartheid global dans lequel le capital peut se déplacer librement alors que des frontières militarisées sont mises en place pour empêcher les populations appauvries et exploitées de migrer pour survivre ou améliorer leurs conditions de vie. Nous choisissons plutôt de mettre de l'avant la vision d'un monde aux frontières complètement ouvertes.****

Au coeur des fondements du capitalisme, il y a cette notion que le capital a plus de valeur que les êtres humains. La "mondialisation" permet le libre mouvement des capitaux et des marchandises à travers les frontières, mais érige de plus en plus d'obstacles au libre mouvement des êtres humains. En même temps, les forces de la mondialisation capitaliste contraignent des communautés entières à l'exil, en amenant la guerre, la pauvreté, la répression étatique et l'exploitation par des multinationales de leurs terres. Cette hypocrisie est au centre de la création d'un système que l'on peut qualifier "d'apartheid global" et qui entraîne également la privatisation et la militarisation des frontières, comme dans le cas du mur érigé entre les États-Unis et le Mexique. Ce système, c'est aussi celui du port d'armes par les agents frontaliers, de la prolifération des centres de détention, de l'augmentation des déportations arbitraires, de la torture physique et psychologique des détenu-es, et plus encore.

L'apartheid global est raciste, parce qu'il cible et exploite les immigrant-es racisé-es originaires du "Sud global", qui sont criminalisé-es et perçu-es comme étant des

"menaces" à la sécurité nationale, à l'économie et à la soi-disant identité nationale. C'est également le cas des peuples Autochtones, dont les terres ont été volées, occupées et subdivisées par les frontières coloniales. Nous luttons pour un monde sans frontières, dans lequel les gens seront libres de déterminer leur avenir et de se déplacer comme ils et elles l'entendent, sans que des États ou des entreprises restreignent leur migration ou les forcent à quitter leur chez-soi. Nous luttons pour un monde dans lequel des communautés possédant un réel pouvoir d'action et agissant entre elles dans un esprit d'entraide mutuelle remplaceront les États-nation coloniaux. Nous tenons également à souligner notre volonté d'agir en solidarité directe avec les luttes de justice et d'auto-détermination du Sud global.

*** Nous luttons pour mettre fin à toutes les formes d'oppression sexiste et genrée. Nous contestons les postulats racistes selon lesquels ces formes d'oppression seraient inhérentes à des cultures ou religions en particulier. ****

Nous cherchons à confronter tous les systèmes patriarcaux qui sous-tendent l'oppression des femmes au niveau mondial. Nous agissons en solidarité avec les luttes pour la libération des femmes, partout dans le monde. Nous reconnaissons que l'histoire de domination et d'exploitation des femmes est étroitement liée à la mise en place de mesures politiques et économiques qui réduisent les femmes à un statut de colonie interne, de simple commodité ou d'être dénué de valeur humaine. En ce sens, nous considérons que les institutions étatiques, les lois et les autres mesures de contrôle social (tels que les programmes de "protection de la jeunesse", les politiques d'immigration, les frontières, etc.) contribuent à l'oppression continue des femmes.

Les différents mouvements de libération des femmes à travers le monde ne sont pas homogènes, et sont en lien direct avec le contexte politique, économique, social et culturel dans lequel s'opèrent la misogynie et le sexisme. Nous dénonçons le racisme qui caractérise certaines idéologies qui réduisent l'oppression des femmes au simple fait de leur appartenance à une identité, culture ou religion en particulier, sans tenir compte des systèmes plus larges de patriarcat, d'impérialisme et de capitalisme. Le féminisme occidental a été complice de cette vision raciste et coloniale des "droits des femmes", qui ne fait qu'infantiliser et déposséder davantage les femmes racisées, tout en servant de couvert pour justifier des guerres impérialistes et des lois anti-immigrantes. Nous rejetons toutefois le relativisme culturel, selon lequel il ne faudrait pas, au nom de la diversité et de la liberté de culte, contester l'oppression des femmes. Nous confronterons l'homophobie, la transphobie et l'hétérosexisme, et célébrerons la pleine diversité de nos communautés.

BASIS OF UNITY:

Accommodate This! Mobilizing Against Racism, Sexism and Colonialism

A struggle against racism must be one that attacks the reasons why racism exists, and the concrete ways that racism affects our daily lives. The struggle against racism is not a fight of the past since "race" -- and the process of "racializing" cultures and peoples -- continues to be used to determine who belongs and who doesn't, who suffers greatest from poverty, who is most criminalized, who has the least mobility, whose labour is the most exploited, who suffers most from state violence and control, and whose voice is the most marginalized. The false notion of "race" -- and the very tangible reality of racism -- continues to determine how much actual power we have to change our lived conditions.

It is deceptive to talk about multiculturalism, tolerance and integration as the answers to racism. We are not demanding to be better integrated into a fundamentally flawed society in which only our costumes, our food and our cultural traditions are seen as entertaining and acceptable. We are putting forth a vision of a society in which fundamental injustices are addressed, and in which the histories of colonization of our different communities are not seen as injustices of a bygone era, but rather as the essential building blocks of today's racism, and the determining factors of today's inequalities. We are putting forth a vision of a society in which marginalized people are not given little tokens of power by the same elites that have always ruled over us, but rather one in which marginalized people take back power to eliminate the existence of elites.

Anti-racism is not a struggle for more politically correct terms, it is not a struggle to put racialized people in the halls of the elites, it is not a struggle for racialized people to be able to oppress other racialized people, nor is it a struggle to obediently integrate better into the social, economic and political systems which exist today and breed inequality. In sharing a vision for a society in which justice and dignity exist for all, we are coming together to mobilize against racism, sexism and colonialism around the following principles:

*** We commit to actively supporting the self-determination struggles of Indigenous peoples of the land we are on, and to work towards a process of decolonization. This means standing in solidarity with Indigenous peoples in their ongoing struggle against land and resource theft, against the violence of the state, for sovereignty, and the preservation of their communities, while engaging in a process of mutual self-determination.**

Standing in solidarity means recognizing that the primordial injustice on this land is the genocide of Indigenous peoples, the theft of their land, and their displacement. All of these processes of colonization continue today, and create the discrepancy in poverty and violence faced by Indigenous communities.

Solidarity means non-Indigenous peoples making a commitment to actively support Indigenous peoples in their struggles to defend their land, organize their own communities, and determine their own futures. This means making respectful alliances

with Indigenous peoples in ways that recognize that we are on their land, while engaging in a process of mutual self-determination, as migrants, displaced people and settlers. Decolonization means the recognition of the true history of Indigenous peoples, the creation of alliances based on solidarity -- taking the state out of our relationship with Indigenous peoples -- and fundamentally changing our everyday practices that contribute to the ongoing violence against Indigenous communities. It also means recognizing all the different ways in which our daily existences are colonized by oppressive forces and systems of domination, and actively fighting against them.

*** We struggle against capitalism, and fight for a social and economic system in which all can sustain themselves and their communities in a dignified manner free from exploitation and precarity.**

Racism has been and continues to be one of the key components of the capitalist economic system. This system is one that values human beings based on how much they produce and discards those that are deemed expendable. Historically, this allowed for the accumulation of wealth in Western nations through processes such as slavery, forced labour, and the exploitation of resources and human labour through the colonization of the global South. In Canada and Quebec today, Indigenous and racialized communities are amongst the poorest. Migrant workers are the most exploited, working the most insecure jobs, receiving the lowest wages and making up the greatest portion of the rapidly expanding temporary work force. Temporary migrant worker programs -- today's indentured labour programs -- continue to expand, as does the establishment of sweatshops locally and abroad. In short, racism also manifests itself daily in the economy, in our workplaces, in our poverty, and in the reality that the privileges of a small elite rest on the exploitation of predominantly racialized people in the North and South.

Our struggle against racism includes a struggle for an economic and social system in which human beings are valued with basic dignity, and not as machines for production. It is a vision in which all can sustain themselves and their communities in a dignified manner, in which ecological and environmental justice is fundamental, and in which all can benefit from what they produce through just distribution, mutual aid and solidarity.

*** We struggle for a society in which social, political and economic problems are not worsened through criminalization, imprisonment and police brutality but rather solved through popular education, empowerment, inclusion and popular participation.**

Racism's face is also clearly seen in today's prisons, detention centers, in the statistics of arrests, sentencing, police harassment and brutality where the numbers of racialized peoples affected are disproportionately high. Historically, policing and imprisonment have targeted poor and racialized peoples given that most of what is judged as crime in our societies is economically related. Poor people face jail time for small acts of theft and elites are seen to have good business sense for swindling in the millions. Across Canada,

Indigenous peoples are the most disproportionately over-represented group in prisons. In Quebec, over 50% of those in prison are in preventive custody – not yet convicted of a crime. In Montreal, police harassment and brutality in working class and poor immigrant neighborhoods is visible and increasing. Racialized youth in Montreal are increasingly harassed by the police under the excuse of a crackdown on street gangs. Prisons and heavy policing have never been shown to decrease so-called crime and in fact such environments have been shown to breed violence, social exclusion and poverty.

*** We struggle to end a system of Global Apartheid where capital can move freely while militarized borders are put in place to stop those who are being impoverished and exploited from migrating to survive or better their lives; instead we put forth a vision for open borders.**

One of the foundations of capitalism is the value of capital over human beings, the structure of so called “globalization” allows for the free movement of capital across borders, while putting up more and more barriers to the free movement of people. At the same time, the forces of capitalist globalization push people away from their homes by imposing war, poverty, state repression and corporate exploitation on their lands. This fundamental hypocrisy underlies the creation of a “Global Apartheid” system and supports the increasing militarization and privatization of border control, as is exemplified by the construction of the border wall between the U.S and Mexico, the arming of border guards, the multiplication of detention centers, the increase of arbitrary deportations, the physical and psychological torture of detainees, and more.

Global Apartheid is racist because it targets and exploits racialized migrants from the Global South – who are criminalized and perceived as “threats” to national security, to the economy and to so called national identity – as well as Indigenous peoples whose stolen lands are occupied and divided by colonial borders. We struggle for a world without borders, where people are free to self-determine their future and to move freely without states or corporations restricting their migration, or forcing people from their homelands. We struggle for a world where empowered, self-sustaining and mutually supportive communities replace colonial nation-states. We also assert our direct solidarity with struggles of justice and self-determination in the global South.

*** We struggle to end all forms of gender and sexual oppression and challenge the racist notion that those forms of oppression are inherent to certain cultures or religions.**

We confront all systems of patriarchy that underlie the oppression of women globally, and stand in solidarity with struggles for liberation of women. We recognize that the history of domination and exploitation of women is intrinsically linked with political and economic agendas that see women as internal colonies, as commodities, and as dehumanized people. In this vein, state-sanctioned institutions, legislation and modes of social control, such as prisons, so called child welfare programs, “youth protection”,

immigration policy and border control, all contribute to the on-going oppression of women.

Women's liberation movements globally are not homogeneous and are linked to the political, economic, social and cultural contexts in which misogyny and sexism operate. We denounce the racism that operates within ideologies that reduces women's oppression to a particular identity, culture or religion, and ignores broader, universal systems of patriarchy, imperialism and capitalism. Western feminism has been complicit in reinforcing these racist and colonial views of "women's rights" that further disempower and infantilize racialized women, while serving as ways to justify imperial wars and anti-immigrant legislation. However, we reject cultural relativism that, under the premise of freedom of religion or cultural diversity, would allow the oppression of women to go unchallenged. We also confront homophobia, transphobia and heterosexism, and celebrate the full diversity of our communities.

A HISTORY OF RACISM IN CANADA'S IMMIGRATION POLICY

1900- Head tax on Chinese immigrants was increased from \$50 to \$100.

1901- Census. Of the 5,371,315 population in Canada, 12.7% were immigrants (i.e. born outside Canada) and of those 57% of immigrants were born in the British Isles. 96% of the population was of European origin.

1903- Head tax on Chinese increased to \$500. From 1901 to 1918, \$18 million was collected from Chinese immigrants.

1906- Immigration Act. According to Frank Oliver, Minister of the Interior, the purpose of the Act was "to enable the Department of Immigration to deal with undesirable immigrants" by providing a means of control. Grounds for deportation included becoming a public charge, insanity, infirmity, disease, handicap, becoming an inmate of a jail or hospital and committing crimes of "moral turpitude".

1906-1907- An "Anti-Asiatic Parade" organized by the Asiatic Exclusion League ended in a riot, with extensive damage done to property in Chinatown and the Japanese quarter.

1908- Continuous journey rule imposed by Order in Council. The "landing money" required of Indians was also increased from \$50 to \$200.

1908- Chinese Immigration Act amended to expand the list of prohibited persons and narrowing the classes of persons exempt from the head tax.

1910- Immigration Act Section 38 allowed the government to prohibit landing of immigrants "belonging to any race deemed unsuited to the climate or requirements of Canada, or of immigrants of any specified class, occupation or character".

1910- Black Oklahoman farmers developed an interest in moving to Canada to flee increased racism at home. In 1911 an order in council was drafted prohibiting the landing of "any immigrant belonging to the Negro race, which race is deemed unsuitable to the climate and requirements of Canada".

1914- Komagatu Maru arrived in Vancouver, having sailed from China with 376 Indians aboard, who were refused admittance to Canada. Between 1914 and 1920 only one Indian was admitted to Canada as an immigrant.

1914- War Measures Act was passed, giving the government wide powers to arrest, detain and deport.

1917- Wartime Elections Act disenfranchised all persons from "enemy alien" countries who had been naturalized since 1902.

1917- Office of Immigration and Colonization was created by order in council.

1917- Hutterites immigrating to Alberta from South Dakota suffered prejudice because they were German-speaking.

1918- Socialist and anarchist groups such as the The Industrial Workers of the World (IWW, known as the “Wobblies”) were declared illegal. Another order in council banned publications using Finnish, Russian, Ukrainian, Hungarian and German as a result of fears of enemy alien subversion and pressure from industrialists interested in suppressing labour activism.

1919- A Women’s Division was created within the Immigration Department. Immigrant women who engaged in sexual relationships outside marriage were liable to be deported (sometimes on the grounds of prostitution, or if they had an illegitimate child, on the grounds that they had become a public charge, since they would generally be forced out of their job).

1919- Immigration Act amendments were made, adding new grounds for denying entry and deportation (e.g. constitutional psychopathic inferiority, chronic alcoholism and illiteracy). Section 38 allowed Cabinet to prohibit any race, nationality or class of immigrants by reason of “economic, industrial, or other condition temporarily existing in Canada” because of their unsuitability, or because of their “peculiar habits, modes of life and methods of holding property”.

June 1919- Doukhobors, Mennonites and Hutterites were prohibited entry because of their “peculiar habits, modes of life and methods of holding property”.

1920’s- Citizenship could be revoked if anyone were found to be “disaffected” or “disloyal” or if the person “was not of good character at the date of the grant of the certificate”.

1920’s- Japanese men are paid 1/2- to 2/3 of what white labour earn for the same type of labour 1920 Immigration official: “At the present moment, we are casting about for some more effective method than we have in operation to prevent the arrival here of many of the nondescript of Europe, whose coming here is regarded more in the light of a catastrophe than anything else”.

June 1922- Opium and Narcotic Drug Act provided for the deportation of “domiciled aliens” (i.e. immigrants who had been in Canada 5 years or more) with drug-related convictions. This measure was particularly directed against the Chinese. In 1923-4, 35% of deportations by the Pacific Division were under these provisions.

Jan. 1923- Order in Council issued excluding “any immigrant of any Asiatic race” except agriculturalists, farm labourers, female domestic servants, and wife and children of a person legally in Canada. (“Asia” was conceived broadly, going as far west as Turkey and Syria).

1923- The door opened to British subjects, Americans and citizens of “preferred countries” (Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Luxembourg, Germany, Switzerland, Holland, Belgium and France).

June 1923- Chinese Immigration Act. This Act prohibited all Chinese immigrants except diplomats, students, children of Canadians and an investor class. The day on which this Act came into force - July 1 - became known to Chinese Canadians as “Humiliation Day”.

1923-24- The suicides of three home children led to a study by a British parliamentary delegation into this program which sent children from Britain into indentured labour in Canada.

1930- As the depression took hold, the number of deportations on the grounds of “becoming a public charge” rose. From 1930 to 1934, 16,765 immigrants were deported on this ground.

Sept. 1930- Order in Council (P.C. 2115) issued prohibiting the landing of “any immigrant of any Asiatic race”, except wives and minor children of Canadian citizens (and few Asians could get citizenship).

1931- Census. The population of Canada was 10,376,786, of whom 22% were immigrants (i.e. born outside Canada). 97.7% of the population was of European origin.

1931- Deportations of immigrants who had organized or participated in strikes or other organized labour activities.

August 1931- The Communist Party was made illegal under the Criminal Code. Even naturalized immigrants who were members of the Party could have their citizenship revoked and be deported.

Fall 1931- Political deportation became federal policy. The Minister of Justice hosted a special meeting attended by the Minister of National Defence, the Commissioner of Immigration, the military chief of staff and the RCMP Commissioner. The exact number of people deported on political grounds is unknown, because they may technically have been deported on other grounds, e.g. criminal conviction, vagrancy or being on the public charge.

Early 1930s- Widespread deportation of the unemployed (28,097 people were deported 1930-1935). Following an outcry, the department changed its policy at least so far as to suspend deportations against those who had found work by the time the deportation orders were ready.

May 1932- In a “red raid” left-wing leaders from across Canada were arrested and sent to Halifax for hearings and deportations. One of them was a Canadian citizen by birth. Despite extensive protests, they were deported.

1934- 94% of applications for naturalization were refused. Confidential RCMP assessments led to refusals on the basis of political or labour activism or perceived “bad character”.

1938- Memo to Mackenzie King by Departments of External Affairs and Mines and Resources: “We do not want to take too many Jews, but in the circumstances, we do not want to say so. We do not want to legitimise the Aryan mythology by introducing any formal distinction for immigration purposes between Jews and non-Jews. The practical distinction, however, has to be made.”

1939- The St Louis sailed from Germany with 930 Jewish refugees on board. No country in the Americas would allow them to land. The ship was forced to return to Europe where three-quarters of the refugees died at the hands of the Nazis.

1940- In a comparative study of deportation in Britain, Northern Ireland, Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand, C.F. Fraser found Canadian practices the most arbitrary and the Canadian judiciary apathetic: “the most notable feature of deportation cases in Canada is the apparent desire to get agitators of any sort out of the country at all costs... [T]he executive branch of the government, in its haste to carry out this policy ... displayed a marked disregard for the niceties of procedure”.

Feb. 1942- Japanese Canadians were expelled from within 100 miles of the Pacific. Many went to detention camps in the interior of B.C., others further east. Detention continued to the end of the war, when the Canadian government encouraged many to “repatriate” to Japan. 4,000 left, more than half Canadian-born and two-thirds Canadian citizens.

Nov. 1946- The Prime Minister announced emergency measures to aid the resettlement of European refugees. Labour was involved), ethnic prejudices (Jews were routinely rejected) and political bias (those with left-wing or Communist sympathies were labelled “undesirables”). An External Affairs officer claimed that Canada selected refugees “like good beef cattle”.

1 May 1947- Prime Minister Mackenzie King made a statement in the House outlining Canada’s immigration policy. Regarding discrimination, he made it clear that Canada is “perfectly within her rights in selecting the persons whom we regard as desirable future citizens. Large-scale immigration from the orient would change the fundamental composition of the Canadian population”.

May 1947- Chinese Immigration Act repealed, following pressure, e.g. by the Committee for the Repeal of the Chinese Immigration Act.

August 1948- The first of a total of 9 boats carrying 987 Estonian refugees arrived on the east coast of Canada. They sailed from Sweden, where they were living under threat of forced repatriation to the Soviet Union. All but 12 were accepted (the 12 were deported).

1950- The Department of Citizenship and Immigration was formed.

June 1950- Order in council issued replacing previous measures on immigration selection. The preference was maintained for British, Irish, French and U.S. immigrants.

1951- The Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees was adopted. Canada did not become a signatory because the RCMP feared that it would restrict Canada's ability to deport refugees on security grounds.

1952- A new Immigration Act was passed, less than a month after it was introduced in the House (it came into effect 1 June 1953). It provided for the refusal of admission on the grounds of nationality, ethnic group, geographical area of origin, peculiar customs, habits and modes of life, unsuitability with regard to the climate, probable inability to become readily assimilated, etc. Homosexuals, drug addicts and drug traffickers were added to the prohibited classes. The Act provided for immigration appeal boards, made up of department officials, to hear appeals from deportation.

1955- Report of a Canadian Bar Association sub-committee criticized the arbitrary exercise of power by immigration officials and called for a quasi-judicial Immigration Appeals Board.

1955- Canadian Domestic Workers program is established to deal with the constant shortage of Canadian workers prepared to accept low wages and undesirable working conditions. Many of the immigrant women entering as domestics were qualified professionals.

Nov. 1956- The crushing of the Hungarian uprising led to over 200,000 Hungarians fleeing to Austria. In response to public pressure, the Canadian government implemented a special program with free passage. Thousands of Hungarians arrived in the early months of 1957 on over 200 chartered flights. More than 37,000 Hungarians were admitted in less than a year.

1 July 1960- The Chinese Adjustment Statement Program was announced. The program included measures to curtail illegal entry of Chinese and to land Chinese in Canada without legal status. The initiative followed on the crackdown of a large-scale illegal immigration scheme, involving "paper families". The amnesty program continued throughout the 1960s - by July 1970, 11,569 Chinese had normalized their status.

1969-White paper Policy: explicitly rejects any special status for First Nations.

1970- Environmental racism of Africville: The Black settlements near Halifax, Nova Scotia is forced to relocate (without the consent of the residents) due to the poverty and health risks imposed upon them which included: human waste disposal pits, an infectious disease hospitals, slaughter houses, open city dump, coal-handling facility, a tannery and shoe factory, all of which white Haligonians did not want in their backyard.

1 April 1970- The Assisted Passage Loan Scheme, previously restricted to Europeans and then Caribbeans, became available worldwide. The interest rate was 6% annually.

1970- The number of people applying for immigration status after entering Canada had “exceeded expectations” and led to a backlog. There were about 8,000 applications in 1967, 28,000 in 1969 and 31,000 in 1970. Delays in processing caused problems for the individuals as they did not have the right to work while awaiting processing.

1971-72- The U.S. was the largest source country of immigration, in part because of the large numbers (possibly 30,000-40,000) of draft dodgers and deserters unwilling to fight in Vietnam who found refuge in Canada.

August 1972- The Ugandan president announced his intention of expelling Ugandan Asians by November 8, 1972. By the end of 1973, more than 7,000 Ugandan Asians had arrived, of whom 4,420 came in specially chartered flights.

