

In Tiohtià:ke (Montreal) on unceded Kanien'kehá:ka [Mohawk] territory



Le Centre communautaire des femmes sud-asiatiques

SAWCC statement on the mass shootings in Quebec mosque on Sunday 28th January 2017

The South Asian Women's Community Centre is shocked and stunned by the mass shooting resulting in deaths and serious injuries at a Quebec mosque on Sunday 28th January 2017. We offer our deepest condolences to the families of the victims and to the members of the Islamic Community Centre in Ste-Foy, Quebec. And we stand in solidarity with Muslim-identified Quebecers at this time. But we are not surprised by the carnage. Even as we stand in solidarity with Quebecers, especially Muslim-identified Quebecers at this time, we call our governments, politicians and media to account for fanning the flames of xenophobia and Islamophobia to score cheap political points. For the past 36 years we have been working among South Asian women and their families. And in more recent times we have been tirelessly warning about the dangerous game that is being played, especially on the bodies of minority women, and in particular Muslim women. The proposed so-called Charter of Values of the erstwhile PQ government, the current Quebec Liberal government's Charter 'light' — Bill-62, as well as at the provincial and federal level prospective leadership contenders' spurious harping on so-called

'Quebec' and 'Canadian' values and the continued focus on so-called 'honour' crimes, forced marriage and radicalisation are unsurprisingly bearing the fruit of fear and hatred. It must stop now!

Déclaration de la SAWCC sur la fusillade dans la mosquée de Québec le dimanche 28 janvier 2017

Le Centre communautaire des femmes sud-asiatiques est choqué et stupéfait par la fusillade à