Sept. 1973- Overthrow of Allende government in Chile. Groups in Canada, particularly the churches, urged the government to offer protection to those being persecuted. In contrast to the rapid processing of Czechs and Ugandan Asians, the Canadian government response to the Chileans was slow and reluctant. Critics charged that the Canadian response was ideologically driven.

1979-80- 60,000 refugees from Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia were resettled in Canada. Responding to media reports of the “boatpeople”, thousands of Canadians came forward, giving a dramatic launch to the new refugee private sponsorship program.

1981- Census. Of the total population of 24,083,500, 16% were immigrants (i.e. born outside Canada). In terms of ethnic origins, 92% of the population declared a single ethnic origin. 86% of population had a single European ethnic origin (40% British, 27% French).

1981- The Foreign Domestic Workers Program was introduced. Those admitted came on a temporary contract, but could apply for permanent residence after 2 years in Canada.

1984- The Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act transferred responsibility for security aspects of immigration from RCMP to the newly created CSIS.

4 April 1985- The Supreme Court of Canada rendered the Singh decision, in which it recognized that refugee claimants are entitled to fundamental justice. The court ruled that this would normally require an oral hearing in the refugee status determination process.

1986- An administrative review program was instituted for all refugee claimants in Canada before 21 May 1986, to address the backlog in the refugee determination system. 85% of the 28,000 applicants were accepted.

Feb. 1987- Measures were instituted turning back refugee claimants arriving from the U.S. They were made to wait for processing in the U.S.

July 1987- A group of Sikhs landed in Nova Scotia and claimed refugee status. Prime Minister Brian Mulroney issued an emergency recall of Parliament for the tabling of Bill C-84, the Refugee Deterrents and Detention Bill. Despite the so-called emergency, the draconian bill was not passed for a full year.

1990- The government unveiled its Five Year Plan for immigration, proposing an increase in total immigration from 200,000 in 1990 to 250,000 in 1992. The long-term commitment to planned immigration was new in Canadian history, as was the proposal to increase immigration at a time of economic recession.

June 1993- Prime Minister Kim Campbell transferred immigration to the newly created Department of Public Security, a move that was widely and bitterly denounced by many other organizations.

Feb. 1995- As part of the federal budget, the government imposed the Right of Landing Fee, widely known as the Head Tax. The fee of \$975 applied to all adults, including refugees, becoming permanent residents. In February 2000, the government rescinded the Right of Landing Fee for refugees, but maintained it for immigrants.

Canada's Bureaucratic Colonization of Indigenous Peoples

1763 - Royal Proclamation: explicitly protects native sovereignty and specifies nation-to-nation treaties as the only means for obtaining Crown title. Enshrines fiduciary obligation.

1857 - The Gradual Civilization Act - stripped Native citizenship and legal rights. If Indians were educated, free of debt and of "good moral character" (i.e. assimilated), they could apply for and be awarded 20 hectares of land. This land was taken from reserve land and privatized, breaking the tradition of collectively shared land and awarded to men only. This act recommended that Native organizations eventually be replaced by municipal-style governments. Foreshadows "First Nations Self-Governance Agreements" today.

1867 - The British Parliament passes the British North American Act creating the Dominion of Canada. Section 129 of the Act confirms the Canadian government is bound by British legislation, including the Royal Proclamation of 1763.

1869 - Act for the Gradual Enfranchisement of Indians is passed. The Governor in Council is given power to impose the Band Council system of governance on Indian reservations and to remove from office those considered "unqualified or unfit".

1871 - The colony of British Columbia joins Canada without the consent of Native Peoples. The terms of the Union acknowledge the Royal Proclamation of 1763.

1876 - Canada passes the Indian Act in violation of imperial and constitutional law. The Indian Act, as a policy of cultural genocide, is specifically designed to eradicate native culture and expropriate land and resources for profit and settlement. The Act prohibits Native women from running for Band Council or voting on land surrenders which require 50% agreement by males. The Canadian government gains complete control over who can purchase the Native land, the terms of the sale, and the price paid for surrenders.

Initially, purchasers pay a 10% down payment and carry a mortgage for the balance. As long as the annual interest is paid, the principal is not required. The annual income from the interest is supposed to be used to make annual payment, in perpetuity to the Indians who “sold” the land. This money is held “in trust” and administered to Indians through Canada’s Indian Agents. Canada uses “trust” monies to build Canadian infrastructure, health and welfare systems.

1876 - The Indian Act is amended to give the Canadian government control over timber extraction rates and terms.

1879 - Indian Act Amendment Bill passed, includes “Trespass, Timber, and Illicit Sale or Exchange” law which enable complete government control over the most micro-economic transactions of commerce including collection of debt, passing on inheritance to a family member, or division of family estates. The “Incitement of Indians to Riot” law includes 2-6 months imprisonment for the celebration of Potlatch, a ceremony which played a central role in Indigenous politics, social, economic and spiritual systems.

1880 - The Indian Act creates the Department of Indian Affairs, and empowered its Superintendent General to enforce imposition of the elective system of Band Council government. This legislation deprives remaining traditional leaders of recognition by stating only spokespeople for the Band are those elected according to the Indian Act.

1881 - Amendment to the Indian Act makes it illegal for Indians to “sell, barter, or traffic fish”.

1884 - “Indian Advancement Act” confers certain privileges for more “advanced” bands of Indians of Canada with the view of training them for municipal affairs. It gives the Band Council power to levy taxes and extends council’s power over police and public health matters. Most reserves refuse to come under Act.

1884 - Indian Act amended so the Superintendent General of the Department of Indian Affairs can lease Native land to non-natives.

1885 - Permit system instituted for Indians absent from reserves.

1885-97 - Off-reserve Native men and male veterans east of Manitoba are granted limited voting rights. On-reserve men only able to vote with the surrender of their exemption from Income Tax.

1887 - An order-in-council pertaining to mining is adopted. This regulation allows exploration on both surrendered and unsurrendered lands with approval of the Superintendent General of the Department of Indian Affairs. If a third party wishes to secure a mining location, they pay the government (again “in trust” for Indigenous Peoples) \$5 per acre along with a royalty fee of 4% of revenues.

1894 - Amendment to the Indian Act authorizes the forced relocation of Native children to residential boarding schools where Native language, culture, traditions, customs, values, and even clothing is forbidden and punished.

1895 - Indian Act amended so that traditional Native leaders elected to Band Council office, but deemed unfit and thrown out by the DIA, could not be re-elected by the people as was practiced in resistance to colonialism and in the fight for self-determination. Traditional Sundances, Pow-wows, and again the Potlatch are outlawed.

1910 - Indian Act amended so “No contracts or agreements are binding...either made by chiefs or councilors of any band...shall be valid or of any force or effect unless or until it has been approved by the Superintendent General” of the Department of Indian Affairs.

1911 - Two amendments to the Indian Act give the Department of Indian Affairs the authority to expropriate native land, first for “the purpose of any railway, road, public work or any work designed for public utility”, and second, “In the case of an Indian reserve which adjoins or is situated wholly or partly within an incorporated town or city having a population of not less than 8,000” land can be expropriated if “expropriation is expedient for public and Indians”, then “Indians should be removed from the reserve or any part of it”.

1919 - Act amended so that “Any Native woman, who marries any person other than an Indian, or a non-treaty Indian, shall cease to be an Indian in every respect within the meaning of this Act”.

1920 - Indian Act amended for the compulsory enfranchisement, the relinquishment of Indian Status, in return for voting privileges. The bill “allowed for the enfranchisement of an Indian against his will following a report by a person appointed by the Superintendent General on his suitability”.

1920 - Federal government passes legislation making it mandatory for all native children, 7 years or older, in BC (the least Christianized province) to attend residential schools or face fines and prison terms.

1924 - Indian Act amended to allow the DIA to “authorize and direct” the expenditure of Band funds for capital projects which would promote “progress”.

1927 - Indian Act amended to prohibit “lawyers and other agitators from collecting money from Indians for the pursuit of claims against the government without departmental approval”. For over 30 years First Nations are prohibited from raising

money for, or even using the courts as a means to pursue grievances on land issues and claims.

1927 - \$73 million held in “trust” fund for Indians, accumulated through mineral and resource extraction from Indian lands, is liquidated to create Canada’s social programs.

1928 - Alberta passes its Sexual Sterilization Act which allows for the sterilization of any Residential School inmate.

1933 - BC passes its Sexual Sterilization Act which allows for sterilization of Residential School inmates.

1951 - Amendment to the Indian Act allows First Nations people to drink alcohol in accordance with provincial or territorial regulations. They are not, however, permitted to be drunk in public.

1952 – After 25 years, the 1927 ban on Indians pursuing claims in court is repealed.

1960 - All First Nations accorded full voting rights.

The “Reasonable Accommodation” Commission and Debate: Statement by No One Is Illegal–Montreal

[The No One Is Illegal–Montreal collective is publishing and distributing the following statement in opposition to the racist “reasonable accommodation” debate in Quebec, and the related Bouchard–Taylor Commission. We encourage groups and individuals who agree with this statement to endorse it by contacting noii-montreal@resist.ca. We also encourage allies who would like to help organize against the hearings, or support the organizing of No One Is Illegal, to get in touch as well.]

November 12, 2007

The “reasonable accommodation” debate in Quebec, and the related “Consultation Commission on Accommodation Practices Related to Cultural Differences” (the so-called “Bouchard–Taylor Commission”), are fundamentally rooted in xenophobia, racism and sexism.

From the outset, the “debate” fails to recognize that Quebec and Canada are built on stolen Indigenous land, and constituted through the dispossession and genocide of Indigenous peoples who have been forced into “accommodating” colonization. Moreover, it completely ignores the fact that racism and white supremacy were intrinsically tied to the creation of both Canada and Quebec, and throughout their histories, have been instrumental in defining who “belongs” and who does not.

The Bouchard–Taylor Commission was created in the context of xenophobia during an election campaign and has provided an uncontested platform for racism, Islamophobia and anti-Semitism.

Opportunistic politicians and corporate media have appealed to public fears and prejudices, and manipulated false controversies over religious practices and cultural differences to create a generalized hysteria, with little to no basis in fact. In its very framework it creates a binary of ‘us’ vs. ‘them’; the ‘us’ being made up of white people of European descent, and the ‘them’ being whichever non-white immigrant group is currently under the spotlight.

The supposed "debate" has made open bigotry publicly acceptable, using simplistic caricatures that render our communities homogenous, uncontested and monolithic. While we reject this offensive portrayal of our communities, we assert the diversity of our cultures and traditions as well as our multiple identities.

Insidiously, so-called progressives and feminists have used the Commission platform to promote their own sophisticated brand of racism, one that refuses to acknowledge the oppressions within Western society, and unquestioningly considers Quebec to be "pluralistic, democratic and egalitarian".

While using rhetoric rooted in Islamophobia and sexism to justify war abroad, as is the case in the on-going military occupation of Afghanistan, Quebec has embraced the framework around the "rights of women" and the systematic dehumanization of Muslim cultures to justify intolerance chez nous. We reject the notion that women of faith need to be saved from their inherently oppressive and backward cultures, and instead we support the women who are on the frontlines of their own struggles for liberation, and subjects, not objects or victims, of their own transformation.

As the Bouchard-Taylor Commission begins its public hearings in Montreal, we are organizing to openly and publicly reject the commission process and framework. To engage the Commission process is to validate its fundamentally racist premise, which is to stand judgment of immigrant communities. This Commission, sanctioned by the state, is a process of submission, whereby minority populations are forced to justify their very existence in Quebec. The way this debate is framed ignores all the current intolerance and injustice faced by many migrant communities in Quebec, while forcing them to defend themselves as "good Quebecois".

We declare: Ni patrie, ni état; ni Québec, ni Canada! We refuse to submit to any form of nationalism.

Instead, we organize by uncompromisingly putting forward a vision of social justice, rooted in day-to-day grassroots struggles. We acknowledge and support the self-determination and sovereignty of Indigenous peoples all over the Americas -- struggles that have

once again been rendered invisible in the skewed “reasonable accommodation” debate.

We organize actively against poverty, precarity, racial profiling, police brutality, war, capitalism and gender oppression. We organize against borders, for free movement and status for all. We actively fight against state oppression and violence targeted at the most marginalized, while struggling against all forms of oppression, whatever their source.

In contrast to the faulty framework of “reasonable accommodation”, we assert “solidarity across borders”, in the spirit of mutual aid and support.

We call for a collective rejection of the entire Commission. The process of genuine dialogue and debate, and real pluralism, comes from our shared struggles against all forms of oppression. The “reasonable accommodation” debate has clouded and confused the unity and solidarity we share -- as workers, poor, women, queer and trans people, migrants, and others -- fighting together to achieve real justice.

We re-assert those struggles, by refusing the fundamentally racist and sexist premises of the Bouchard-Taylor Commission, and by refusing to be submissive or fearful as we continue to practice self-determination and strive for collective liberation.

-- No One Is Illegal-Montreal (November 2007)
noii-montreal@resist.ca - 514-848-7583
<http://nooneisillegal-montreal.blogspot.com>

Déclaration du collectif Personne n'est illégal sur le débat des « Accommodements raisonnables »

La Commission sur les Accommodements raisonnables a été mise sur pied dans le but d'assurer que les « pratiques d'accommodements se conforment aux valeurs de la société québécoise en tant que société pluraliste, démocratique et égalitaire ». Cette commission a pris la forme d'une tournée à travers la province, dans laquelle les gens ont pu s'exprimer sur ce qui est « raisonnable » et ce qui ne l'est pas. Cette consultation a par la même occasion servi de tribune publique à des orateurs aux propos ouvertement racistes.

Le problème est toutefois plus profond que les seuls propos des gens dans le cadre de la Commission. La source du problème se trouve dans la structure même de la Commission, dont le rôle semble être de juger de la valeur des communautés immigrantes établies au Québec, tout en leur demandant de justifier leur existence même.

Cette structure entraîne une division entre le « nous » et le « eux », entre le « nous » et les « autres ». On présente les communautés immigrantes comme un bloc uniforme, susceptible de nuire aux « valeurs québécoises ». Le portrait que cette Commission dresse des immigrants et des immigrantes brosse du revers de la main la diversité des cultures et des milieux sociaux, ainsi que la complexité des raisons qui poussent les gens à immigrer. Les immigrants et les immigrantes sont vus comme étant un groupe dont les valeurs profondes vont à l'encontre de toute notion de rationalité ou d'égalité, et qui sont incompatibles avec les « valeurs québécoises ».

LES IMMIGRANT-ES, QUI SONT-ILS?

Il est rare que nous portons réflexion sur la façon dont les lignes entre le « nous » et les « autres » sont tracées. Dans le cadre de ce débat, les personnes immigrantes sont les personnes qui ne sont pas blanches ou qui ne sont pas de descendance européenne. Cette définition occulte le fait que le Canada est une nation composée essentiellement d'immigrants et d'immigrantes européens. La définition actuelle prend source dans les lois racistes qui ont parsemé l'histoire de l'immigration au Canada et au Québec. Ainsi, jusqu'en 1960, le Canada a explicitement sélectionné des immigrants et des immigrantes originaires de l'Europe du Nord et a exclu les « races noires et asiatiques ». Le gouvernement canadien a également imposé une taxe sur l'immigration des Chinois et des Chinoises (*Chinese Head Tax*) afin de réduire leur migration. Ce sont ces politiques d'exclusion délibérée à l'endroit de certains groupes sociaux qui ont rendu possible la construction de l'identité québécoise comme étant une identité blanche et chrétienne. Ces politiques sont en fait des politiques prônant la suprématie de la race blanche; à la lumière des faits historiques, cette réalité est difficile à contester.

Ainsi, si les immigrants et les immigrantes de descendance européenne font maintenant partie intégrante de la société québécoise, cette dernière considère encore aujourd'hui les personnes de couleurs comme de perpétuels étrangers. Du point de vue historique, il est donc faux de dire que les « valeurs québécoises » sont des valeurs d'égalité et de pluralité, ou du moins ces valeurs ne sont pas étendues à toutes et à tous.

On ne peut pas parler de « l'identité québécoise » sans parler d'histoire, parce que c'est l'histoire qui nous montre comment cette identité a été construite et comment elle a été intériorisée. La Commission sur les Accommodements raisonnables refuse de reconnaître les « accommodements » qui ont été imposés aux peuples autochtones par le Québec et le Canada. Ce passé de génocide et de dépossession, cette violence colonisatrice qui a caractérisé la création du Québec et du Canada, ne peuvent être aussi facilement évacués du « débat » actuel. Il faut le dire clairement: le Québec est un État bâti sur des terres volées aux autochtones et doit être considéré comme étant complice de cette colonisation, et de cette occupation. Du génocide culturel qui continue, aux écoles résidentielles et à l'état des réserves autochtones où il n'y a pas d'approvisionnement adéquat en eau potable, cette dépossession se poursuit, et se reflète dans des situations comme à Six Nations, par exemple. Ces faits ne peuvent être dissociés de l'identité québécoise, surtout lorsqu'on observe la violence, le racisme et le vol qui continuent d'être subis par les communautés autochtones.

Dans le contexte du climat de peur actuel, on a caricaturé les communautés musulmanes et de descendance moyen-orientales comme étant des menaces. Cette crainte simpliste à l'endroit de communautés en particulier n'est cependant pas nouvelle: En 1942, un décret gouvernemental a donné aux Canadiens et aux Canadiennes d'origine japonaise le statut « d'étrangers ennemis », et les a forcé à demeurer à plus de 100 milles de l'Océan Pacifique. Le gouvernement leur a par la suite accordé 24 heures pour ramasser leurs affaires, et les a envoyé dans des camps d'internement. Leurs terres et leurs maisons ont été vendues, et le Canada a utilisé les profits de cette vente pour payer les coûts de l'internement. La détention s'est poursuivie jusqu'à la fin de la Deuxième guerre mondiale, et plusieurs personnes ont par la suite été renvoyées au Japon et ont perdu leur citoyenneté canadienne.

Ces peurs naissent de fausses controverses qui sont en réalité basées sur peu ou pas grand chose, mais qui ont des impacts à long terme sur les communautés visées. Le profilage racial fait partie de l'histoire du Canada, et c'est une histoire qui se poursuit aujourd'hui encore, par le biais de mesures telles que les certificats de sécurité (qui ciblent de prime abord les Musulmans) et la détention arbitraire d'individus qui ne sont pas formellement accusés et à qui on ne divulgue aucune preuve. Ces lois permettent au gouvernement de déporter des citoyen-nés canadien-nés naturalisé-es vers leur « pays d'origine ». Ainsi, des groupes spécifiques ne seront jamais considérés comme étant des citoyens à part entière du Canada, malgré toutes les années passées ici ou malgré qu'ils aient en main un passeport canadien.

LES VALEURS QUÉBÉCOISES: DÉMOCRATIQUES ET ÉGALITAIRES POUR QUI?

La Commission, depuis ses débuts, établit constamment une opposition entre les « valeurs immigrantes » et les « valeurs québécoises ». Cette opposition est particulièrement visible dans le cadre du débat sur les droits des femmes, dont le message sous-jacent est que les femmes pratiquant une religion doivent absolument être sauvées de leurs cultures qui sont de manière inhérente oppressives, barbares ou passéistes. Restreindre le droit des femmes à exprimer leur religion sous le prétexte d'un « accommodement » ne devrait pas être perçu comme une victoire pour les femmes, mais bien comme un geste sexiste et empli de préjugés d'ordre culturels. Enlever à ces femmes leur pouvoir d'action, les réduire à un rôle d'objets devant être sauvés par des hommes blancs ou par des groupes

féministes blancs est en fait le comble de l'anti-féminisme. Les femmes ont le droit de décider par elles-mêmes ce qui les opprime et ce qui ne les opprime pas. En ce sens, nous appuyons les femmes qui sont aux premières lignes de leurs propres luttes de libération, en tant que sujets – et non pas en tant qu'objets ou victimes – dans les combats internationaux contre l'oppression sexiste.

Les « accommodements » qui sont imposés aux communautés immigrantes du Canada ne sont ni raisonnables, ni « égalitaires, démocratiques et pluralistes ». La réalité se trouve en flagrante contradiction avec les valeurs auto-proclamées du Québec. Le racisme et le sexisme inhérents aux programmes d'immigration et de travail temporaire sanctionnés par l'État québécois, tel que le programme des aides familiaux résidants, vont à l'encontre de cette représentation égalitaire que le Québec se fait de lui-même. Le programme des aides familiaux résidants (ou *Live-in Caregiver Program*) permet à des femmes originaires des Philippines de venir s'établir au Canada en échange d'une période de temps passée à travailler en tant qu'aides domestiques, dans des conditions de quasi-esclavage. Cette servitude est sanctionnée légalement, les droits de ces femmes sont violés au quotidien et elles peuvent être déportées si elles refusent de demeurer dans les maisons de leurs employeurs, ou si elles ne complètent pas les 24 mois de travail obligé pendant les 3 années suivant leur arrivée au Canada, même si c'est pour des raisons de grossesse ou de maladie.

La non-reconnaissance des acquis et des diplômes dément aussi le principe d'égalité pour toutes et tous, en forçant des intellectuel-les et des professionnel-les à assumer des emplois peu reconnus et mal payés, à cause de leur origine et sans aucun égard à leurs talents et habiletés. Dans le contexte où les immigrants et les immigrantes n'ont tout simplement pas le choix de s'accommoder des injustices et des humiliations subies au quotidien, il est insultant que le présent débat porte sur ce que les Québécois veulent bien « tolérer ».

Cette Commission tente de pallier à cette discrimination en « donnant une voix au peuple ». Au nom du dialogue libre et ouvert, il accorde aux participants et aux participantes un maigre deux minutes pour décrire leurs conditions de vie au Canada. Ce dialogue, dans les faits, est une parodie de justice sociale. La dignité ne naît pas d'une imploration à être accepté, mais bien à travers la lutte pour la justice sociale et la solidarité. Plutôt que de parler de notions abstraites « d'accommodements », nous devons parler de situations réelles, telles que l'existence de programmes comme le programme des travailleuses domestiques, la précarité des sans-papiers, les certificats de sécurité, les combats des peuples autochtones pour l'autodétermination, la brutalité policière, le profilage racial, la non-reconnaissance des acquis et les conséquences quotidiennes du capitalisme et de l'oppression sexiste sur la vie des gens. Nous devons aussi parler des raisons qui sont aux racines de l'immigration. Nous devons parler de ces traités de libre-échange qui font croître la misère dans certaines régions du monde. Nous devons parler de la politique étrangère du Canada, créatrice de réfugiés dans des pays tels que l'Afghanistan et Haïti, qui ne peut être dissociée du discours sur l'immigration.

En bout de ligne, « l'accommodement » et la « tolérance » demeurent des termes tout à fait inadéquats pour discuter de l'identité québécoise et de l'immigration.

On ne va pas *accommoder* cette commission raciste.

"Reasonable Accommodation": A Feminist Response

As anti-racist, anti-colonial feminists in Québec, we have serious misgivings about the Commission de Consultation sur les pratiques d'accommodement reliées aux différences culturelles. The Conseil du statut de la femme du Québec (CSF) has proposed that the Québec Charter be changed so as to accord the right of gender equality relative priority over the right to religious expression and to ban the wearing of "ostentatious" religious symbols in public institutions by public employees. Our concern is that the Commission and the CSF's subsequent intervention pave the way for legislation that will restrict rather than enhance the rights of women. We invite you to join us in questioning the exclusionary structure of the Commission, the assumptions it supports, and the negative impact it is likely to have on women's lives.

So, why call into question the legitimacy and the effects of the Commission?

1. because although we see the urgent need for dialogue about racism and sexism in Québec society, we object to *how* this consultation process has been undertaken. Listening to people "air out" their racism is not conducive to promoting critical reflection and dialogue, but instead creates a climate of fear-mongering and moral panic. Furthermore, in asking whether or not "difference" and "minorities" *should be* accommodated the commission assumes and perpetuates "commonsense" racist understandings of some "cultures" as homogeneous, backward and inferior. In addition, the Commission's reliance on the notion of "reason" must also be critically examined. Historically, white men have been positioned as the exclusive bearers of reason, and the Commission runs the risk of reproducing this in a context of ongoing social inequality.
2. because the design of the Commission and the language of "accommodation" assumes and perpetuates a system of power whereby western "hosts" act as gatekeepers for non-western "guests." A better consultative process would start with the recognition that Canada is a white-settler state, and that its history is one of colonial and patriarchal violence against Indigenous people.
3. because the public debates that the Commission has sparked construct certain ethno-cultural communities as perpetual outsiders and as threats to Québec identity rather than as integral to it. Concerns about ethno-cultural others as socially regressive obscure the everyday homophobia, sexism and racism that pervade Québec society.
4. because the ways that the Commission has been represented in mainstream English media promotes the idea that racism is a feature exclusive to Québec society and is not a problem -- or is less of a problem -- in the rest of Canada.
5. because the preoccupation with veiled women serves to deflect from the sexism and racism that has historically pervaded Québec and Canadian society. As feminists, we must challenge our complicity with the state's violence against women both in its colonial relations with Indigenous people and in its use of the figure of the veiled woman as an alibi for imperialist war and occupation in Afghanistan.

6. because appeals to secularism as a guarantor of gender equality effectively function to promote Christian culture as the norm and to scapegoat Muslims as inherently sexist, erasing secular forms of sexism.
7. because although it is still underway, the Commission has already prompted the proposal of laws that could restrict, regulate, and otherwise impede the lives of immigrant and racialized people in Québec.
8. because regulating women's public religious expression is gender discrimination insofar as it takes away women's freedom and inhibits their civic participation.
9. because the CSF is failing to meet its mandate of "defending the interests of women." The CSF would better serve the interests of women in Québec by focusing on the conditions of poverty, violence, criminalization and racism that many of us face, and not on what women wear.

Signed: The Simone de Beauvoir Institute, Concordia University, November 2007

A list of further readings which explores the connections between gender and race can be found on the Simone de Beauvoir Institute website: <http://artsandscience1.concordia.ca/wsdb/>

Please circulate widely. To endorse this statement please email acarastathis@gmail.com

Les « accommodements raisonnables » : Une réponse féministe

En tant que féministes antiracistes et anticoloniales, nous avons d'importantes réserves à l'égard de la Commission de consultation sur les pratiques d'accommodement reliées aux différences culturelles. Par ailleurs, le Conseil du statut de la femme du Québec (CSF) a suggéré des modifications à la Charte québécoise afin de réclamer la priorité relative du droit à l'égalité des sexes sur le droit à l'expression religieuse, ainsi qu'une interdiction du port de symboles religieux « ostentatoires » dans les institutions publiques par leurs salarié-e-s. Le fait que la Commission, suivie de l'intervention du CSF, ouvrent la voie à des législations qui limiteront les droits des femmes plutôt que les améliorer, nous préoccupe. Nous vous invitons à sonder avec nous la structure d'exclusion de la Commission, les présomptions qu'elle avance et l'impact néfaste qu'elle pourrait avoir sur la vie des femmes.

Cela dit, pourquoi contester la légitimité et les effets de la Commission ?

1) Parce que malgré l'urgent besoin d'amorcer une discussion sur le racisme et le sexisme dans la société québécoise, nous nous opposons au procédé par lequel la consultation de la Commission a pris place. Écouter des gens exposer ouvertement leur racisme ne constitue pas un cadre propice à la réflexion critique et au dialogue, mais incite plutôt à un climat de peur et de panique morale. De plus, par le fait même de demander si la « différence » et les « minorités » devraient être accommodées ou non, la Commission tient pour acquis et perpétue une perspective selon laquelle certaines « cultures » sont homogènes, inférieures et rétrogrades. En outre, la notion de « raison » à laquelle la Commission a recours doit aussi être étudiée de manière critique. En effet, historiquement, les hommes blancs ont occupé la position d'unique détenteurs de la raison, et la Commission court le risque de reproduire cet état de choses dans le présent contexte d'inégalités sociales.

2) Parce que la conception de la Commission et le vocabulaire des « accommodements » tiennent pour acquis et perpétuent un système de pouvoir selon lequel des « hôtes » occidentaux doivent protéger leurs frontières des « visiteurs » non occidentaux. Un procédé consultatif plus rigoureux reconnaîtrait d'abord que le Canada est un état de colons blancs et que son histoire en est une de violence coloniale et patriarcale envers les peuples autochtones.

3) Parce que les débats publics engendrés par la Commission présentent certaines communautés ethnoculturelles comme de perpétuelles étrangères et comme une menace à l'identité québécoise au lieu d'admettre qu'elles en sont partie intégrante. L'inquiétude que les « autres » d'origine ethnoculturelle puissent être socialement régressifs occulte l'homophobie, le sexisme et le racisme prévalents au quotidien dans la société québécoise.

4) Parce que les médias francophones couvrent les débats de manière à légitimer un protectionnisme de l'identité québécoise et de la langue française qui autorise la peur de l'autre et le racisme au nom de la sauvegarde d'une culture distincte.

5) Parce que l'attention prêtée aux femmes voilées sert à détourner l'attention du sexisme et du racisme qui ont historiquement dominés les sociétés québécoises et canadiennes. En tant que féministes, nous devons refuser d'être complices de la violence envers les femmes que perpétue l'état, soit par ses rapports coloniaux avec les peuples autochtones, soit par son emploi de la femme voilée comme justification de la guerre et de l'occupation impérialistes en Afghanistan.

6) Parce que recourir à la laïcité, supposément garante de l'égalité des sexes, sert dans les faits à promouvoir une norme chrétienne et à faire des musulmans les boucs émissaires du sexisme, masquant ainsi les formes laïques de sexisme.

7) Parce que, même si la Commission est encore en cours, elle a déjà donné lieu à des propositions de lois pouvant restreindre, réguler et autrement entraver la vie des immigrant-e-s et des personnes provenant des communautés ethnoculturelles au Québec.

8) Parce que réguler l'expression religieuse publique des femmes constitue de la discrimination sexuelle, portant atteinte à la liberté des femmes et restreignant leur participation civique.

9) Parce que le CSF ne remplit pas son mandat, soit « défendre les intérêts des femmes. » Le CSF défendrait mieux les intérêts des femmes du Québec s'il mettait l'accent sur les conditions de pauvreté, de violence, de criminalisation et de racisme auxquelles bon nombre font face, et non sur ce qu'elles portent.

Signé : L'Institut Simone de Beauvoir, Université Concordia, Novembre 2007

Vous trouverez une liste de lectures sur les liens entre rapports de race et de sexe sur le site internet de l'Institut Simone de Beauvoir : <http://artsandscience1.concordia.ca/wsdb/>

Prière de faire circuler. Pour appuyer la déclaration, merci d'envoyer un courriel à:
acarastathis@gmail.com

Relations publiques : Viviane Namaste, directrice par intérim, Institut Simone de Beauvoir 514 848-2424 poste 2371, viviane@alcor.concordia.ca

GENDER, RACE AND RELIGIOUS IDENTITY : A READER
GENRE, RACE ET IDENTITÉ RELIGIEUSE : RÉFÉRENCES

Prepared for : the “Accommodate this!” series, March 2008–
Préparé pour : la série “Accommode donc ça!”, Mars 2008.

- 1) **The Bouchard-Taylor Commission's Hijacking of 'Gender Equality'**
By Anna Carastathis, December 2007 -- The Dominion
- 2) **I Am Not Asking for Your Approval : Faith and Its Expression**
By Kameelah Janan Rasheed, March 2007 -- Hot Coals
- 3) **RAWA: A Model for Activism and Social Transformation**
Adapted from : Sonali Kolhatkar; June 2006 -- Znet
- 4) **No One Is Illegal-Montreal statement on the racist Quebec debate about “reasonable accommodation”**
February 5, 2007
- 5) **Déclaration de Personne N’est Illégal en réponse au débat sur les «accommodements raisonnables»**
5 février 2007
- 6) **The “Reasonable Accommodation” Commission and Debate: Statement by No One Is Illegal-Montreal**
November 12, 2007
- 7) **La Commission et le débat sur les "Accommodements Raisonnables": Déclaration de Personne N’est Illégal-Montréal**
12 Novembre 2007
- 8) **Whose Reasonable Accommodation ?**
Statement by the Immigrant Workers Center of Montreal, November 2007
- 9) **Qui fait des « accommodements raisonnables »?**
Déclaration du Centre des Travailleurs et Travailleuses ImmigrantEs, Novembre 2007
- 10) **"Reasonable Accommodation": A Feminist Response**
Simone de Beauvoir Institute, November 2007
- 11) **Les « accommodements raisonnables » : Une réponse féministe**
Institut Simone de Beauvoir, Novembre 2007

For further reading on this topic
Références supplémentaires sur ce sujet

Articles:

- **L'ethnicité et la modernité**, Danielle Juteau, Les frontières, Res Publica., No. 33, Juin 2003.

- **The Muslim Veil in North America: Issues and Debates**, Sajida Alvi, Toronto: Women's Press, 2003.

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- **Citizens of the State but Not Members of the Nation: The Politics of Language and Culture in the Construction of Minorities in Québec** in C. E. James (ed). *Possibilities and Limitations: Multicultural Policies and Programs in Canada*. Halifax: Fernwood, 76-92, Ship, Susan Judith., 2005

- **Lettre d'une musulmane aux Nord-Américaines**, Zehira Houfani-Berfas, ÉcoSociété, Février 2005.

- **Patriarchy in secular and religious varieties**, Vivienne Wee, *Development quarterly - Journal of the Society for International Development*, Volume 49 No 1, 2006.

- **Between Orientalism and Fundamentalism: The Politics of Muslim Women's Feminist Engagement**, Jasmin Zine, *MuslimWorld Journal of Human Rights – Special Issue: Post-September 11th Developments in Human Rights In The Muslim World. Volume 3, Issue 1 2006 Article 5*

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- **Discourses of Denial: Mediations of Race, Gender and Violence**. Jiwani, Yasmin. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006

- **West Coast Leaf Women's Equality and Religious Freedom Project --** Report based on Advisory Committee Discussions, November 2006; Prepared by Harsha Walia.

- **Endangering the Safety of Canadian Values: The Case of a Hijab, an Eleven Year old Girl and a Soccer Ball.**, Ramachandran, Tanisha, *R.A.C.E. Link*, Spring, (2007).

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- **Casting Out: Race and the Eviction of Muslims from Western Law and Politics.** Sherene Razack, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008.

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- *Mon coeur est témoin...* , Film de Louise Carré, Office National du Film (ONF), 1996.

- *They Call Me Muslim*, A film by Diana Ferrero, Italy/France/Iran, 2006.

- *Layers of the Hijab* and *Layers of Discrimination*, El-Masri, Amal. Two audio documentaries about Muslim women in Canada. Produced at CKUT radio in Montréal
<http://www.rabble.ca/rpn/episode.shtml?x=52789>
<http://www.rabble.ca/rpn/episode.shtml?x=52929>

1) The Bouchard-Taylor Commission's Hijacking of 'Gender Equality'

By Anna Carastathis, December 2007

The Dominion - <http://www.dominionpaper.ca>

Last November, the West Coast LEAF (Legal Education and Action Fund) issued a report based on its Women's Equality and Religious Freedom Project (WERF). Some of the overarching questions that the Project explored were “What is the nature of religious discrimination experienced by women of faith? What are the ways in which women balance and navigate the experiences of discrimination and interlocking systems of oppression in their daily lives?” The report also addresses specific areas such as same-sex marriage; polygamy; use of religious arbitration in family law; and immigration law. The full report can be found [here](#).

The Taylor-Bouchard Commission on "reasonable accommodation" in Québec has prompted a great deal of commentary on the relationship between gender equality and freedom of religion. For instance, the Conseil du statut de la femme du Québec (CSF) has recommended that the Québec Charter of Rights and Freedoms be amended so that gender equality is given relative priority over the right to religious expression. In light of these developments, the Dominion interviewed Harsha Walia, who authored the report based on Advisory Committee discussions, to get an anti-racist and feminist perspective.

The Dominion: Why is religious freedom a feminist issue?

Harsha Walia: This is an important issue because the “religious freedom debate” actually has less to do with religion or secularism than it does with race. Particularly in the post 9/11 climate, religion is a highly politicized, racialized, and publicly constructed identity. For example, invoking a Muslim identity is not about defining the beliefs of a person of Muslim faith; rather, it is a euphemism for Arabs, Middle Easterners, and South Asians (who may not actually be Muslim). In the context of the “War on Terror” this racialized imagery is very important, as there is a need to have an identifiable ‘enemy’ who is supposedly threatening Western values. The use of such language and imagery is rooted in a colonial legacy; therefore fighting patriarchy is intrinsically linked to fighting colonization and racism.

This is also an issue for feminists because feminism is currently being, as it historically has been, co-opted by imperial and colonizing forces. Historian Leila Ahmed has written, “Whether in the hands of patriarchal men or feminists, the ideas of western feminism essentially functioned to morally justify the attack on native societies and to support the notion of the comprehensive superiority of Europe.” An increasing number of feminists have expressed concerns regarding various state interventions on behalf of the “disempowered foreign woman”. For example, feminists have questioned the use of “protecting women” as a rationale for the occupation of Afghanistan. Similarly, the discourse surrounding human trafficking taps into notions of victimized Third World women and justifies restrictive border controls.

Dominion: What do you think about the discourse of "reasonable accommodation" that has come to dominate public discussions in Québec?

HW: It is astounding how many people who identify themselves as pro-feminist are expressing the need to 'save women from the hijab' and how there needs to be 'limits to multiculturalism.'

First, it is hypocritical to talk about Canada's "over-tolerance" of multiculturalism when the very nature of the debate positions racialized immigrant communities as not belonging' to Canadian society; as "Outsiders" who need to be accommodated. It reveals the shallow self-congratulatory nature of Canadian multiculturalism under which rests a fundamentally white national consciousness. Second, such a debate aims to portray a sense of victimization where Canadian culture is being violated by "Outsiders." This process of demonization, 'othering' and racism that targets particular communities for greater scrutiny has very real consequences in the present day context, being used to sell illegal wars and occupations across the globe, and restricting the rights and civil liberties of migrants within these borders.

It is also problematic to talk about secularism in a seemingly neutral way as it ignores the foundations of Christianity within the Canadian state and the violent role that Christianity has played in colonizing and assimilating indigenous peoples for example. It is also ironic that many of those rejecting the "authority" of religion so readily accept the authoritative ideologies of capitalism, consumerism, and liberal secularism, which are far more normalized in Western societies.

The most damaging consequence of this debate is that it removes the capacity for women's agency by reinforcing the idea that being a 'Muslim feminist' for example is impossible; forcing women to accept narrower definitions of self, despite occupying multiple locations across citizenship, religion, class, sexuality, and race. Furthermore, discussions of gender inequality 'within' certain religions or cultures renders invisible the universal systems of patriarchy that all women contend with, while homogenizing and fossilizing religions in definitive ways.

Dominion: In the report, I found your critique of the distinction between polygamy and polyamory compelling. Can you elaborate?

HW: One of the major problems with the distinction between polygamy and polyamory is that it relies on and perpetuates racist assumptions. While polyamory is used to define a relationship based on mutual negotiation between "independent people," polygamy refers to a "cultural practice." Such a dichotomy reinforces assumptions that women in racialized cultures are being more exploited and less independent than "autonomous women" from dominant white cultures. This is not to suggest that polygamy cannot be critiqued; it is to highlight this double standard and how such differentiations are based on the premise that racialized cultures are inherently more hostile to women. The reality is that the practice of both polygamy and heterosexual polyamory exist within a global

context of systemic discrimination against women and girls. The current-day reality is that 99% of polygamous marriages are characterized by men having multiple wives. But it is dangerous to suggest that the roots of polygamy lie in 'religious culture' because cultures and religions do not offer homogenous narratives. Various conservative ideologies are on the rise across the globe because that is the socio-political context within which we are operating. Religion can be used to justify polygamy, but if we recognize that the current practice of polygamy is not about a particular religion or culture (which reinforces racism) -- it is, rather, a manifestation of a universal system of patriarchy -- then we can more readily reject those "freedom of religion" arguments that are used to prevent discussion about the effects on women in an anti-racist manner.

Dominion: How should feminists be addressing the issue of religious freedom as it intersects with the marginalization of racialized, immigrant, and indigenous women?

HW: We must contend with the reality that culturally-imperialist feminisms are being forced upon women across the world and the narrative of women's rights serves as a crucial tool in the pro-war and anti-immigrant propaganda machine. Such a theft of feminist principles is advancing everything but genuine equality for women. Instead, we must choose a path that is feminist as well as anti-racist, anti-militarist, pro-immigration, queer- and trans-positive, and class-conscious. This includes questioning and challenging the legitimacy given to state-based responses such as prisons as a solution to violence, border controls as a solution to trafficking, child apprehension as a solution to women and child poverty, and militarization as a solution to third world women's liberation.

It is important to avoid falling into the racist traps that infantilize racialized women, while at the same time maintaining a basic commitment to gender and sexual equality that cannot be breached by religious or cultural justifications. We must avoid a culturally imperialist feminism that seeks to impose Western notions of gender equality and 'sameness' onto other women. This does not imply that we become culturally relativist and begin to support any unjust practice. Cultural diversity or freedom of religion should not serve as a shield to scrutinize against gender-oppressive practices.

Walking this line requires us to pay attention to specific contexts, to listen to those women whose rights we purport to stand for, and to understand that we occupy different relationships of power and privilege. All oppressed women equally deplore sexism and misogyny, but women's liberation movements must be culturally sensitive and relevant so as to oppose patriarchal elements without attacking or destroying non-white cultures, religions, or identities. Women of colour and indigenous women have consistently pointed out that reducing their oppression to their 'culture' represents deeply colonial attitudes. The greater oppression that some women face is directly linked to policies of the state, histories of colonization, the nature of capitalism, and the powerful rise of global conservative ideologies. Most importantly, we must walk alongside those women who are on the front lines of their own struggles and who are agents of their own transformation. They do not need pity or charity, but solidarity and our respect for their leadership and agency.

2) I Am Not Asking for Your Approval -- Faith and Its Expression

By Kameelah Janan Rasheed; March 26th, 2007 - Hot Coals

I have spun myself into a web of non-stop, albeit non-linear, intertextual journeys and discursive shadow boxing matches towards a coherent narrative about hijab. I feared that in writing about hijab that my thoughts would be so reminiscent of previous works, that my narrative would be surrendered to the museum of embalmed anachronisms and clichés. This fear kept me running as far as my short legs could carry me away from the oppression versus liberation paradigm, and hiding in a dark corner away from self-hating confessionals about the ugliness of Islam.

I am not interested in proving to anyone that I am in fact liberated or that by wearing hijab in America I am engaging in a radical feminist act. Just as I gave up the task of proving my blackness or womanhood years ago to those who were skeptical of my 'credentials', I do not plan to spend time here validating my humanity or agency. Such a task is a distraction. The task here is not to shuck n'jive or discursively gyrate towards a presentation of hijab and myself that will grant me entrance into the feminist or 'mainstream' community. I do not want to spend time convincing people that in fact my hijab is not surgically attached to my scalp.

Nor, do I want to spend energy arguing that there is not a tracker embedded in my hijab that screeches a pronounced 'haraam, haraam' when there is too great of a distance between the said hijab and my head. The task here is to share stories that if nothing else will illustrate that self-elected liberators who are convinced of my oppression are doing more to oppress me than my hijab ever could by fixing me in conceptual incarcerations. In telling me that as a hijabi, I can only represent and ever be seen as the epitome of oppression - the atavistic aberration, then you have succeeded in reifying the patriarchal structures you pretend to despise. You have held me hostage in your imagination and my only key to freedom is to surrender and corroborate your assumptions of my subjugation.

If I tell you that I am comfortable as a hijabi, and do not feel the least restricted, why do you still feel the need to speak down to me as if I am a child? Why do you feel the need to convince that I am living in a matrix where I have managed to confuse liberation with oppression? The question has never been so much 'is Kameelah oppressed'? because when this question is asked I do not believe that there is a genuine concern for my wellbeing. The question has always been twofold: 'Why do you feel it to be your right to tell me how I should live my life? And: 'Why do you even care?' My experiences, that are mine and not to be generalised for other hijabis, have illustrated that the concern is not my oppression, but the inaccessibility of hijabi bodies and a general discomfort with those who have no problems with visible signs of cultural and religious difference.

My childhood and adulthood, neither of which are completed life stages, were full of paradox and alienation as I attempted to navigate what seemed to be rough uncharted

territory of a nerdy short black Muslim girl suspended in time and spaces that just could not 'figure me out'. I am the daughter of two black working-class Muslim reverts. I grew up in a small city in northern California where you could count the number of Muslims on one hand. Because being starved at and having rude comments directed at me is a sadistic task I rather enjoy, I then spent four years at a private Catholic school where I was not only one of very few black students, I wandered about as the only Muslim student. Thinking it could not get worst then being called a suicide bomber, or Osama bin Laden's wife, I embarked on another four-year journey at a private liberal arts institution where the number of Muslim students was heartbreaking. While most comments at this institution were reserved for private discussions, the college experience as well as my time in Johannesburg, South Africa provide an opportunity to understand what literally annoyed people about my hijab.

While in Yeoville, a hybrid inner-city/suburb of Johannesburg, I was approached by a man who was intent on liberating me from not only my gender oppression, but from my racial confusion. Apparently, 'I am not free' in hijab and Islam is not an African religion.

I had committed not only the ultimate sin of embracing a faith that 'forced' me to be modest; I had chosen a faith that had no roots in Africa. Let's not bother with the contrary historical facts, as that is the least of our concerns. What I found of the utmost importance in this monologue (yes, because I was unable to get a word in edgeways) was that he conceptualised my channels of freedom via the ritualistic removal of my hijab and his penetration or sexual conquest. I never knew that my freedom toolbox included a penis and an instruction guide - I will keep this in mind.

As he continued to speak in a series of poorly phrased insults, I realised that this was no longer about gender oppression or black authenticity; it was about the politics of accessibility to certain bodies. He repeated almost in a hypnotic fashion, 'I cannot see you...I cannot see your essence'. In wearing hijab, it was his argument that I was making myself inaccessible to men, and particularly to him. Choosing to place myself off the radar was not a choice I could exercise. In fact, I was required to make myself available and accessible to his gaze as well as the gaze of other men.

Thus, the crime I had committed was not one of accepting my subjugation as a Muslim woman and 'confused African woman', but of refusing to situate myself in his myopic discourse of liberation that ultimately puts me at his mercy. If I was mistaken in this assumption, it was further validated by a number of men in Johannesburg and in America who have told me similar tales of my inaccessibility, as a reason why I should not wear hijab. They started with a narrative of genuine concern for my oppression and devolved into a shallow desire for a free pass to accessibility. It was not always about what was said, but the delivery of these diatribes. In many of these situations, these men used aggressive and paternalistic tones. They attempted to silence me by raising their voices. They worked to discredit my line of defense by telling me I did not know enough. Most of all they were surprised that I was able to put together a sentence and to give as good as I was given.

It was a reminder that the covering of my head is not a covering of my mind or my mouth. Now, my mama taught me that in a conversation that I need to speak up irrespective of the genitalia I assume the other person to possess. My dad taught me to do it with tact. I think that while I am better at the former than the latter, it was a necessary lesson. For me, this battle over hijab editorialised by patriarchal not feminist discourses has never been about my liberation or the liberation of Fatima or whatever common Muslimah name you choose to insert here. Really, can men and institutions that consider me less intelligent and inept be that concerned about the death of patriarchy? This battle has always been about the accessibility of certain bodies and a neurotic discomfort with difference. If I can be convinced or forced to unveil and assimilate my discourse and lifestyle someone else can feel comfort. Someone will assume greater access to my body. However, for someone else to feel comfort when they look at me, and secure greater dominion over me, some part of me has to be sacrificed.

I cannot make any conclusive remarks about hijab generally or in my personal experiences. What I can say is that as these discourses about my oppression reach a nauseous height and hegemonic preoccupation in numerous imaginations, I will continue to write. I will not write to prove my liberation, but write to assert my right to exist as I choose without harassment, intimidation and ridicule. People often say, 'well, if you don't want to be singled-out then just don't wear hijab'. I guess while I am at it, I should lighten my brown skin to reach a more appeasing colour? Or give my hips back to mama. Assimilation is not an option. The reality is that, yes, I wear hijab and no, I do not need your approval. While I do not need your approval, I would not mind a little respect.

3) RAWA: A Model for Activism and Social Transformation

RAWA: a Model for Activism and Social Transformation

Adapted from : Sonali Kolhatkar; June 01, 2006 - Znet

The Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA) rose to international prominence after the attacks on the US on September 11th, 2001. Despite interviews with Larry King Live, and promotion by Oprah, few mainstream media outlets examined the radical nature of RAWA's political vision and strategy, or their organizational structure. Sadly, many on the left have also overlooked the lessons we can learn from this extraordinary women's movement, choosing instead to relegate support of RAWA to mainstream feminist groups.

Within the context of on-going brutal war, that such a political organization of women exists and thrives, is reason enough to study RAWA. Additionally, their political vision is basic and non-sectarian, espousing universal human rights, women's rights, economic democracy, and a progressive education policy. They create and distribute their own media and have successfully harnessed new technologies to further their goals. RAWA is an extraordinarily resilient organization that uses a horizontal structure with an emphasis on the collective over the individual, and employs practical and democratic decision-making and internal conflict-resolution. In fact, RAWA has been operating in a manner that progressive political organizations in the West could only dream of. What can Western social movements learn from RAWA?

To answer this question I draw heavily from my own personal experience of working in solidarity with RAWA for the past 6 years, supplemented with information from the book, "With All Our Strength" by Anne Brodsky, (New York: Routledge, 2003).

Historical context

Afghanistan's brutal history of war naturally shapes RAWA dramatically. The 1970s were a time of intense student activism and protest. In 1977, a young Kabul University student named Meena founded RAWA to struggle for women's rights. RAWA was born into a nation on the brink of imperial war, occupation, and reactionary forces from which it has yet to emerge. A year after RAWA's formation, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan and began a ten year long occupation. RAWA's initial goal of women's emancipation, was broadened to include national emancipation. They participated in the nation-wide non-violent resistance, or jihad, against the occupation. But RAWA was also seen as a threat by the fundamentalist, misogynist forces which the US chose to work with. In fact, RAWA's work was increasingly threatening to both Soviet imperialists and Islamic fundamentalists. In 1987, Meena was assassinated by a collaboration of both (the) forces (of) KHAD (Afghan secret police, controlled by the Soviet government), and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar (the largest recipient of US financial aid).

Rather than destroying the organization, Meena's assassination drove RAWA underground and actually provoked them to broaden their goals even more. Since then, they see imperialism and religious fundamentalism as twin injustices to be resisted and eradicated. Meena is seen as a martyr by RAWA members. Her photograph adorns the otherwise bare walls of RAWA houses, classrooms, orphanages, hospitals, and clinics. Because RAWA members operate incognito, Meena's face has essentially become RAWA's face.

Political Vision

RAWA's underlying philosophy sees women's rights as integral to the struggle for human rights, democracy, and national sovereignty. Because women are the main victims of war, religious fundamentalism, and economic globalization, women's rights are crucial markers of injustice worldwide. As in the US, leftist Afghan women like Meena realized that the men in their movements paid lip service to women's rights but did not see it as important as class, or other struggles. Women were told that their freedom would automatically follow from other social changes and that it was not necessary for women's rights to be central to their struggles.

RAWA has not adopted any specific economic or social ideology. They do advocate "economic democracy," and secularism. While most RAWA members are Muslim, as are the majority of Afghans, they have seen Islam being used as a political tool of oppression by fundamentalist warlords in government positions.

Excerpts from RAWA's Charter (twice revised since its inception, to address socio-political changes), define their main aim as:

- (1) women's emancipation, which cannot be abstracted from the freedom and emancipation of the people as a whole,
- (2) separation of religion and politics, so that no entity can misuse religion as a means for furthering their political objectives,
- (3) equal rights of all Afghan ethnic groups,
- (4) economic democracy and the disappearance of exploitation,
- (5) commitment to struggle against illiteracy, ignorance, reactionary, and misogynistic culture,
- (6) to draw women out of the incarceration of their homes into social and political activity, so that they can liberate themselves economically, politically, legally, and socially,
- (7) to serve and assist affected and deserved women and children, in the fields of education, healthcare, and economy,

(8) establish and strengthen relations with other pro-democracy and pro-women's rights groups nationally and internationally, with such relations based on the principle of equality and non-interference in each others affairs,

(9) support for other freedom and women's movements worldwide.

RAWA bases their struggle on universal principles of human rights and democracy, consistent with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. They are not bound by the inevitable dogma that results from sectarianism and "the party line."

Additionally, RAWA realizes the importance of connecting their struggle with those of other groups worldwide. They regularly express international solidarity in their statements, such as this one:

We declare our unequivocal and unreserved support and solidarity with the struggles of the people and the pro-democracy and progressive forces of Iran, Palestine, Kashmir, Kurdistan, Sudan and other fettered peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America fighting for their rights against reactionary and anti-liberty states and powers.

Strategy

For the formation of a free, independent and democratic Afghanistan the joint striving and struggle of pro-liberty and democratic forces is indispensable. This objective can only be achieved through relentless struggle, not through compromise and capitulation.

--RAWA statement on 50th anniversary of (the) Universal Declaration of Human Rights, December 1998

RAWA's strategies, like their political aims, are broad. They are a balance of long-term and short-term strategies of political agitation and humanitarian aid.

Education

Education is seen as part of RAWA's long-term struggle and is considered their most important strategy. Education of women in particular, is based on the understanding that when women are empowered through literacy and skills, they are more inclined and better equipped to fight for their rights. However, RAWA also educates boys, providing a practical alternative to the brain-washing of religious madrassas. They believe that male domination is a social phenomenon that can be eradicated through education for both boys and girls.

RAWA's educational projects range from full-fledged schools for girls and boys, all the way down to home-based literacy courses and skills training for adult women. Many women and girls who discover RAWA through these institutions choose to become members. Education also includes skills training for adult women who are struggling to raise families. RAWA teaches women embroidery, sewing, handicrafts, etc. They also

teach women farming skills like raising hens for eggs, fish farming, and goat farming. Such courses are labeled "income-generating projects." The goal is to enable women to become financially self-sufficient.

RAWA's educational policy (see Appendix A) evolved over the years through trial and error. It is based on principles of freedom, peace, non-violence, respect for the environment, as well as gender, ethnic, and religious tolerance. Anne Brodsky observes that Paolo Freire's groundbreaking work on emancipatory education speaks to some of the very same approaches that RAWA espouses. RAWA members are not familiar with the highly influential Pedagogy of the Oppressed by Freire and have developed their own methods based on an intimate understanding of their communities.

Health Care and Humanitarian Aid

Despite much-touted progress, Afghanistan still suffers from shockingly high rates of infant mortality and maternal mortality. In 2005, Afghanistan ranked 173 out of 178 in the UN's Human Development Index. With so much suffering around them, it is impossible for RAWA to speak of human rights and women's political rights, without also addressing the lack of access to food and health care, which are prerequisites to other rights.

RAWA runs clinics and mobile health teams both inside Afghanistan and in Pakistan's refugee camps. In many cases, the people they serve have no other access to health care. When the need arises, RAWA conducts emergency relief operations alongside their political and educational work. They often assist refugees during harsh winter months with blankets, food, and medical aid.

Because of the large numbers of orphans in Afghanistan, RAWA runs several orphanages for boys and girls in Pakistan and Afghanistan. (They do not, however, offer Afghan children up for adoption in Western countries and urge instead Western supporters to sponsor orphans so that the children can remain in their own country while having access to education, shelter, etc.)

Media, Documentation, and Technology

From their inception RAWA realized that they needed a means of spreading news from independent sources throughout the country, as well as a way to convey news of their activities and achievements.

Payam-e-Zan (translated as Woman's Voice) is RAWA's main publication: "a magazine that first published in 1981, only four years after they were founded. Payam-e-Zan started out being produced by hand, with several hundred mimeographed copies stealthily passed across the country. Some issues, produced during the most dangerous years, were published in miniature, to make them easier to hide. According to Brodsky, Payam-e-Zan "operates as an educational vehicle through which literacy skills as well as political consciousness are cultivated. The magazine is also a highly effective recruitment tool" for

RAWA, "serv[ing] as a place to document RAWA's concerns and standpoints, and as a vehicle to present these ideas to a wide audience."

As the casualties of US-backed fundamentalists mounted in the early 1990s, RAWA, realizing that the world had moved on from Afghanistan, decided to document the rampant human rights abuses through still photography and video. Photographs documenting the victims of the fundamentalists, or in some cases, violence in action, are published on their website and magazine, along side reports by the RAWA members with details such as the date, time, names of victims, and perpetrators, etc. Digital cameras have made RAWA's documentation much easier and also enabled RAWA to share the images of human rights violations more easily with an international audience via their website.

Videos of human rights abuses are circulated to news media and documentary film makers, and added to RAWA's own archive. The most famous example of RAWA's video documentation was the 1999 public execution of a woman named Zarmeena, by the Taliban in Kabul stadium. After 9/11, this video was viewed all over the world, despite the fact that it was more than 2 years old. When initially offered to news media in 1999, no one would touch the gruesome footage until it was politically convenient. The footage was also used in Saira Shah's widely acclaimed documentary, *Behind the Veil*, which was re-aired repeatedly on CNN after 9/11.

The advent of the internet catapulted RAWA into the international like no other new technology. Wisely seeing the potential for international solidarity, and drawing world attention to a forgotten crisis, RAWA launched <http://www.rawa.org> in late 1996. One member explained:

We never imagined the internet would bring such a positive result for us. It is very important and something that now we can't imagine we could work without! At the time I remember it was kind of amazing. The first email from the US that we got, we all called each other to come see this and our eyes were so big!

Most of the relations between RAWA and their international supporters have developed through their website and e-mail. I too first discovered RAWA through their website and wrote to them expressing my solidarity.

RAWA's website is the perfect portal for them to express their political views and publish their documents while preserving the anonymity of their members. Additionally, large amounts of material can be published and archived with little additional cost.

While Payam-e-Zan is still RAWA's primary outlet to reach the majority of Afghans - who live in a poor country with little internet access, RAWA's website is the main method of communicating with the outside world.

Political Demonstrations

RAWA organizes public protests up to several times a year to mark various dates: March 8th, International Women's Day; April 28th, the "black day" when the fundamentalists entered Kabul in 1992; and December 10th, International Human Rights Day. According to Brodsky, "demonstrations are one of the large-scale non-traditional ways that RAWA educates and enlightens people." [4] They are usually held in Pakistan, as Afghanistan is still too dangerous. Thousands of women are bussed in from across the border to march with signs and banners. Sometimes the women carry sticks for self-defense, or are accompanied by male supporters who walk beside the march. The demonstrations often culminate in a rally in front of the United Nations Office in Islamabad and elsewhere.

One member of RAWA explains the importance of demonstrations:

When a demonstration happens, some in backward places can't even think a woman can stage such a thing. Our mission is to change that mentality and let women know they are human beings and equal to men.

RAWA's demonstrations also highlight events in Afghan history that either are forgotten or have been re-written. For example, the bloody events of fundamentalist infighting and civil war that followed April 28th 1992 are resurrected each year on RAWA's signs and placards.

The women in RAWA's demonstrations march militantly with faces uncovered and fists in the air. Their signs are explicitly pro-democracy and anti-fundamentalist. As such, the public demonstrations also challenge pervading assumptions among Westerners who were obsessed by images of mute, burqa-clad, helpless looking Afghan women, after 9/11.

Organizational Structure and Decision making

While RAWA had adopted a committee structure from the beginning, their founder Meena operated as a de-facto President. Her tragic assassination in 1987 highlighted the organization's vulnerability with having a high-profile "leader" who could be easily targeted. After Meena's death, RAWA changed its structure so that no single member could assume a leadership role. Their goal was to "create a leadership structure that was democratic, collective, and as non-hierarchical as possible, thus promoting the equality and democracy that RAWA seeks for Afghanistan at large." This manifested itself in the form of a "leadership council" of 11 members. These members are elected every two years by the entire membership.

The election of the Leadership Council is to my knowledge, unique among "subversive movements." Because of RAWA's underground nature, its members are geographically dispersed and cannot communicate with one another frequently. Consequently there are no nominations or election campaigns. Members simply submit in writing 11 names of

members that they think ought to comprise the Council. The top 11 vote-getters are then elected.

Leadership Council members simply continue in their daily functions as RAWA members, while taking on the responsibilities of that particular committee. They meet several times a year to oversee RAWA's operations and author RAWA's standpoints and statements in a way that reflects the membership's sentiments by conferring with the spokespeople from all the underlying committees. Their names are never revealed outside the membership for security reasons. RAWA's structure is consistent with their philosophy of the collective being more important than the individual.

The remaining RAWA members join any one of the following seven standing committees

Each committee has a number of sub-committees focused on its various responsibilities. All committees, including the Leadership Council, are composed of an odd number of members to avoid deadlock in decision making.

Each committee has a "masul" -- which is Persian for "responsible person. The masul functions like a spokesperson for the committee, to whom members can turn for mediation, or to make complaints. They are also responsible for communication between various committees. Brodsky elaborates: "Overall, RAWA's committee structure can be thought of as having branches in which each masul is the sole connection between the committees and members she is responsible for and the next level up in the committee structure." This fosters the "relatively independent operation of each committee, and ensures projects that are "locally responsive."

As any serious activist knows, committees cannot function without regular meetings, and RAWA members have their fair share of frequent meetings. One of RAWA's most interesting type of meeting is a mechanism that enables them to deal with internal conflict: the "jelse entaqady" or "mistake meeting." This is an "evaluation and correction mechanism that operates at all levels of the organization in order to facilitate RAWA's distributed decision making style, and address mistakes, problems, and differences of opinion." Differences of opinion or disagreements are directly addressed with the people involved. The committee masul is often a mediator in such meetings, and an odd number of attendees ensure that there can be no deadlock.

Secrecy is a huge factor in RAWA's operations because of the dangerous nature of their work. As a result most members often know only a small number of other members personally at any given time. RAWA's dispersed committee structure, and its members' belief in the collective having more importance than the individual, ensures the organization's continued functioning.

Only Afghan women based in Afghanistan or the refugee camps of Pakistan and Iran can be RAWA members. Men are not allowed to be members. However, many male relatives of RAWA members are dedicated to supporting the organization in any manner available

to them. Male supporters often help with security at public events, escorting foreign supporters, passing out RAWA literature, etc.

What we can learn from RAWA

RAWA's approach to activism is very practical and tailored to suit the needs of their situation. Their political vision is simple, yet adheres to some basic fundamental truths such as the universality of human rights and democracy. While this may make some Western leftist ideologues scoff, it is an approach that, at the very least, works in a country like Afghanistan which has lost so much and is struggling to preserve the most basic of rights.

However, RAWA's simple political vision enables it to be flexible to situations as they arise. For example, RAWA does not denounce capitalism. Rather they call for "economic democracy." This enables them to train women in marketable skills through their "income-generating projects." The practical short-term goal of enabling economic independence for a poor struggling, often illiterate woman, is achieved in this manner. RAWA does not engage in micro-lending however, preferring to grant women the basic foundation they may need to start up an operation, free of charge.

RAWA's organizational structure is also quite practical, having preserved the organization for nearly two decades after Meena's death. Rather than strain to achieve some idealistic but impractical notion of absolute participatory democracy, they have instead conceived a structure that has limited hierarchy (the Leadership Council), which is outweighed by ample democracy through simple and functional elections and committee membership.

RAWA's emphasis on the collective over the individual is also a philosophy worth aspiring to. Among Western activists we have seen an increasing tendency to valorize individual figures, at the expense of collective action.

4) No One Is Illegal-Montreal statement on the racist Quebec debate about “reasonable accommodation”

February 5, 2007

[Translated from the original French]

As racialized and migrant women, we are outraged by the slanderous, xenophobic and racist propaganda that is being expressed in the debate about "reasonable accommodation".

We assert our ability, as subjects not objects, to exercise our own capacity to self-determine our lives; we reject the repeatedly paternalistic, and fundamentally misogynist, discourse about the State that will supposedly save us from our own cultures.

We assert that such a discourse is both racist and sexist. It is racist, because it perpetuates the idea that our cultures are fundamentally backwards and cruel, in contrast with white Western culture, which is seen as the ultimate achievement of civilization. It is sexist because it derives from ideas that render women childlike, or viewed as simple victims incapable of struggling for their own wellbeing.

This idea of “civilization” is intrinsically linked to the colonial mentality that led to the genocide of the indigenous peoples of the Americas. It is a genocide that persists when, by way of example, the disappearance of more than five-hundred indigenous women in Canada continues to be treated with contempt and indifference.

We reject the mass media’s simplistic and reductive conception of women’s “rights”. While we actively assert our "right" to freedom, safety and dignity as articulated in the traditional paradigm of "human rights", we also assert our "right" to the expression of our cultural and religious identities.

We celebrate the diversity and dynamism of our cultures and our identities – including our different sexual orientations as queer, lesbian, trans, straight, or other forms of self-identification -- and refuse the simplistic caricatures that reduce our multiple communities to homogeneous and uncontested representations of a monolithic tradition.

In this respect, we reassert the dynamic nature of the various manifestations of our beliefs or cultural identities, which express themselves within a larger social and political context.

In particular, we observe that the analysis of the oppression of women and gender inequality, as expressed in the mass media, as strictly a phenomenon internal to religions, explicitly ignores the external, universal systems of patriarchy and sexism which all women face, while also definitively homogenizing religion.

We denounce the role of the State and its structures in the marginalization of racialized

and migrant women, whether they are religious or not.

The actions of the State and the capitalism contribute to making the status of migrant women more precarious by increasing the barriers to obtaining legal status through various forms of systemic discrimination, and increasing the vulnerability of women by their criminalization.

We also denounce the complicity of the imperialist feminist discourse which, under the cover of supposed solidarity, imposes Eurocentric and assimilationist ideas about gender equality. We are critical of the dominant feminist paradigm that privileges the choices of Western women as the sole path towards liberation, despite the overpowering reality of daily sexism that Western women face.

We are conscious of the way in which this discourse continues to be manipulated and used by pro-war, anti-immigrant proponents. We recognize the historical continuity of the appropriation and manipulation of feminist discourse by colonial and imperialist movements throughout the world.

However, we are not supporters of cultural relativism that tends to justify oppressive and unjust practices in the name of the "difference". We remain vigilant so that the freedom of religion does not prevent us from fighting actively against oppression.

To show true solidarity, we must listen to the women that we claim to support in their struggle, and we must understand that we occupy different positions of privilege and power.

To do this, we must actively fight against the dehumanization of racialized and faith communities, and against the victimization of women. We must support the women who are on the frontlines of their own struggles for liberation, and subjects, not objects, of their own transformation. We must engage in this process not motivated by pity or charity, but by a true sense of solidarity and respect.

-- *No One Is Illegal-Montreal.*

5) Déclaration de Personne N'est Illégal en réponse au débat sur les « accomodements raisonnables»

5 février 2007

En tant que femmes racialisées et migrantes, nous sommes outrées devant l'infâmante propagande xénophobe et raciste articulée dans le cadre du débat autour des « accomodements raisonnables ».

En tant qu'actrices à part entières, affirmant notre capacité à nous auto-déterminer, nous rejetons le discours paternaliste et fondamentalement misogyne répétant la nécessité que les structures de l'État nous protègent et nous sauvent de nos propres cultures.

Nous affirmons qu'un tel discours est à la fois raciste et sexiste : raciste, car il perpétue la notion que nos cultures sont foncièrement rétrogrades et barbares, en contraste avec la culture blanche et occidentale, envisagée comme forme ultime de civilisation et de progrès; et sexiste, car provenant d'une perspective qui tend à infantiliser les femmes, ou celles-ci sont perçues comme de simples victimes incapables d'oeuvrer à leur propre bien-être.

Cette notion de « civilisation » est intrinsèquement liée à la rhétorique coloniale qui a mené au génocide des populations autochtones des Amériques, un génocide qui perdure jusqu'à ce jour, alors que la disparition de plus de cinq cent femmes autochtones au Canada continue d'être traité avec mépris et indifférence, réduit à un simple fait divers.

Nous rejetons le modèle simpliste et réductionniste de conception des « droits » des femmes véhiculé dans les médias de masse. Alors que nous réclamons activement nos « droits » à la liberté, à la sécurité, à la dignité tels qu'articulés dans le paradigme traditionnel des « droits humains », nous réclamons tout autant nos « droits » à l'expression de nos identités culturelles et religieuses.

Nous célébrons la diversité et le caractère dynamique de nos cultures et de nos identités, notamment nos identités sexuelles – en tant que femmes, et en tant que lesbiennes, bisexuelles, transsexuelles ou toute autre forme d'auto-identification - et refusons la caricature simpliste et schématique réduisant nos multiples communautés à des représentations uniques, homogènes et incontestées d'une tradition monolithique.

À cet égard, nous réaffirmons le caractère dynamique des différentes manifestations de croyances ou d'identités culturelles alors qu'elles se recoupent avec un contexte politique et social extérieur plus large.

En particulier, nous insistons que l'analyse de l'oppression des femmes et de l'inégalité des sexes telle qu'exprimée dans les médias de masses, c'est-à-dire comme phénomène strictement interne aux religions ignore explicitement les systèmes extérieurs universels de patriarcat et de sexisme auxquels toutes les femmes font face, tout en homogénéisant et en fossilisant les religions de manière définitive.

Nous dénonçons le rôle de l'État et de ses structures dans la marginalisation des femmes racialisées et migrantes, qu'elles soient de foi ou non.

L'action de l'État et du système capitaliste contribuent à rendre le statut des femmes migrantes plus précaire en multipliant les barrières à l'obtention d'un statut légal, en cautionnant les différentes formes de discrimination systémique et en décuplant la criminalisation des femmes, accentuent leur vulnérabilité.

Nous dénonçons également la complicité du discours féministe impérialiste qui, sous couvert de solidarité, impose des conceptions eurocentristes et assimilationnistes d'égalité des sexes. Nous sommes critiques du paradigme féministe dominant qui place les choix des femmes occidentales comme l'unique et ultime chemin vers la libération des femmes, malgré l'accablante réalité que les femmes en Occident font face à un sexisme quotidien.

Nous sommes conscientes de la manière dont ce discours a été, et continue d'être manipulé et instrumentalisé par la machine de propagande pro-guerre et anti-immigrante.

Nous reconnaissons la continuité historique de l'appropriation et de la manipulation du discours féministe par les mouvements colonialistes et impérialistes à travers le monde.

Toutefois, nous ne sommes pas partisans du relativisme culturel qui tend à justifier des pratiques oppressives et injustes au nom de la « différence » et restons vigilantes afin que la liberté de religions ne nous empêche pas de lutter activement contre l'oppression.

Afin d'adopter une authentique position de solidarité, nous devons écouter les femmes que nous prétendons soutenir dans leurs luttes et comprendre que nous occupons différentes positions de privilège et de pouvoir.

Pour ce faire, nous devons activement lutter contre la déshumanisation des communautés racialisées et de foi et contre la victimisation des femmes. Nous devons soutenir les femmes qui sont à l'avant plan de leurs propres luttes de libération et les actrices de leur propre transformation. Nous devons nous engager dans ce processus non pas motivées par la pitié ou la charité, mais animées d'un véritable sens de solidarité et de respect.

-- *Personne N'est Illégal-Montréal*

6) The “Reasonable Accommodation” Commission and Debate: Statement by No One Is Illegal-Montreal

November 12, 2007

The “reasonable accommodation” debate in Quebec, and the related “Consultation Commission on Accommodation Practices Related to Cultural Differences” (the so-called “Bouchard-Taylor Commission”), are fundamentally rooted in xenophobia, racism and sexism.

From the outset, the “debate” fails to recognize that Quebec and Canada are built on stolen Indigenous land, and constituted through the dispossession and genocide of Indigenous peoples who have been forced into “accommodating” colonization. Moreover, it completely ignores the fact that racism and white supremacy were intrinsically tied to the creation of both Canada and Quebec, and throughout their histories, have been instrumental in defining who “belongs” and who does not.

The Bouchard-Taylor Commission was created in the context of xenophobia during an election campaign and has provided an uncontested platform for racism, Islamophobia and anti-Semitism.

Opportunistic politicians and corporate media have appealed to public fears and prejudices, and manipulated false controversies over religious practices and cultural differences to create a generalized hysteria, with little to no basis in fact. In its very framework it creates a binary of ‘us’ vs. ‘them’; the ‘us’ being made up of white people of European descent, and the ‘them’ being whichever non-white immigrant group is currently under the spotlight.

The supposed "debate" has made open bigotry publicly acceptable, using simplistic caricatures that render our communities homogenous, uncontested and monolithic. While we reject this offensive portrayal of our communities, we assert the diversity of our cultures and traditions as well as our multiple identities.

Insidiously, so-called progressives and feminists have used the Commission platform to promote their own sophisticated brand of racism, one that refuses to acknowledge the oppressions within Western society, and unquestioningly considers Quebec to be “pluralistic, democratic and egalitarian”.

While using rhetoric rooted in Islamophobia and sexism to justify war abroad, as is the case in the on-going military occupation of Afghanistan, Quebec has embraced the framework around the “rights of women” and the systematic dehumanization of Muslim cultures to justify intolerance *chez nous*. We reject the notion that women of faith need to be saved from their inherently oppressive and backward cultures, and instead we support the women who are on the frontlines of their own struggles for liberation, and subjects, not objects or victims, of their own transformation.

As the Bouchard-Taylor Commission begins its public hearings in Montreal, we are organizing to openly and publicly reject the commission process and framework. To engage the Commission process is to validate its fundamentally racist premise, which is to stand judgment of immigrant communities. This Commission, sanctioned by the state, is a process of submission, whereby minority populations are forced to justify their very existence in Quebec. The way this debate is framed ignores all the current intolerance and injustice faced by many migrant communities in Quebec, while forcing them to defend themselves as “good Quebecois”.

We declare: *Ni patrie, ni état; ni Québec, ni Canada!* We refuse to submit to any form of nationalism.

Instead, we organize by uncompromisingly putting forward a vision of social justice, rooted in day-to-day grassroots struggles. We acknowledge and support the self-determination and sovereignty of Indigenous peoples all over the Americas -- struggles that have once again been rendered invisible in the skewed “reasonable accommodation” debate.

We organize actively against poverty, precarity, racial profiling, police brutality, war, capitalism and gender oppression. We organize against borders, for free movement and status for all. We actively fight against state oppression and violence targeted at the most marginalized, while struggling against all forms of oppression, whatever their source.

In contrast to the faulty framework of “reasonable accommodation”, we assert “solidarity across borders”, in the spirit of mutual aid and support.

We call for a collective rejection of the entire Commission. The process of genuine dialogue and debate, and real pluralism, comes from our shared struggles against all forms of oppression. The “reasonable accommodation” debate has clouded and confused the unity and solidarity we share -- as workers, poor, women, queer and trans people, migrants, and others -- fighting together to achieve real justice.

We re-assert those struggles, by refusing the fundamentally racist and sexist premises of the Bouchard-Taylor Commission, and by refusing to be submissive or fearful as we continue to practice self-determination and strive for collective liberation.

-- *No One Is Illegal-Montreal (November 2007)*

7) La Commission et le débat sur les "Accommodements Raisonables": Déclaration de Personne N'est Illégal-Montréal

12 Novembre 2007

Le débat actuel sur les « accommodements raisonnables » au Québec, de même que la « Commission de consultation sur les pratiques d'accommodement reliées aux différences culturelles » - mieux connue sous le nom de « Commission Bouchard-Taylor », sont fondamentalement basés sur des préceptes xénophobes, racistes et sexistes.

De prime abord, ce « débat » ne reconnaît pas le fait que le Québec et le Canada sont des entités établies sur des terres volées aux Autochtones, et ce que ces entités se sont développées à travers la dépossession et le génocide de ces peuples, qui ont été forcés de « s'accomoder » au processus de colonisation. De plus, ce « débat » ignore complètement le fait que le racisme et l'idéologie de suprématie blanche font partie intégrante de la création du Canada et du Québec. Ces idéologies ont défini tout au long de l'histoire et jusqu'à aujourd'hui ceux qui sont « inclus » dans le concept de l'identité nationale et ceux qui ne le sont pas.

La Commission Bouchard-Taylor a été mise en place dans un intense climat de xénophobie, avec en toile de fond une campagne électorale en quête de boucs émissaires. La Commission a servi de plateforme incontestée pour l'expression du racisme, de l'islamophobie et de l'anti-sémitisme.

Des politiciens à l'opportunisme aigu ainsi que les médias de masse ont joué sur les peurs et les préjugés et ont manipulé de fausses controverses au sujet des pratiques religieuses et des différences culturelles, dans le but de créer un climat d'hystérie généralisée, qui au fond est basé sur peu ou pas de substance.

À l'intérieur même de sa structure, ce « débat » a créé une dichotomie fondamentale entre le « nous » et le « eux », le « nous » étant défini comme la population blanche de descendance européenne, et le « eux » s'appliquant à différents groupes d'immigrants racialisés. Ce supposé débat a permis l'expression publique et admise d'un sectarisme béat, dirigé contre les communautés immigrantes et religieuses, tout en faisant usage de caricatures simplistes pour les réduire à des blocs homogènes, monolithiques et figés.

Nous rejetons ce portrait à la fois simpliste et insultant de nos communautés, tout en réaffirmant la diversité de nos cultures et de nos traditions, ainsi que de nos multiples identités à l'intérieur de celles-ci.

D'une manière très insidieuse, ceux qui s'identifient comme progressistes et comme féministes ont utilisé la Commission afin de promouvoir leur propre forme - plus sophistiquée - de racisme. Un racisme qui ignore les différentes formes d'oppression à l'intérieur des sociétés occidentales et qui considère immanquablement le Québec comme étant de facto une société « pluraliste, démocratique et égalitaire »

Alors qu'une rhétorique islamophobe et sexiste est utilisée pour justifier la guerre à l'échelle mondiale, comme dans le cas de l'occupation militaire de l'Afghanistan, le Québec a emprunté une rhétorique semblable, centrée autour de ce qui est schématiquement désigné comme « les droits des femmes ». Cette rhétorique déshumanise systématiquement les cultures musulmanes, afin de justifier l'intolérance au sein de ce « chez nous ».

Nous rejetons l'idée que les femmes de foi aient besoin d'être sauvées de leurs cultures fondamentalement oppressives et rétrogrades. Nous les soutenons plutôt dans leurs luttes de libération, dont elles sont les sujets à part entière, et non pas les objets ou les victimes.

Alors que la Commission Bouchard-Taylor entame ses audiences publiques à Montréal, nous nous mobilisons afin de rejeter ouvertement et publiquement le processus et le cadre idéologique de la Commission. S'impliquer dans la Commission serait synonyme d'une validation de ses prémisses racistes et une approbation de sa fonction de juge des communautés immigrantes.

Cette Commission, créée et parrainée par l'État, n'est rien d'autre qu'un processus de soumission, à travers lequel des groupes minoritaires sont forcés à justifier jusqu'à leur existence même au Québec, à coups d'humiliantes enchères à « l'intégration ». La manière dont ce débat est articulé met de côté toutes les intolérances et les injustices subies par de nombreuses communautés migrantes au Québec, tout en les obligeant à faire la preuve qu'ils sont de « bons Québécois ».

Nous déclarons : Ni patrie, ni État; ni Quebec, ni Canada! Nous refusons de nous soumettre à tout forme de nationalisme.

Nous choisissons plutôt de militer en mettant de l'avant une vision de justice sociale sans compromis, basée sur des luttes populaires qui s'effectuent au quotidien. Nous reconnaissons et soutenons les luttes pour la souveraineté et l'autodétermination des peuples autochtones à travers les Amériques, luttes une fois encore rendues invisibles par le soi-disant « débat » sur les accommodements raisonnables.

Nous militons activement contre la pauvreté, la précarité, le profilage racial, la brutalité policière, la guerre, le capitalisme et le sexisme. Nous militons contre les frontières, pour la liberté de mouvement et pour un statut pour toutes et tous. Nous luttons activement contre l'oppression et la violence infligées par l'État aux plus marginaliséEs, tout en continuant à lutter contre toute forme d'oppression, quelle que soit sa source.

À la vision réductrice et malsaine véhiculée par le débat sur les «Accommodements raisonnables », nous opposons – et préférons – celle de la «solidarité sans frontières », dans un esprit d'entraide mutuelle.

Nous appelons à un rejet collectif de la Commission dans son ensemble. Le processus de dialogue véritable, le réel pluralisme et le vrai débat découlent de nos luttes contre toutes les formes d'oppression. Le «débat sur les accommodements raisonnables » a obscurci

l'unité et la solidarité que nous partageons – en tant que travailleurs(euses), pauvres, femmes, personnes queer et trans, migrantEs, et autres – en luttant ensemble pour obtenir une justice véritable.

Nous réitérons par la présente l'importance de ces luttes tout en refusant les prémisses fondamentalement racistes et sexistes qui sous-tendent la Commission Bouchard-Taylor. Nous refusons la soumission et la crainte, et continuerons à pratiquer l'autodétermination, dans une perspective de libération collective.

-- *Personne N'est Illégal-Montréal (Novembre 2007)*

8) Whose Reasonable Accommodation ?

Statement by the Immigrant Workers Center of Montreal

November 2007

The debate raised in Quebec on 'reasonable accommodation' is built on a number of false assumptions about the relationship between majority groups ('we') and minorities ('they') and what 'we' believe the correct behaviours of 'they' should be. It is the wrong debate. Reasonable accommodation should begin with the rights of workers.

Accommodating reasonably implies the protection of basic rights, decent wages, rapid recognition of credentials, and terminating 'guest worker' programs that deny rights. We have to remember that historically Canada/Quebec has been created and developed through the colonization of First Peoples on the one hand and the exploitation of migrant labour on the other, in order to build the 'nation'. These processes continue unabated.

The public debate on 'reasonable accommodation' remains how 'they' should modify their customs to accommodate 'us'. It assumes, dangerously, that there are common values, as though such things actually exist. We are writing this because we do not believe in this false consensus, this tendency to homogenize all things except food, custom and costume. 'Cultural accommodation' blinds the public to the realities of migration, and how the middle and owning classes of Quebec society benefit from the exploitation of the 'they'. The connections between immigration and labour are absent from the debate and we believe that it should be at its centre.

Let's briefly review some of the trends in immigration and labour over the past 30 years and ask ourselves is this 'reasonable accommodation'? Most immigrants arriving during this period are from countries in the South (Asia, Africa, Latin America) and therefore they are not white. The economic forces that push them out of their countries are the same ones that shape their conditions here. They are 'the other'. They have arrived with high levels of education and skills. Yet over that time, most have not had their skills and training recognized and therefore, they have been forced to take jobs that many "Canadians/Quebecers" reject. They do the work that remains hidden: the caring for children and the elderly, the services and cleaning that allows the 'we' to function. In these jobs, there is little protection. Minimal labour standards exist on paper, but are not posted in workplaces or in private homes for caregivers and domestic workers. There are few inspectors and where these standards are abused, it is incumbent upon the workers her/himself to challenge her/his boss. They are often isolated and with few other employees. For people who are struggling to raise children and send remittance payments to family members in their countries of origin, this is a great risk. It takes enormous courage to stand up for their labour rights when the chances of their winning anything and keeping their job is remote. You might say that this is a situation of 'reasonably accommodating' the class interests of employers by providing a pool of skilled, cheap labour (trained and educated elsewhere) who are prepared to work in almost any conditions as the price of migration to a better place. In addition, there is little evidence to support the myth that 'things get better for immigrants with time'.

Many Canadians and Quebecers are unaware that we have programs for 'guest workers', who are brought in for limited periods and sent back to their home countries when the work is done. This is the case of agricultural workers. Domestic workers, through the Live-in Caregiver Program, are brought in and if they comply as live-ins can apply as permanent residents. The federal government likes these programs and intends to increase their use because they allow labour to be brought in without any real 'accommodation' as strict rules regulate the conditions of exploitation. Workers in these programs have little recourse to protection from the laws and policies for 'us' and remain the 'they' of the labour market. Even worse off are the many workers without formal status- who remain hidden as cleaners, cooks, dish-washers and domestics, facing arbitrary and well-below the minimum wage and labour standards, not eligible to making any claims but available nonetheless to be exploited.

As the policies of the provincial and federal governments have been to open up markets and reduce 'expensive' state programs, immigrant labour has been one of the ways of filling the gaps left by the inadequacies of neo-liberal policies. We don't need as many decent nursing homes if immigrant women, often trained as nurses, can provide cheap care at sub-standard private ones or in peoples' homes. We don't need as much public childcare if we can import nannies. We do not need to increase wages and improve working conditions if the international labour pool will continue to bring workers here who are pushed into sub-standard jobs. Accommodation implies justice for immigrant workers as a precondition for any other discussion.

-- *The Immigrant Workers Center (November 2007)*

9) Qui fait des « accommodements raisonnables »?

Déclaration du Centre des Travailleurs et Travailleuses ImmigrantEs

Novembre 2007

Le débat sur les accommodements raisonnables au Québec est construit sur un ensemble de fausses prémisses au sujet de la relation entre la majorité (le « nous ») et les minorités (le « eux ») et ce que « nous » pensons être le comportement correct pour « eux ». Il s'agit du mauvais débat. Les accommodements raisonnables devraient commencer avec les droits en milieu de travail. « Accommoder raisonnablement » signifie la protection des droits fondamentaux, un salaire décent, la reconnaissance rapide des compétences et l'abolition des programmes de « travailleur saisonnier » qui bafouent les droits des travailleurs. Il est nécessaire de se rappeler que le Québec-Canada a été historiquement créé et développé « grâce » à la colonisation des Premières Nations et l'exploitation des travailleurs migrants. Ces procédés se perpétuent impunément.

Le débat public sur les « accommodements raisonnables » continuent à demander comment « ils » devraient modifier leurs coutumes et traditions pour « nous » accommoder. Cette conception assume dangereusement qu'il y a quelque chose comme des valeurs communes. Nous écrivons cette lettre car nous ne croyons pas à ce faux consensus, cette tendance à tout homogénéiser sauf la nourriture, les vêtements et les coutumes. Les « accommodements culturels » aveuglent le public par rapport à la réalité de la migration et à l'avantage que retirent les classes moyenne et dirigeante du Québec de l'exploitation des travailleurs immigrants. La connection évidente entre l'immigration et le marché du travail est totalement absente du débat et nous croyons qu'elle devrait être au coeur de celui-ci.

Revoyons ensemble certaines tendances de l'immigration et du travail au Québec au cours des trente dernières années et demandons nous si cela constitue des « accommodements raisonnables ». La plupart des nouveaux arrivants sont issus des pays du Sud (Asie, Afrique, Amérique du Sud) et ne sont pas « blancs ». Ils sont le « eux », l'« autre ». Ils sont souvent très qualifiés et très éduqués. Cependant, les compétences de la grande majorité d'entre eux ne sont pas reconnues et incidemment ils doivent accepter des emplois que « nous » rejetons. Ils font le travail que personne ne veut faire et restent cachés : ils s'occupent des enfants, des aînés et du ménage ce qui « nous » permet de fonctionner. Dans ces emplois, il n'y a pas de sécurité. Les normes minimales du travail existent en principe mais dans les faits, elles ne sont pas respectées. Il y a très peu d'inspecteurs et dans les cas où il y a abus ou violation de ces normes, il incombe au travailleur lui-même de contester son traitement et son patron. Pour des immigrants qui doivent supporter leur famille et souvent envoyer de l'argent à l'étranger, s'en prendre à un patron peu scrupuleux est un très grand risque. S'attaquer à un patron demande énormément de courage et les réparations sont souvent insuffisantes en regard des dangers. Vous pourriez dire que le fait d'accepter au Québec-Canada un bassin d'employés qualifiés prêts à travailler dans n'importe quelle condition et à n'importe quel

prix constitue un exemple d' « accommodements raisonnables » de « nous » envers « eux ». Malheureusement, il y a peu d'information qui nous porte à croire que « leur » niveau de vie est beaucoup meilleur ici.

Plusieurs Québécois et Canadiens ne savent pas que nous avons des programmes spéciaux d'accueil de travailleurs « temporaires » ou « saisonniers ». Dans le cadre de ces programmes, un nombre important d'immigrants viennent travailler au Canada et sont renvoyés dans leur pays quand leur travail est terminé. Le secteur de l'agriculture est particulièrement concerné. Des travailleurs domestiques arrivent également au Canada et doivent travailler dans des maisons pendant 24 mois sur 3 ans avant d'avoir le droit de faire une demande de résidentes. Le gouvernement fédéral a à coeur ce type de programme et entend les utiliser de plus en plus car cela permet de faire entrer beaucoup de travailleurs sans avoir à les accommoder tout en définissant clairement les conditions de leur exploitation. Ces travailleurs ne bénéficient d'aucune protection et restent le « eux » du marché du travail. La condition des sans-papiers est encore pire! Ils travaillent au noir à nettoyer la vaisselle et à faire le ménage et font face à des conditions de travail arbitraires et de beaucoup inférieures aux normes du travail. Ils ne sont évidemment pas éligibles à aucune requête légale mais ils sont tout à fait éligibles à l'exploitation....

Comme les politiques récentes des gouvernements vont dans le sens d'un désengagement de l'État et d'une baisse concordante des services sociaux, les travailleurs immigrants sont une excellente façon de combler les trous ouverts par les politiques néo-libérales. Nous n'avons pas besoin d'autant d'infirmières si des travailleuses immigrantes (souvent entraînées comme infirmières dans leur pays) peuvent fournir des soins directement sur place à des prix ridicules-« cheap labour ». Nous n'avons pas besoin de monter les salaires si des immigrants viennent chaque année combler les trous dans le marché du travail. Les accommodements raisonnables impliquent la justice pour les travailleurs immigrants comme « précondition » à tout autre débat.

-- *Le Centre des Travailleurs Immigrants (Novembre 2007)*

10) "Reasonable Accommodation": A Feminist Response

Simone de Beauvoir Institute

November 2007

As anti-racist, anti-colonial feminists in Québec, we have serious misgivings about the Commission de Consultation sur les pratiques d'accommodement reliées aux différences culturelles. The Conseil du statut de la femme du Québec (CSF) has proposed that the Québec Charter be changed so as to accord the right of gender equality relative priority over the right to religious expression and to ban the wearing of "ostentatious" religious symbols in public institutions by public employees. Our concern is that the Commission and the CSF's subsequent intervention pave the way for legislation that will restrict rather than enhance the rights of women. We invite you to join us in questioning the exclusionary structure of the Commission, the assumptions it supports, and the negative impact it is likely to have on women's lives.

So, why call into question the legitimacy and the effects of the Commission?

1. because although we see the urgent need for dialogue about racism and sexism in Québec society, we object to *how* this consultation process has been undertaken. Listening to people "air out" their racism is not conducive to promoting critical reflection and dialogue, but instead creates a climate of fear-mongering and moral panic. Furthermore, in asking whether or not "difference" and "minorities" *should be* accommodated the commission assumes and perpetuates "commonsense" racist understandings of some "cultures" as homogeneous, backward and inferior. In addition, the Commission's reliance on the notion of "reason" must also be critically examined. Historically, white men have been positioned as the exclusive bearers of reason, and the Commission runs the risk of reproducing this in a context of ongoing social inequality.
2. because the design of the Commission and the language of "accommodation" assumes and perpetuates a system of power whereby western "hosts" act as gatekeepers for non-western "guests." A better consultative process would start with the recognition that Canada is a white-settler state, and that its history is one of colonial and patriarchal violence against Indigenous people.
3. because the public debates that the Commission has sparked construct certain ethno-cultural communities as perpetual outsiders and as threats to Québec identity rather than as integral to it. Concerns about ethno-cultural others as socially regressive obscure the everyday homophobia, sexism and racism that pervade Québec society.
4. because the ways that the Commission has been represented in mainstream English media promotes the idea that racism is a feature exclusive to Québec society and is not a problem -- or is less of a problem -- in the rest of Canada.
5. because the preoccupation with veiled women serves to deflect from the sexism and racism that has historically pervaded Québec and Canadian society. As feminists, we must challenge our complicity with the state's violence against women both in its colonial relations with Indigenous people and in its use of the figure of the veiled woman as an alibi for imperialist war and occupation in Afghanistan.

6. because appeals to secularism as a guarantor of gender equality effectively function to promote Christian culture as the norm and to scapegoat Muslims as inherently sexist, erasing secular forms of sexism.
7. because although it is still underway, the Commission has already prompted the proposal of laws that could restrict, regulate, and otherwise impede the lives of immigrant and racialized people in Québec.
8. because regulating women's public religious expression is gender discrimination insofar as it takes away women's freedom and inhibits their civic participation.
9. because the CSF is failing to meet its mandate of "defending the interests of women." The CSF would better serve the interests of women in Québec by focusing on the conditions of poverty, violence, criminalization and racism that many of us face, and not on what women wear.

-- *The Simone de Beauvoir Institute, Concordia University (November 2007)*

11) Les « accommodements raisonnables » : Une réponse féministe

Institut Simone de Beauvoir

Novembre 2007

En tant que féministes antiracistes et anticoloniales, nous avons d'importantes réserves à l'égard de la Commission de consultation sur les pratiques d'accommodement reliées aux différences culturelles. Par ailleurs, le Conseil du statut de la femme du Québec (CSF) a suggéré des modifications à la Charte québécoise afin de réclamer la priorité relative du droit à l'égalité des sexes sur le droit à l'expression religieuse, ainsi qu'une interdiction du port de symboles religieux « ostentatoires » dans les institutions publiques par leurs salarié-e-s. Le fait que la Commission, suivie de l'intervention du CSF, ouvrent la voie à des législations qui limiteront les droits des femmes plutôt que les améliorer, nous préoccupe. Nous vous invitons à sonder avec nous la structure d'exclusion de la Commission, les présomptions qu'elle avance et l'impact néfaste qu'elle pourrait avoir sur la vie des femmes.

Cela dit, pourquoi contester la légitimité et les effets de la Commission ?

1) Parce que malgré l'urgent besoin d'amorcer une discussion sur le racisme et le sexisme dans la société québécoise, nous nous opposons au procédé par lequel la consultation de la Commission a pris place. Écouter des gens exposer ouvertement leur racisme ne constitue pas un cadre propice à la réflexion critique et au dialogue, mais incite plutôt à un climat de peur et de panique morale. De plus, par le fait même de demander si la « différence » et les « minorités » devraient être accommodées ou non, la Commission tient pour acquis et perpétue une perspective selon laquelle certaines « cultures » sont homogènes, inférieures et rétrogrades. En outre, la notion de « raison » à laquelle la Commission a recours doit aussi être étudiée de manière critique. En effet, historiquement, les hommes blancs ont occupé la position d'unique détenteurs de la raison, et la Commission court le risque de reproduire cet état de choses dans le présent contexte d'inégalités sociales.

2) Parce que la conception de la Commission et le vocabulaire des « accommodements » tiennent pour acquis et perpétuent un système de pouvoir selon lequel des « hôtes » occidentaux doivent protéger leurs frontières des « visiteurs » non occidentaux. Un procédé consultatif plus rigoureux reconnaîtrait d'abord que le Canada est un état de colons blancs et que son histoire en est une de violence coloniale et patriarcale envers les peuples autochtones.

3) Parce que les débats publics engendrés par la Commission présentent certaines communautés ethnoculturelles comme de perpétuelles étrangères et comme une menace à l'identité québécoise au lieu d'admettre qu'elles en sont partie intégrante. L'inquiétude que les « autres » d'origine ethnoculturelle puissent être socialement régressifs occulte l'homophobie, le sexisme et le racisme prévalents au quotidien dans la société québécoise.

4) Parce que les médias francophones couvrent les débats de manière à légitimer un protectionnisme de l'identité québécoise et de la langue française qui autorise la peur de l'autre et le racisme au nom de la sauvegarde d'une culture distincte.

- 5) Parce que l'attention prêtée aux femmes voilées sert à détourner l'attention du sexisme et du racisme qui ont historiquement dominés les sociétés québécoises et canadiennes. En tant que féministes, nous devons refuser d'être complices de la violence envers les femmes que perpétue l'état, soit par ses rapports coloniaux avec les peuples autochtones, soit par son emploi de la femme voilée comme justification de la guerre et de l'occupation impérialistes en Afghanistan.
- 6) Parce que recourir à la laïcité, supposément garante de l'égalité des sexes, sert dans les faits à promouvoir une norme chrétienne et à faire des musulmans les boucs émissaires du sexisme, masquant ainsi les formes laïques de sexisme.
- 7) Parce que, même si la Commission est encore en cours, elle a déjà donné lieu à des propositions de lois pouvant restreindre, réguler et autrement entraver la vie des immigrant-e-s et des personnes provenant des communautés ethnoculturelles au Québec.
- 8) Parce que réguler l'expression religieuse publique des femmes constitue de la discrimination sexuelle, portant atteinte à la liberté des femmes et restreignant leur participation civique.
- 9) Parce que le CSF ne remplit pas son mandat, soit « défendre les intérêts des femmes. » Le CSF défendrait mieux les intérêts des femmes du Québec s'il mettait l'accent sur les conditions de pauvreté, de violence, de criminalisation et de racisme auxquelles bon nombre font face, et non sur ce qu'elles portent.

-- *L'Institut Simone de Beauvoir, Université Concordia (Novembre 2007)*

**FIGHTING STATE AND INTERPERSONAL GENDER VIOLENCE :
A READER
LUTTER CONTRE LA VIOLENCE SEXISTE ÉTATIQUE ET
INTERPERSONNELLE : RÉFÉRENCES**

Prepared for : the “Accommodate this!” series, March 2008–

Préparé pour : la série “Accommode donc ça!”, Mars 2008.

1) 15 ans après le geste terroriste de l'École Polytechnique, la violence sexiste continue...

Par Martin Dufresne , 1er décembre 2004

2) De bourreau à victime; de victime à criminelle :

Brian Myles ; Le Devoir, vendredi 15 février 2008

3) Pamela Jean George, aged 28, of the Sakimay First Nation

From “Missing Native Women

4) What You Need To Know About Prisons

The INCITE! Collective

5) Critical Resistance - Incite Statement : Gender Violence and the Prison Industrial Complex

The INCITE! Collective

6) Travailleuses du sexe, pénalisation et prison en France

Lara Peyret, Hiver 2005

7) Examples of Grassroots models for fighting gender violence :

Various sources

8) “National Security” and the Violation of Women: Militarized Border Rape at the US-Mexico Border

Sylvanna Falcon

9) Law Enforcement Violence Against Women of Color

Andrea J. Ritchie

10) Pomo Woman, Ex-Prisoner, Speaks Out

Stormy Ogden

For further reading on this topic
Références supplémentaires sur ce sujet

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Multi-Media:

- Femicide: The Killing of Women and Girls: A Video about the femicide taking place in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. In Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, over 450 women have been brutally murdered and over 600 have gone missing since 1993, in what constitutes one of the most brutal impacts of global capitalism at the U.S. Mexico Border: the misogynist and racist attack on women migrants from the South of Mexico and Central America, who make up the urban reserve of wage labor of the maquiladora industry.

<http://citizen.nfb.ca/femicide-killing-women-and-girls>

- With Love and Grief: The Femicide List is a record of women and children murdered in Canada. In Vancouver a group of women created Marker of Change, a national women's monument.

<http://citizen.nfb.ca/global-womens-memorial>

- CopWatch, Documentary Short ; 8 min – From Media Matters Film Fest. :

<http://www.mediathatmattersfest.org/3/index.php?id=7#> :

A video on a Berkeley based CopWatch initiative.

www.copwatch.org

- Channel 3 News Video: A woman is arrested and forced to undergo a body search after having been assaulted on the street in Ohio. This video highlights the « Double Jeopardy » of interpersonal and state violence targeting women in a patriarchal society:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8bX3d1pdNpU>

1) 15 ans après le geste terroriste de l'École Polytechnique, la violence sexiste continue...

par Martin Dufresne , 1er décembre 2004

Dans un travail de sensibilisation populaire et de confrontation des pouvoirs établis, le Collectif masculin contre le sexisme recense les noms et résume les circonstances des incidents où des femmes et des enfants ont été tué-es par des hommes (ou des inconnus) au Québec depuis le massacre perpétré par un antiféministe à l'École Polytechnique de Montréal, le 6 décembre 1989. Nous faisons ce travail depuis maintenant onze ans.

Nous n'utilisons que les données publiées et donc disponibles en bibliothèque, en nous en tenant aux éléments qui permettent de rappeler le nom et l'identité des protagonistes de ces drames et la dynamique qui a mené au meurtre. Sans un tel travail, nous croyons que ces traces seraient immédiatement oubliées par tous sauf par les proches des victimes.

Nous faisons ce travail pour qu'une prise de conscience collective de l'ampleur du désastre sexiste amène une levée de boucliers contre le laxisme de notre société à l'égard des privilèges masculins, dont celui de s'en prendre à une conjointe, surtout à l'occasion d'une séparation. Si le fait de rappeler ces crimes et leur contexte pouvait éviter ne serait-ce qu'une tuerie de plus, est-ce que cela n'en vaudrait pas la peine ? Notre affiche est apposée au mur de dizaines de maisons d'hébergement au Québec. Ce tragique décompte les aide à jauger les risques réels auxquels leur conjoint les expose. J'ose croire que cette liste a pu sauver des vies et justifier de saines colères.

Martin Dufresne
Secrétaire
Collectif masculin contre le sexisme

"Où que ce soit au monde, s'il n'y a pas de noms, il n'y a pas de mort-es." (Laura Bonaparte, une des Mères de la Place de Mai, en Argentine)

**DES FEMMES ET ENFANTS TUÉES PAR DES HOMMES, AU QUÉBEC,
DEPUIS LE 6 DÉCEMBRE 1989**

Ada Burns, Aïda El-Tomi, Agnes McCormick-McKenzie, Ai Ny Cai, Albina Arbour Cloutier, *Alex Maheux-Royer*, Alexandra McBride, *Alexandre Blanchette*, *Alexandre Riendeau*, Alice Benoît, Alice Lépine-Reeves, Alicia Moses, Aline Dubé, Aline Robidoux, Aline Taylor-Francoeur, Aloma Potvin, *Alonzo Ortiz*, Amanda Huard, Ana Maria Solinas Norbaak, *Anastasia Siméon*, Andréa Gagné, Andrée Gagné, Andrée Halpin, *Andréanne Tremblay*, Andrée Guénette, *Angel Laskaris*, Angela Moreau, Anita Lelièvre, Ann Lyons, Ann Tuyet Nguen, Anna Marden, Anna Yarnold, Anna-Maria Codina-Leva, Anne Brissette, Anne Laurin, Anne-Lisa Cefali, **Anne-Marie Edward**, **Anne-Marie Lemay**, Anne-Marie Morin, Anne-Marie Sharpe, Annette Wilson, Annick Babin, *Annick Gravel*, Annie Dominique-Normandin, Annie Lapointe, **Annie St-Arneault**, **Annie Turcotte**, *Anthony Lefebvre-Richer*, Antoinette Asselin, Antonia Cantin, *Ashley Pluviose*, *Audrey Danjou-Chrétien*, *Audrey Dubé*, Audrey-Ève Charron, *Audrey Martin*, *Audrey Paquet*, *Aurélie Grimoux*, Aurore Tremblay (2), *Aylin Olanagarcia*, **Barbara Daigneault**, Barbara Erhardt, **Barbara Maria Kluznick**, Bee-Leei Meng, *Béatrice De Montigny*, Béatrice Lavoie, Béatrice Thibodeau, *Benoît Marceau*, Beruhi Leylekoglu, Berta Dimidjan, Berthe Hardy-Blanchette, *Bianca Caron*, Binh-Khieu-Thanh Tran, Bitha Mengo Munsu, Blandine Simoneau-Girard, Bonnie Dagenais, Born Samphorn, *Brejnev Lee Maynard*, Brigitte Gagné, Brigitte St-Germain, Calliope Vournous, Carmel Louisjeune, Carmen Lagueux, Carmie Jeannot, Carmina Rivas, Carole Bienvenue, Carole Blanchette, Carole Boisvert, Carole Lachapelle, Carole Martin, Carole Rajotte, Carolle Deschamps, Caroline Guimond, Caroline Landry, Caroline Laniel, Caroline Poulin, Caroline Veilleux, Carrie Dolores Mancuso, Carrie-Ann Larocque, *Catherine Dansereau*, Catherine Morin, Cathy Brooks, Cathy Caretta, Cécile Clément, Cécile Roy, *Cédric Alexandre-Scott*, *Cédric Bourgeois-Cadieux*, Céline Fréchette, Céline Lemieux-Letendre, Céline Letellier, Céline Pearson, Céline Saint-Amant, Chantal Brière, Chantal Brochu, Chantal Coutu, Chantal Lavoie, Chantal Tremblay, Chantale Gervais, Charlene McFarlane, *Charles Gagné*, *Charles Tremblay*, Chien Chin Wong, *Christian Girard*, Christiane Asselin, Christiane Boucher, Christiane Maurice, *Christina Deladurantaye*, Christina Mitriou, *Christina Palasanu*, *Christine Baillargeon*, *Christine Dallaire-Labelle*, Christine De Grandmont, Christine Deslauriers, Christine Dubé, Christine Leclerc, *Christine Lessard*, *Christine Speich*, Christine Tremblay, *Christophe-Emmanuel Robinson*, *Chrystelle Lavigne-Gagnon*, Cindy Bouchard, *Cindy Faucher*, Claire Lafrenière, Claire Ouellet-Bourgault, Claire Samson, Claude Ferron, Claude Julien, Claude Lecours, Claudette Archambault-Perron, Claudette Frenière, Claudette Servant, *Claudia De Montigny*, Claudia Drouin, Claudine Breault, Claudine Caron, Clothilde d'Auteuil-Quimper, Colette Harnois, Colette Julien, Colette Rondeau, Cristobalina Vasquez, Cynthia Crichlow, *Daniel Desrochers*, Danielle André, Danielle Boucher, Danielle Dufour, Danielle Falardeau, Danielle Guilbault, Danielle Laplante, Danielle Provost, Danny Deschamps, *Dany Fleurant*, *David Guillet*, *David Prieur-Santerre*, Deborah Ann Rothmann, *Deilia Tautu*, Delima Kopeau, Denise Charron, Denise Duquette, Denise Martel, Denise Rybicki, *Diana Tautu*, Diane Bergeron, Diane

Couture, Diane Durand, Diane Francis, Diane Gélinas, Diane Labelle, Diane Latour, Diane Lavigne, Diane Massicotte, Diane Paquette, Diane Tremblay, Dolores Lijoi, Dominique Papineau, Dominique Tremblay, *Donald Desruisseaux*, Donna Norris, Dora Psyrris, Dorine Mallette, *Dylan Lebel*, Elaine Cormier, Éliane Hervieux, Elisapi Assepa, Elise Leboeuf, Elizabeth Bernachez-Larocque, Elizabeth Fuller, *Emilia Thomas*, *Émilie Thinel*, Emma Reda di Girolano, Emmanuella Corso, *Éric Arpin*, *Éric Beauvais*, *Éric Labonne*, Estelle Letendre, *Esther Conserve*, Eva Paradis, *Ève St-Onge*, Evette Brown-Alliman, Fabian Mitchell, Fanny Kingstone, Fatima Kama, Florence Bouchard, France Bazinet, France Cossette, France Beaugard, France Lacharité, France Legault, France Pelletier, France Roy (2), France Saint-Germain, Francine Gouin, Francine Lacroix, Francine Lefebvre, Francine Turcotte-Bérard, Francine Valois, Francine Villeneuve, *Francis Boucher*, *François Mongrain*, *François Wistaff*, Françoise Barnes-Carrière, Françoise Beaulieu, Françoise Beaulne, Françoise Lirette, *Frankz Anatole*, Gaétane Saint-Pierre, Gemma Dessureault, **Geneviève Bergeron**, Geneviève Dubois, *Geneviève Prieur-Santerre*, *Georges-Éric Lohier*, Georgette Forget, Germaine Charbonneau, Germaine Désilets, Germaine Hebert, Gertrude Paquin, Ghislaine Dubé, Ghislaine Gagnon, Ghislaine Poirier, Gilberte Desalliers, Ginette Boucher, Ginette Dufresne, Ginette Gaudette, Ginette Gauthier, Ginette Lamirande-Grenon, Ginette Legault, Ginette Rivard, Ginette Roger, Ginette Vincent, Gisèle Côté, Guylaine Fortin, Guylaine Gent, Guylaine Leblond, Guylaine Potvin, Hanh Nguyen, Helen Bauer, **Hélène Colgan**, Hélène Dufresne, Hélène Farman, Hélène Hurtubise, Hélène Langlais, Hélène Morneau, Hélène Plante, Hélène Verreault, *Hend El-Tomi*, Hermeline Leblanc-Bourdages, *Hilary Erhardt*, Hortensia Diaz, Huguette Boulanger, Huguette Demers-Paradis, Huguette-Marie Brideau, *Ian Lambert-Tourangeau*, Ida Rudy Kramer, Immaculée-Barbara Pierre, *Innocent Kastar*, Isabelle Bacon, Isabelle Bolduc, Isabelle Brouillette-Venne, Isabelle Champoux, Isabelle Denis, Isabelle Lotz, Isabelle Rolin, Isabelle Villeneuve, Ivy Roberts, Jacinthe Dufour, Jacqueline Bernard, Jacqueline Dansereau, Jacqueline Fortin, Jacqueline Lecors, Jadwiga Lorynski, *Jae Woo Hu*, Jane Grefford, Janet Kuchinski, Janette Daigneault, *Janie Lefebvre*, Jasmine Mathews, Jayshri Patel, *Jea In Hu*, *Jean-Anthony Richer*, *Jean-Christophe Roy*, *Jean-Francois Leclerc*, *Jean-Francois Lessard*, *Jean-François Parenteau*, *Jean-Marc Harper*, *Jean-Philippe Rossignol*, *Jean-Vanel Prévost*, Jeanet Grenier-Lajoie, Jeanie Poucachie, Jeanne Bouchard, *Jeanne Francoeur*, Jeanne d'Arc Alarie-Ouellet, Jeanne-Lolita Cameron, Jeannelle Dumont, Jeannette Fradette-Fréchette, Jeannette Lamoureux, Jeannine Boissonneault-Durand, Jeannine Gagnon, Jeannine Marineau, Jenny Lenner, *Jérôme Fréchette-Vachon*, *Jérôme Leclerc*, *Jérôme Langlois*, Jessica Charbonneau, *Jessica Chiasson-Huard*, *Jessica Grimard*, *Jessica Lemire-Gagnon*, *Jessica Sylvain*, Joan Williams, Joanna Simolenska-Powada, Joanne Beaudoin, Joanne Cloutier, Joanne Foessi, Joanne Salvatore, Jocelyn Toope, Jocelyne Bourbonnais-Delorme, Jocelyne Lemay, Jocelyne Montreuil, Jocelyne Parent, Jocelyne Plante, Jocelyne Poirier, Joëlle Delage, Joëlle Tremblay, Johanne Bonhomme, Johanne Chalut, Johanne Godbout, Johanne Guay, Joanne Murray, Johanne Patenaude, Johanne Plante, Johanne Renaud, *Johanne Saint-Éloi*, Johanne Valade, *John Feurer Pellerin*, *Joleil Campeau*, *Jonathan Beaudin*, *Jonathan Brodeur*, *Jonathan Couture*, *Jonathan Gilbert*, Josée Jobidon, Josée Johnston, Josée Mathieu, Josée Matte, Josée Olsen, Josée Paquin, Josée Pitre, Josée Siracusa, Josée Tremblay, Joséphine Sberna, Joséphine Petitpas, Josette Duchesne, Josette Therriault, *Josiane Jeannot*, Joyce Bond, Judy Clark, Judy O'Reilly,

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En tout, 595 femmes tuées en 15 ans au Québec par un partenaire actuel ou récent, par un client ou un souteneur, par un fils ou par un violeur, par des cambrioleurs ou par un antiféministe armé ; 172 jeunes et enfants assassinés-es par un père, un beau-père ou un prédateur sexuel. Et encore ne s'agit-il que des victimes dont le corps a été retrouvé et le nom publié. Nous parlons de crimes commis par des hommes en tant qu'hommes parce que le moteur de la presque-totalité de ces crimes est une "virilité" factice, pétrie de volonté de pouvoir et de contrôle, où le meurtre apparaît clairement comme un geste délibéré, annoncé, terroriste et propriétaire, protégé par une culture et un appareil judiciaires profondément sexistes. Ce massacre continuera tant que nous n'aurons pas mis fin aux privilèges masculins que cette violence délibérée sert à préserver en tenant en respect toutes les femmes.

2) De bourreau à victime; de victime à criminelle

Un homme violent bénéficie de la clémence de la cour et réussit même à faire condamner sa victime

Brian Myles ; Le Devoir
Édition du vendredi 15 février 2008

Une femme séropositive victime de violence conjugale a été reconnue coupable d'agression sexuelle et de voies de fait graves contre son ex-conjoint, hier à Longueuil, pour avoir omis de lui signaler son état lors de leur première relation sexuelle. L'homme s'en est tiré avec une absolution inconditionnelle pour ses coups de poing.

Infectée. Violentée. Reconnue criminelle. D. C. est triplement victime. Elle a contracté le VIH de son défunt mari dans des circonstances pathétiques en 1991. En 2000, son coeur se remet à battre pour un certain J.-L. P. Lors de leur première relation, elle omet de lui dire qu'elle est séropositive, ce qu'elle finit par révéler quand la relation devient sérieuse. Après quatre ans de vie commune, c'est la rupture. J.-L. P. est envahissant, violent même. À la fin de 2004, il bat sévèrement D. C. et casse même le poignet du jeune fils de celle-ci lors d'une altercation.

La justice s'empare de son cas. J.-L. P. est reconnu coupable de voies de fait graves. Mais tout juste avant les discussions sur sa sentence, il porte plainte à son tour contre D. C. au sujet de leur première relation sexuelle. Le juge ne voit pas d'un bon oeil le comportement de D. C. et accorde l'absolution inconditionnelle à l'ex-conjoint violent en 2005.

«Ce verdict donne raison à un conjoint violent qui, on le voit, tente de se venger. Le système judiciaire se laisse encore avoir par les stratégies des agresseurs. La violence conjugale est encore mal comprise, excusée, minimisée», déplore Louise Riendeau, coordonnatrice au Regroupement provincial des maisons d'hébergement et de transition pour femmes victimes de violence conjugale.

Quant à D. C., elle a dû subir un procès pour agression sexuelle et voies de fait graves, bien que J.-L. P. n'ait jamais contracté le VIH. Dans sa décision rendue hier, le juge Marc Bisson ne prête aucune crédibilité à D. C., qui jure avoir utilisé un condom lors de cette fameuse relation inaugurale. Le juge Bisson conclut qu'il s'agissait au contraire d'une relation non protégée. Selon les enseignements de la Cour suprême, D. C. avait l'obligation de révéler son statut séropositif à J.-L. P. dans de telles circonstances. Comme elle ne l'a pas fait, son acte est considéré comme une fraude qui annule le consentement donné par J.-L. P.

Et voilà les rôles d'agresseur et de victime complètement inversés. D. C. risque maintenant de se retrouver en prison. Son avocat, Noël Saint-Pierre, a cependant l'intention de porter la cause en appel.

La Coalition des organismes communautaires québécois de lutte contre le sida (COCQ-SIDA) estime qu'il s'agit d'un cas flagrant de «criminalisation» d'une personne atteinte du VIH. L'ONUSIDA a d'ailleurs exprimé ses préoccupations face aux poursuites intentées contre les porteurs du VIH, qui ont pour effet de miner les efforts de prévention et de dépistage. La COCQ-SIDA estime que le droit pénal n'est pas une réponse appropriée pour un problème de santé publique. La coalition réclame un moratoire sur des poursuites de ce genre, de même qu'un programme de formation pour les juges et les avocats.

3) PAMELA JEAN GEORGE , aged 28, of the Sakimay First Nation

(Found face down in a ditch West of Regina on the morning of April 18, 1995)

The 28-year-old mother of two was the victim of a tragic and violent homicide. Steven Tyler Kummerfield, 20 years old, and Alexander Dennis Ternowetsky, 19 years old, were charged with first degree murder in her death.

According to Kummerfield's testimony, he and Ternowetsky met in the evening of April 17, 1995 for drinks. They first shared a nearly full 40-ounce bottle of Southern Comfort. After 11 p.m., they picked up a 12-pack of high alcohol beer from a downtown beer outlet.

While Kummerfield testified that their only plan was to drink that evening, they did look for a prostitute. With Ternowetsky in the trunk, Kummerfield picked up Pamela George and drove out on a gravel road to a spot near the airport.

Kummerfield then let Ternowetsky out of the trunk. At this time, Pamela George started to scream and tried to escape. The two men caught her and returned her to the car where, according to Kummerfield, they had oral sex. They then proceeded to beat her.

Dr Modesto Escanlar, who testified for the Crown, described her injuries as being consistent with blows from a blunt object. He stated that the beating gave Pamela George a broken nose, swollen eyes and hand, cuts on her face and lips and numerous bruises that covered her upper body especially her head.

On April 19, 1995, Tyler Stuart, a friend of Kummerfield, asked him what he had done the night before. Stuart says that Kummerfield replied,

"Not much. We drove around, got drunk and killed this chick."

Under cross examination, Stuart qualified the statement by saying,

"I think we killed her."

He also testified that Kummerfield told him they threatened to kill Pamela George if she refused to have sex with them.

Stuart also related a telephone call from Ternowetsky and said his friend told him, "She deserved it. She was an Indian." In a later telephone call, Ternowetsky told him "he was real drunk and couldn't remember a lot of it."

After the testimony of almost 30 witnesses, Mr Justice Ted Malone, of the Court of Queen's Bench told the all-white jury it would be "very dangerous' to convict Kummerfield and Ternowetsky of first degree murder.

He also told them to bear in mind that Pamela "indeed was a prostitute" when considering if she consented to having sex with the accused.

The jury returned a guilty verdict to the lesser charge of manslaughter.

Public reaction to the verdict was swift and widespread. A coalition of Regina-based women's groups filed a formal complaint against Mr. Justice Malone to the Canadian Judicial Council for the inappropriate comments during his charge to the jury. The National Action Committee on the Status of Women said the judge's remarks "dehumanized women and trivialized the murder".

Blaine Favel, Chief of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, called the verdict "one of the most unjust in Saskatchewan judicial history".

In an open viewpoint in the Saskatoon Star Phoenix (February 7, 1997) Chief Favel wrote, "There have been over 20 major justice studies over the past 15 years, including one in Saskatchewan in 1993, which have all come to the same conclusion. First Nations people experience racism and systemic discrimination in the criminal justice system both as accused and victim. In the Pamela George case, we have seen little respect for Aboriginal persons. First Nations will not have respect for the justice system until it is changed."

December 6, 2000

In December 1996, Steven Kummerfield and Alex Ternowetsky were convicted by jury of manslaughter for the murder and sentenced to 6? years each by Justice Ted Malone. Judge Malone instructed the jury to remember that George was "indeed a prostitute," when considering whether she consented to the sexual assault. The issue of consent was important in determining whether the young men should be convicted of manslaughter rather than first-degree murder. Ternowetsky hid in the trunk of the car when they picked Pam George up, so that she wouldn't know that there were two of them. She was beaten so badly that her family couldn't open the casket for her funeral. The manslaughter conviction was appealed by Crown prosecutor Matt Miazga.

Kummerfield was paroled November 10, 2000, after serving just under four years in New Brunswick, because officials feared for his safety in a Saskatchewan prison where there is a large Native population. He is now living in a half-way house in Vancouver

Ternowetsky was granted day parole in August, 2000. He was returned to prison in 2002 for violence against his current girlfriend.

-- adapted from "*Missing Native Women*"
<http://www.missingnativewomen.ca/>

4) What You Need To Know About Prisons

The INCITE! Collective

It is time to question the "get tough on crime" policies advocated by policy makers and elected officials, and popularized by the mainstream media which call for the expansion system and law enforcement apparatus as the solution to the so-called "crime" problem in the U.S.

While the expansion of prisons and law enforcement are supposed to help curb crime, in fact increased incarcerations rates have not historically nor in the present had a significant impact on crime rates. In fact unemployment rates are more closely correlated with crime rates than are rates of incarceration. While legislators claim they are stopping "violent" crime; in fact 89 percent of those in prison are there for non-violent offenses primarily drug offenses. And even the majority of so-called "violent criminals" are not a danger to society. For instance a woman who is married to man who commits a violent offense that she has no knowledge of can be convicted of murder and hence considered a "violent criminal" even though she had committed no violence. Most murderers in fact, could be released from prison without endangering the public safety. Thus despite the hype of the explosion of crime rates, the crime rate has actually remained more-or-less constant over the past 20 years, despite the mass expansion of the prison system.

Prisons are a very costly, oppressive and ultimately ineffective way to deal with problems of crime. It costs more money to send a person to person for a year than to Harvard University for a year.

The ultimate impact of prisons is not to stop crime, but to serve as a weapon of population control against poor communities and communities of color. The US imprisons per capita more people than all the countries in the world - one in every 130 people will serve time in prison in their lifetime.

Communities of color are disproportionately impacted by the prison system. American Indians are the most incarcerated racial/ethnic group per capita. Blacks are 8.5 times more likely and Latinos are 3.9 times more likely to go to prison than are White people. One in three African American men will serve time in prison. Six of every ten juveniles in federal custody are American Indian. Two-thirds of women in prison are women of color.

Prisons serve to disguise the economic hardships of these communities because prisoners are not included in unemployment statistics. They then serve to exacerbate these problems within the same communities. In addition, when prisoners are relocated to prisons outside of their community, they are counted in the populations of the prisons when the state allocates its resources by population. Thus, the imprisonment of mass numbers of people of color leads to the draining of resources from communities of color to the primarily white rural areas where prisons are located.

The 13th Amendment expressly permits the slavery of prisoners. Uncompensated prison labor is a multimillion dollar industry. A large percentage of the goods and services we receive are the result of prison labor. Prison labor then undercuts unionized labor, forcing more people out of jobs and into poverty and thus more vulnerable to committing crimes of poverty. Companies that profit from exploitation of prison labor include: TWA, McDonald's, Compaq, Texas Instruments, Sprint, Microsoft, MCI, Victoria's Secret, IBM, Toys R Us, AT&T, Eddie Bauer, Nordstrom, Honeywell, Lexus, and Revlon.

Public funds are diverted directly from public education and social services to prison construction. Since education is one of the more effective preventatives of future incarceration, essentially some youth are being tracked toward higher education and others are being tracked into prison. In 1992 there were more Black men in prison than in college.

Prisoners become seen as non-persons, deserving of any type of abuse or enslavement. Eighty percent of experimental drugs are tried on prisoners. Women in prison are routinely sexually abused with no recourse for justice. Prisoners lack adequate nutrition, medical care, much less do they receive anything rehabilitative. The denial of media access to prisons ensure that this abuse continues unnoticed by the public.

Three out of four women in prison are mothers who routinely lose custody of their children while in prison. Eighty percent of imprisoned women have children and of those, 70% are single mothers. When men of color are imprisoned they too are prevented from fulfilling familial responsibilities and thus prisons effectively prevent communities of color from raising physically and psychologically healthy children.

Since 1980, the female inmate population has increased by more than 500 percent. Eighty percent of women in prison are there for violent crimes. Prisons also constitute a form of patriarchal social control over women. Women are routinely imprisoned if they fight back against abusive partners; if they are involved with men engaged in criminal behavior even if they are not (and they often get tougher sentences than do their partners); if they are substance abusers while pregnant (while at the same time they are denied services for their addictions), and if they do not fit patriarchally-inscribed roles for women. Forty percent of women in prison for homicide are there because they killed abusive partners, and the majority of juveniles in prison for murder are there because they murdered an abusive parent. Women in prison are punished for behaviors that men are not - such as engaging in "unladylike" behavior. Women who do not fit these patriarchal roles within prison are often subjected to a range of "cures" and are kept in prison longer than men until they are deemed "cured."

The underlying causes of crime are:

1. Increased poverty which forces people into crimes of poverty and substance abuse related crimes coupled with the cutting of funds for public education and social services.
2. Disruption of community stability by a capitalist economy which depends on a mobile work force.
3. Prisons themselves - When individuals violate social norms, prisons take them further away from society, making it even more difficult for them to fit in later after they are released. Prisons provide little job skills, treatment facilities, etc., that address the reasons why individuals became imprisoned in the first place. Once an individual has a prison record, it is much for difficult for her/him to get a job, thus s/he becomes forced to support her/himself through extralegal means.

Clearly, we need to develop alternatives to incarceration that deal with the root causes of crime.

-- From: *INCITE! Women of Colour Against Violence*

<http://www.incite-national.org/involve/orgkit.html>

5) Critical Resistance - Incite Statement Gender Violence and the Prison Industrial Complex

We call social justice movements to develop strategies and analysis that address both state AND interpersonal violence, particularly violence against women. Currently, activists/movements that address state violence (such as anti-prison, anti-police brutality groups) often work in isolation from activists/movements that address domestic and sexual violence. The result is that women of color, who suffer disproportionately from both state and interpersonal violence, have become marginalized within these movements. It is critical that we develop responses to gender violence that do not depend on a sexist, racist, classist, and homophobic criminal justice system. It is also important that we develop strategies that challenge the criminal justice system and that also provide safety for survivors of sexual and domestic violence. To live violence free-lives, we must develop holistic strategies for addressing violence that speak to the intersection of all forms of oppression.

The anti-violence movement has been critically important in breaking the silence around violence against women and providing much-needed services to survivors. However, the mainstream anti-violence movement has increasingly relied on the criminal justice system as the front-line approach toward ending violence against women of color. It is important to assess the impact of this strategy.

- 1) Law enforcement approaches to violence against women MAY deter some acts of violence in the short term. However, as an overall strategy for ending violence, criminalization has not worked. In fact, the overall impact of mandatory arrests laws for domestic violence have led to decreases in the number of battered women who kill their partners in self-defense, but they have not led to a decrease in the number of batterers who kill their partners. Thus, the law protects batterers more than it protects survivors.
- 2) The criminalization approach has also brought many women into conflict with the law, particularly women of color, poor women, lesbians, sex workers, immigrant women, women with disabilities, and other marginalized women. For instance, under mandatory arrest laws, there have been numerous incidents where police officers called to domestic incidents have arrested the woman who is being battered. Many undocumented women have reported cases of sexual and domestic violence, only to find themselves deported. A tough law and order agenda also leads to long punitive sentences for women convicted of killing their batterers. Finally, when public funding is channeled into policing and prisons, budget cuts for social programs, including women's shelters, welfare and public housing are the inevitable side effect. These cutbacks leave women less able to escape violent relationships.
- 3) Prisons don't work. Despite an exponential increase in the number of men in prisons, women are not any safer, and the rates of sexual assault and domestic violence have not decreased. In calling for greater police responses to and harsher sentences for perpetrators of gender violence, the anti-violence movement has fueled the proliferation of prisons

which now lock up more people per capita in the U.S. than any other country. During the past fifteen years, the numbers of women, especially women of color in prison has skyrocketed. Prisons also inflict violence on the growing numbers of women behind bars. Slashing, suicide, the proliferation of HIV, strip searches, medical neglect and rape of prisoners has largely been ignored by anti-violence activists. The criminal justice system, an institution of violence, domination, and control, has increased the level of violence in society.

4) The reliance on state funding to support anti-violence programs has increased the professionalization of the anti-violence movement and alienated it from its community-organizing, social justice roots. Such reliance has isolated the anti-violence movement from other social justice movements that seek to eradicate state violence, such that it acts in conflict rather than in collaboration with these movements.

5) The reliance on the criminal justice system has taken power away from women's ability to organize collectively to stop violence and has invested this power within the state. The result is that women who seek redress in the criminal justice system feel disempowered and alienated. It has also promoted an individualistic approach toward ending violence such that the only way people think they can intervene in stopping violence is to call the police. This reliance has shifted our focus from developing ways communities can collectively respond to violence.

In recent years, the mainstream anti-prison movement has called important attention to the negative impact of criminalization and the build-up of the prison industrial complex. Because activists who seek to reverse the tide of mass incarceration and criminalization of poor communities and communities of color have not always centered gender and sexuality in their analysis or organizing, we have not always responded adequately to the needs of survivors of domestic and sexual violence.

1) Prison and police accountability activists have generally organized around and conceptualized men of color as the primary victims of state violence. Women prisoners and victims of police brutality have been made invisible by a focus on the war on our brothers and sons. It has failed to consider how women are affected as severely by state violence as men. The plight of women who are raped by INS officers or prison guards, for instance, has not received sufficient attention. In addition, women carry the burden of caring for extended family when family and community members are criminalized and warehoused. Several organizations have been established to advocate for women prisoners; however, these groups have been frequently marginalized within the mainstream anti-prison movement.

2) The anti-prison movement has not addressed strategies for addressing the rampant forms of violence women face in their everyday lives, including street harassment, sexual harassment at work, rape, and intimate partner abuse. Until these strategies are developed, many women will feel shortchanged by the movement. In addition, by not seeking alliances with the anti-violence movement, the anti-prison movement has sent the

message that it is possible to liberate communities without seeking the well-being and safety of women.

3) The anti-prison movement has failed to sufficiently organize around the forms of state violence faced by LGBTI communities. LGBTI street youth and trans people in general are particularly vulnerable to police brutality and criminalization. LGBTI prisoners are denied basic human rights such as family visits from same sex partners, and same sex consensual relationships in prison are policed and punished.

4) While prison abolitionists have correctly pointed out that rapists and serial murderers comprise a small number of the prison population, we have not answered the question of how these cases should be addressed. The inability to answer the question is interpreted by many anti-violence activists as a lack of concern for the safety of women

5) The various alternatives to incarceration that have been developed by anti-prison activists have generally failed to provide sufficient mechanism for safety and accountability for survivors of sexual and domestic violence. These alternatives often rely on a romanticized notion of communities, which have yet to demonstrate their commitment and ability to keep women and children safe or seriously address the sexism and homophobia that is deeply embedded within them.

We call on social justice movements concerned with ending violence in all its forms to:

1) Develop community-based responses to violence that do not rely on the criminal justice system AND which have mechanisms that ensure safety and accountability for survivors of sexual and domestic violence. Transformative practices emerging from local communities should be documented and disseminated to promote collective responses to violence..

2) Critically assess the impact of state funding on social justice organizations and develop alternative fundraising strategies to support these organizations. Develop collective fundraising and organizing strategies for anti-prison and anti-violence organizations. Develop strategies and analysis that specifically target state forms of sexual violence.

3) Make connections between interpersonal violence, the violence inflicted by domestic state institutions (such as prisons, detention centers, mental hospitals, and child protective services), and international violence (such as war, military base prostitution, and nuclear testing).

4) Develop an analysis and strategies to end violence that do not isolate individual acts of violence (either committed by the state or individuals) from their larger contexts. These strategies must address how entire communities of all genders are affected in multiple ways by both state violence and interpersonal gender violence. Battered women prisoners represent an intersection of state and interpersonal violence and as such provide and opportunity for both movements to build coalitions and joint struggles.

- 5) Put poor/working class women of color in the center of their analysis, organizing practices, and leadership development. Recognize the role of economic oppression, welfare "reform," and attacks on women workers' rights in increasing women's vulnerability to all forms of violence and locate anti-violence and anti-prison activism alongside efforts to transform the capitalist economic system.
- 6) Center stories of state violence committed against women of color in our organizing efforts.
- 7) Oppose legislative change that promotes prison expansion, criminalization of poor communities and communities of color and thus state violence against women of color, even if these changes also incorporate measure to support victims of interpersonal gender violence.
- 8) Promote holistic political education at the everyday level within our communities, specifically how sexual violence helps reproduce the colonial, racist, capitalist, heterosexist, and patriarchal society we live in as well as how state violence produces interpersonal violence within communities.
- 9) Develop strategies for mobilizing against sexism and homophobia WITHIN our communities in order to keep women safe.
- 10) Challenge men of color and all men in social justice movements to take particular responsibility to address and organize around gender violence in their communities as a primary strategy for addressing violence and colonialism. We challenge men to address how their own histories of victimization have hindered their ability to establish gender justice in their communities.
- 11) Link struggles for personal transformation and healing with struggles for social justice.

We seek to build movements that not only end violence, but that create a society based on radical freedom, mutual accountability, and passionate reciprocity. In this society, safety and security will not be premised on violence or the threat of violence; it will be based on a collective commitment to guaranteeing the survival and care of all peoples.

-- *INCITE! and Critical Resistance*, 2003.

6) Travailleuses du sexe, pénalisation et prison en France

Lara Peyret, Hiver 2005

On peut dire que la situation des travailleuses du sexe en France n'a jamais été synonyme de tranquillité. Ce qu'elles viennent figurer en tant que femmes par leur position transgressive dans l'espace social les a éloignées de leurs droits les plus fondamentaux et n'a jamais cessé de leur attirer les foudres des politiques et des législateurs.

On peut aussi dire aujourd'hui que leur situation s'est considérablement aggravée depuis deux ans. Les arrêtés municipaux pris à l'encontre des travailleuses du sexe dans certaines municipalités, même socialistes, à partir d'août 2002, puis la mise en application de la loi sur la Sécurité intérieure ont déclenché la spirale infernale de la criminalisation de celles qui, considérées jusqu'alors comme des victimes, deviennent en plus des délinquantes.

Le régime français abolitionniste envisageait depuis 1946 les travailleuses du sexe comme de "pauvres femmes prostituées contre leur bon vouloir qu'il faut réinsérer". Aujourd'hui, la prostitution n'est pas interdite par la loi en tant qu'activité privée, néanmoins sa manifestation publique, le racolage actif comme passif, est puni de deux mois d'emprisonnement et de 3.750 Euro (6.053\$) d'amende.

De leur place désignée de victimes incapables d'autodétermination, elles passent à celle, tout aussi inconfortable et stigmatisante, de délinquantes punies par la loi pour faire publiquement ce qu'il est toujours acceptable de faire en aparté. Là où cette situation est d'autant plus remarquable, c'est que la loi ne va pas s'appliquer de la même façon pour toutes... En effet, les travailleuses du sexe migrantes vont être les premières et les plus touchées par cette loi. Il convient de rappeler que dans ses intentions premières, cette loi se devait de mettre en œuvre les conditions nécessaires au "démantèlement de réseaux transnationaux de prostitution", dans le souci de la protection des femmes victimes de trafic. Que nenni!!! On peut déjà dresser le bilan catastrophique de ces deux dernières années durant lesquelles très peu de proxénètes ont été arrêtés et pour cause, la légalisation de la délation n'ayant pas fonctionné comme prévu, vu les risques encourus par les femmes! Par contre, les commissariats de police n'ont pas désemplis.

On compte à ce jour, pour la ville de Lyon, environ 300 gardes à vue de travailleuses du sexe, majoritairement migrantes, depuis la mise en application de la loi, sur la seule agglomération lyonnaise. Une trentaine sont passées en procès. Mais il est important de faire remarquer qu'avant d'être mises en garde à vue, elles sont d'abord rappelées à la loi, intimidées, menacées, harcelées. Si très peu finalement ont écopé de prison ferme, il n'en demeure pas moins que la menace plane lourdement au-dessus des têtes et crée un climat de stress et d'inquiétude permanent sur les trottoirs.

Les conditions de détention lors des gardes à vue méritent elles aussi d'être rendues publiques, car c'est un espace de plus où les droits des personnes sont bafoués. Les

femmes restent parfois plusieurs heures ou jours sans pouvoir manger ou accéder aux toilettes, sans avoir la possibilité de rencontrer un médecin ou de bénéficier de soins ou de traitements dont elles ont besoin. Lorsqu'elles demandent que soit contacté l'avocat qui pourrait suivre leur affaire, dans nombre de cas, celui-ci n'est pas averti.

Les abus de pouvoir des forces de l'ordre à l'égard des travailleuses du sexe sont donc quotidiens depuis la pénalisation. Les travailleuses du sexe sont aujourd'hui encore rarement incarcérées en France pour racolage, mais elles le sont parfois pour proxénétisme ou complicité de proxénétisme. En effet, les lois contre le proxénétisme ou l'aide à la prostitution sont nombreuses et peuvent concerner à peu près toutes les personnes ayant des liens avec les prostituées. Si ces lois étaient peu appliquées [depuis les luttes des prostituées en 1975](#), elles redeviennent le plus sûr moyen d'enfermer les travailleuses du sexe là où la loi sur le racolage n'y parvient pas encore... Par exemple, des femmes travaillant en camionnette ont été inculpées pour avoir prêté leur camionnette à des collègues, ce qui est reconnu par la loi comme du proxénétisme.

Aujourd'hui en France, la politique de tolérance zéro à l'encontre de toutes les personnes considérées comme dangereuses pour l'ordre social et moral est menée ouvertement et avec acharnement. Les prostituées comme bien d'autres sont jugées indésirables et leurs activités perçues comme intolérables. La réponse sociétale actuelle est de les cacher et de les enfermer, que ce soit par le biais des centres de rétention, des expulsions ou des incarcérations. La pression qui pèse sur les travailleuses du sexe est d'ores et déjà considérable, néanmoins nous savons que nous n'en sommes qu'aux prémices des effets des politiques sécuritaires.

Lara Peyret, hiver 2005

-- *Extrait de ConStellation, 2005.*

7) Examples of Grassroots models for fighting gender violence:

* North America:

- New York based Institute on Violence :
 - Focuses on violence experienced by Black Women in central Harlem.
 - In addition to strengthening residents and community organizations to respond to violence against women, this initiative uses the idea of a Community Police Council.

- Asian Women's Shelter in California and Dimmock Community Health center in Boston:
 - Aims at building structures of accountability for batterers.
 - Uses a Community circle model
 - Basic philosophy : Crime is redefined as “harm”, and “harm” is addressed to victim and community.

- Communities Against Rape and Abuse (CARA) in Seattle:
 - Developing interventions that address state violence and interpersonal violence simultaneously.
 - Organizes around the issue of prison abolition from an anti-violence perspective, recognizing the history of survivors of violence.

- Sista II Sista in Brooklyn:
 - Initiative crated in response to the murder of two young women by police in Brooklyn in the summer of 2000.
 - Sisters Liberated Ground Initiative: Community accountability program that organizes young women of colour to monitor violence in the community without relying upon the police.

- Friends Are Reaching Out (FAROut) in Seattle:
 - Works with queer and LGBT communities of colour.
 - Aknowledges the homophobia entrenched in the criminal justice system.

*Global South:

- Masum, Women's Organization in Pune, India
 - Aims at creating accountability strategies without relying on the state.
 - Organizes community members to actively intervene in domestic violence cases through nonviolent, direct action tactics.
 - Masum simultaneously provides necessary community services such as health care, microcredit and education.

- Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra – Movement of Landless People (MST), Brazil
 - Creates structures of accountability to address domestic violence on the reclaimed pieces of land, using mixed-gender “security teams” and community assemblies to discuss domestic violence.

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Gita

Gita was brought to Canada as a domestic worker by persons with diplomatic status in Canada. Due to the sensitive nature of her case, the name of the country from where she was brought has been omitted.

I was born in Sri Lanka, but moved to (country's name omitted) in 1994. I stayed there with my husband for about 7 and a half years. We had a daughter and she was just 9 1/2 months old when I left them. I had been searching for jobs and I met a diplomat who said that they could take me to Canada. They promised me that I would only be gone for three years and that I could have a one month vacation every year to travel back to visit my family. They promised me that I wouldn't have to spend anything... they were diplomatic people. But this was not what happened.

After one month in Canada, my Madam had cut off all of my connections to my husband and my daughter. Anytime that my husband tried to call me, she would say "she's not home." There was one time though, that he phoned early in the morning, 5:00, and my madam's husband answered the phone. He was a good man. I never had a long conversation with him because he was very, very busy, but I could tell by the way he said "good morning" that he was a good person. So that morning my husband asked my Mister, "Where is my wife? It's been a whole month and she didn't call or write letters..." and my Madam's husband didn't understand, he said "we gave her the address and the phone number, I don't know why she didn't call you." But what neither of them knew was that I had been asking his wife "Can I please talk to my family?" and she always refused. But my Mister came to me that day and said..."answer the phone, it's your husband." My husband was very upset. He was nervous and angry because he thought I would forget about him and my daughter, because sometimes women move away from and become Canadians by themselves. But I told him that I wanted to talk to him but my Madam wouldn't let me and I couldn't tell the truth to her husband because he is so close to his wife.

During the four months, the suffering got worse. She never let me go out of the house or talk to anyone on the phone. All I had was my Jesus- and was praying all the time that he would release me from that hell. I started talking to the gardener. One day he told me about a South Asian Woman's Centre and the Claims Office. I knew how to read English well enough to look in the yellow pages. Even after I found the number though, I couldn't call. I was so scared. Everyday when my Madam came home she checked to see if I made or received any phone calls. I could not call from inside the house and I could not go outside to use a pay-phone because all of the doors and windows had alarms. I just kept praying and praying. I wasn't a good Christian but I believed that if I became a born-again Christian Jesus

would save me. I never slept in that house. When I got to my room at 10:30 or 11:00, I'd just lay in bed with my eyes open, and at 5 o'clock in the morning I'd get up and pray until 6:30 when I started my work.

There was one day that my Madam took me to the Mountain to stay with one of her friends for three days. Her friend had three kids and I took care of them for those three days. When we left the woman gave me 60 Canadian dollars! That was the only money that I had. My madam hadn't paid me any salary, and I kept insisting that they pay me so I could send money to my family. One day I cried to the Mister, I said "Please, send my money or open an account!" On Monday, September 2nd, I think... Yes, September 2nd, he opened the account and put in three months salary. I don't know how my husband survived without it. He had lost his job because he had to stay home with our daughter. He called to tell me that he got the money and that he wanted me to come home. But I told him: "I don't have anybody to help me in Montreal, and I don't know the Canadian rules." I tried to watch the news to learn about the situations in Canada but my Madam would always yell at me "Why do you watch the news all the time." I was so scared. After those four months, I asked her to send me back to (countries name omitted). Only then did I realize that it would be impossible for me to return.

She had cancelled all of my papers because she wanted to keep me as a slave with her forever. Even if they were going to move, I would have to move too, and I could never see my family again. She was smart. She knew that I have only my husband and my daughter- no one else, so she was trying to break that connection. One day, the Mister said to my Madam "Take this girl outside, don't keep her in the house all the time." So she took me to the supermarket. I had my \$60.00 with me and when my madam wasn't looking I asked the cashier quietly to give me calling cards, but not to let my madam see that I was buying them. The lady tried, but my Madam saw and made a big fuss in the store. She screamed like hell in front of everybody, and I was crying. I tried to tell her that I just wanted to call my husband. She took me home and after arguing with her husband, who insisted that one card was harmless, she had to let me keep the card... but they didn't know that I bought 2 cards for \$20. After I used up all of the money on the first card, they thought the problem was solved.

One morning... November 22nd or 21st, she went to drive her son to school. She told me that she would be back in 5 minutes... So I waited 5 minutes, then 10 and she still wasn't back, so I called the number for the South Asian Woman's Centre. I was so scared. Hitu answered the phone, and after I told my story, she told me that

I had to leave the house without taking anything (except my clothes) and to take a bus and the metro. "I don't even know where I am living!" I cried to Hitu. I could not take the bus. So, we finally decided that I should take a taxi. I had a taxi phone number hidden on the inside of an envelope in my room. I was smart to write it on the inside because my Madam always came into check my room and looked at my jewelry, and I didn't want her to see the number. So I called the taxi person and they said that they would arrive in 5 minutes, and I said "no, come in 2!" And within 2 minutes I heard a horn beeping outside. I grabbed my clothes, but they were all summer clothes, and I went to the car. On our way we passed by the embassy and I saw my Madam's driver! I put my head down and pretended to tie my shoes. The taxi driver knew that I was upset and asked where I was going, and I told him that I was going on vacation for a month. I didn't want him to be suspicious. When we got to the address that I'd given him... there was Hitu waiting for me. Hitu gave me a winter coat and warm clothes and took me to the Police Station.

At first they said that they couldn't help me because I didn't have any of my papers. But Hitu insisted that I needed their help. I requested that they would get some things from my Madam's house... things like my winter clothes, my passport, my account card, contract paper and work permit. But they could only get my bank card and my passport- and suggested that I try to just forget about the other things. Madam Sadeqa let me stay at her house for three days, until I could go to a Pilipino shelter called PINAY. There they told me that I could stay for 2 or 3 months but no more than that. Soon after, Hitu taught me how to use the Metro. One day I got a call saying I had to go to the police station in Outremont. When I went there, that's the first time I realized that I had been living in Outremont! At the police station, they told me that my Madam and the Mister said that I stole their jewelry from them... I was scared, I never stole. I told them that I was good, that I was guided by God, and if I ever do something bad- I crucify Jesus again- so I don't do anything wrong. I told them why would I steal their jewelry? I have my own. I was wearing my 13 pound wedding necklace, and I told them that it was mine and that even if I did have jewelry, I don't know how to sell it. At that moment, I felt like God was talking through me. Then they believed me- they really believed me. "We even have to love our enemy..." the bible says so, so I never would have taken anything from them. What I wanted more than anything, and I told them this, was to close that horrible chapter of my life and start a fresh life in Canada.

I wanted to cancel my diplomat visa, and Hitu came with me to tell the people at immigration that I am not a diplomat person. On February 17th they cancelled it and told me that I could claim refugee status if I wanted to. On September 6th though,

my case was rejected. Hitu was so helpful, Hitu and Madam Sadeqa- Hitu even helped me to find a legal aid lawyer so that I could appeal the decision. I was happy during this month, I had the strength to work and was able to cancel my welfare. I just kept praying that God would guide me in Canada. Like when Jesus saved me... I was dead in my Madam's house, but I prayed and I was saved. By the end of September, all of my forms went through and I got my work visa.

Since October, I've been working in a factory. I only get paid a little bit but I believe I can manage myself. My church has helped me a lot too. Now, I can say that I'm happy. I can smile. I send money to my husband and my daughter. It is hard for them and he wants me to come home. He has had to be a mother and a father and is also trying to find a job. I want to go back too, I told him- but he would have to sponsor me- and I have so many people helping me here now. They gave me a lot of furniture and a microwave. But my husband says that my daughter started calling everybody "mom"- and I'm not even dead- I'm alive! I wanted to go back to my husband and my daughter. It is so hard. I wake up early and stay until late- I have to pay for my phone and food- it's \$450-500 a month. I never buy clothes- no- I just send the rest of the money to my husband. When I got my first cheque, it was only \$200 because there were many false taxes taken off of it. Hitu helped me. She talked to the lady and told her that I needed the real check and the lady agreed. Hitu has helped me so much. When I first was at the shelter with her, she even kept my whereabouts secret from the police to protect me. If I am so busy and don't call for a few weeks, then Hitu or Madam Sadeqa call to see if I'm okay. I really appreciate them. They made everything free for me. Even when my husband faxed my birth and marriage certificates to the SAWCC, and I called to say that I received them- Hitu let me call for free. I want to see my husband but I don't want to go back to (countries name omitted) and my husband and I both don't want to go back to Sri Lanka. I would like to bring them to Canada. I talked to my pastor and he said that if my story might help someone- then it's worth telling. Now I just have to keep smiling, otherwise it would be very hard.

Gita can no longer enter the country where her husband and daughter are due to the cancellation of her status by her former employers. She is now awaiting a verdict on her refugee claimant status, and a time when she will be able to be reunited with her husband and daughter.

My Two Minutes

Pronounced on November 29th 2007, at the Palais des Congrès de Montréal
Bouchard-Taylor Commission in Montreal

Bonsoir. Sophie Le-Phat Ho. Rive-Sud de Montréal. I'm a graduate student in anthropology (if that makes a difference). I have a few question I'd like to bring up at this Commission...

As the Commission reaches its end, I think it has become evident (even to the Commissioners) that it presents serious problems. As someone who was born and grew up in Quebec, I have been disgusted by the racism and sexism broadcasted on prime time TV the past couple of months, to be then depicted as "malaise" by journalists and analysts. To not be able to call racism by its name demonstrates a huge prevailing problem in our society and reveals the power discrepancy that racialized communities (including racialized women) are forced to deal with on an everyday basis.

While the majority "Québécois de souche" speaks about this "malaise" in terms of a search for their "identity", I would argue that their "malaise" is caused by the fact that they are immigrants themselves trying to construct an identity that is in fact based on colonialism and historical racist policies. I would further argue that this Commission is perfectly inscribed within this colonial dynamic, where under the disguise of "democracy" and "public consultation", racialized communities are yet again put into a position where they have to defend themselves in front of descendants of people who have stolen this land from indigenous peoples.

Given that this Commission is a spectacle of democracy and the idea of "reasonable accommodation", racist by nature, I would like to ask the following question: How would you explain the unprovoked, yet brutal, police attack that happened this past Tuesday right here, at Palais des Congrès? While protesters were *peacefully* leaving the building after an eviction notice was given, and with no camera around, more than 25 policemen started pushing and brutalizing with batons and Taser guns many of the protesters, including women with children and elderly people. If the Commission is said to exist to hear what immigrants have to say, and if the police is supposed to "protect the public", how can you explain that we are still sitting here talking about "reasonable accommodations"? The reality is that you are not able to protect us because this Commission is part of the very machine that maintains racialized communities in a perpetual state of trial. The fact that a diverse group of people denounced this, and then was repressed, is proof that this Commission is profoundly biased and another instrument of distraction from the real issues faced by migrant and racialized communities today. And this is why many of us are part of a generation that denounces this Commission, and will continue our struggle against racism and sexism on an everyday basis.

Whose Reasonable Accommodation ?

Statement by the Immigrant Workers Center of Montreal

November 2007

The debate raised in Quebec on 'reasonable accommodation' is built on a number of false assumptions about the relationship between majority groups ('we') and minorities ('they') and what 'we' believe the correct behaviours of 'they' should be. It is the wrong debate. Reasonable accommodation should begin with the rights of workers.

Accommodating reasonably implies the protection of basic rights, decent wages, rapid recognition of credentials, and terminating 'guest worker' programs that deny rights. We have to remember that historically Canada/Quebec has been created and developed through the colonization of First Peoples on the one hand and the exploitation of migrant labour on the other, in order to build the 'nation'. These processes continue unabated.

The public debate on 'reasonable accommodation' remains how 'they' should modify their customs to accommodate 'us'. It assumes, dangerously, that there are common values, as though such things actually exist. We are writing this because we do not believe in this false consensus, this tendency to homogenize all things except food, custom and costume. 'Cultural accommodation' blinds the public to the realities of migration, and how the middle and owning classes of Quebec society benefit from the exploitation of the 'they'. The connections between immigration and labour are absent from the debate and we believe that it should be at its centre.

Let's briefly review some of the trends in immigration and labour over the past 30 years and ask ourselves is this 'reasonable accommodation'? Most immigrants arriving during this period are from countries in the South (Asia, Africa, Latin America) and therefore they are not white. The economic forces that push them out of their countries are the same ones that shape their conditions here. They are 'the other'. They have arrived with high levels of education and skills. Yet over that time, most have not had their skills and training recognized and therefore, they have been forced to take jobs that many "Canadians/Quebecers" reject. They do the work that remains hidden: the caring for children and the elderly, the services and cleaning that allows the 'we' to function. In these jobs, there is little protection. Minimal labour standards exist on paper, but are not posted in workplaces or in private homes for caregivers and domestic workers. There are few inspectors and where these standards are abused, it is incumbent upon the workers her/himself to challenge her/his boss. They are often isolated and with few other employees. For people who are struggling to raise children and send remittance payments to family members in their countries of origin, this is a great risk. It takes enormous courage to stand up for their labour rights when the chances of their winning anything and keeping their job is remote. You might say that this is a situation of 'reasonably accommodating' the class interests of employers by providing a pool of skilled, cheap labour (trained and educated elsewhere) who are prepared to work in almost any conditions as the price of migration to a better place. In addition, there is little evidence to support the myth that 'things get better for immigrants with time'.

Many Canadians and Quebecers are unaware that we have programs for 'guest workers', who are brought in for limited periods and sent back to their home countries when the work is done. This is the case of agricultural workers. Domestic workers, through the Live-in Caregiver Program, are brought in and if they comply as live-ins can apply as permanent residents. The federal government likes these programs and intends to increase their use because they allow labour to be brought in without any real 'accommodation' as strict rules regulate the conditions of exploitation. Workers in these programs have little recourse to protection from the laws and policies for 'us' and remain the 'they' of the labour market. Even worse off are the many workers without formal status- who remain hidden as cleaners, cooks, dish-washers and domestics, facing arbitrary and well-below the minimum wage and labour standards, not eligible to making any claims but available nonetheless to be exploited.

As the policies of the provincial and federal governments have been to open up markets and reduce 'expensive' state programs, immigrant labour has been one of the ways of filling the gaps left by the inadequacies of neo-liberal policies. We don't need as many decent nursing homes if immigrant women, often trained as nurses, can provide cheap care at sub-standard private ones or in peoples' homes. We don't need as much public childcare if we can import nannies. We do not need to increase wages and improve working conditions if the international labour pool will continue to bring workers here who are pushed into sub-standard jobs. Accommodation implies justice for immigrant workers as a precondition for any other discussion.

The Immigrant Workers Center--

Qui fait des « accommodements raisonnables »?

Déclaration du Centre des Travailleurs et Travailleuses ImmigrantEs

Novembre 2007

Le débat sur les accommodements raisonnables au Québec est construit sur un ensemble de fausses prémisses au sujet de la relation entre la majorité (le « nous ») et les minorités (le « eux ») et ce que « nous » pensons être le comportement correct pour « eux ». Il s'agit du mauvais débat. Les accommodements raisonnables devraient commencer avec les droits en milieu de travail. « Accommoder raisonnablement » signifie la protection des droits fondamentaux, un salaire décent, la reconnaissance rapide des compétences et l'abolition des programmes de « travailleur saisonnier » qui bafouent les droits des travailleurs. Il est nécessaire de se rappeler que le Québec-Canada a été historiquement créé et développé « grâce » à la colonisation des Premières Nations et l'exploitation des travailleurs migrants. Ces procédés se perpétuent impunément.

Le débat public sur les « accommodements raisonnables » continuent à demander comment « ils » devraient modifier leurs coutumes et traditions pour « nous » accommoder. Cette conception assume dangereusement qu'il y a quelque chose comme des valeurs communes. Nous écrivons cette lettre car nous ne croyons pas à ce faux consensus, cette tendance à tout homogénéiser sauf la nourriture, les vêtements et les coutumes. Les « accommodements culturels » aveuglent le public par rapport à la réalité de la migration et à l'avantage que retirent les classes moyenne et dirigeante du Québec de l'exploitation des travailleurs immigrants. La connection évidente entre l'immigration et le marché du travail est totalement absente du débat et nous croyons qu'elle devrait être au coeur de celui-ci.

Revoyons ensemble certaines tendances de l'immigration et du travail au Québec au cours des trente dernières années et demandons nous si cela constitue des « accommodements raisonnables ». La plupart des nouveaux arrivants sont issus des pays du Sud (Asie, Afrique, Amérique du Sud) et ne sont pas « blancs ». Ils sont le « eux », l'« autre ». Ils sont souvent très qualifiés et très éduqués. Cependant, les compétences de la grande majorité d'entre eux ne sont pas reconnues et incidemment ils doivent accepter des emplois que « nous » rejetons. Ils font le travail que personne ne veut faire et restent cachés : ils s'occupent des enfants, des aînés et du ménage ce qui « nous » permet de fonctionner. Dans ces emplois, il n'y a pas de sécurité. Les normes minimales du travail existent en principe mais dans les faits, elles ne sont pas respectées. Il y a très peu d'inspecteurs et dans les cas où il y a abus ou violation de ces normes, il incombe au travailleur lui-même de contester son traitement et son patron. Pour des immigrants qui doivent supporter leur famille et souvent envoyer de l'argent à l'étranger, s'en prendre à un patron peu scrupuleux est un très grand risque. S'attaquer à un patron demande énormément de courage et les réparations sont souvent insuffisantes en regard des dangers. Vous pourriez dire que le fait d'accepter au Québec-Canada un bassin d'employés qualifiés prêts à travailler dans n'importe quelle condition et à n'importe quel

prix constitue un exemple d' « accommodements raisonnables » de « nous » envers « eux ». Malheureusement, il y a peu d'information qui nous porte à croire que « leur » niveau de vie est beaucoup meilleur ici.

Plusieurs Québécois et Canadiens ne savent pas que nous avons des programmes spéciaux d'accueil de travailleurs « temporaires » ou « saisonniers ». Dans le cadre de ces programmes, un nombre important d'immigrants viennent travailler au Canada et sont renvoyés dans leur pays quand leur travail est terminé. Le secteur de l'agriculture est particulièrement concerné. Des travailleurs domestiques arrivent également au Canada et doivent travailler dans des maisons pendant 24 mois sur 3 ans avant d'avoir le droit de faire une demande de résidentes. Le gouvernement fédéral a à coeur ce type de programme et entend les utiliser de plus en plus car cela permet de faire entrer beaucoup de travailleurs sans avoir à les accommoder tout en définissant clairement les conditions de leur exploitation. Ces travailleurs ne bénéficient d'aucune protection et restent le « eux » du marché du travail. La condition des sans-papiers est encore pire! Ils travaillent au noir à nettoyer la vaisselle et à faire le ménage et font face à des conditions de travail arbitraires et de beaucoup inférieures aux normes du travail. Ils ne sont évidemment pas éligibles à aucune requête légale mais ils sont tout à fait éligibles à l'exploitation....

Comme les politiques récentes des gouvernements vont dans le sens d'un désengagement de l'État et d'une baisse concordante des services sociaux, les travailleurs immigrants sont une excellente façon de combler les trous ouverts par les politiques néo-libérales. Nous n'avons pas besoin d'autant d'infirmières si des travailleuses immigrantes (souvent entraînées comme infirmières dans leur pays) peuvent fournir des soins directement sur place à des prix ridicules-« cheap labour ». Nous n'avons pas besoin de monter les salaires si des immigrants viennent chaque année combler les trous dans le marché du travail. Les accommodements raisonnables impliquent la justice pour les travailleurs immigrants comme « précondition » à tout autre débat.

Le Centre des Travailleurs Immigrants

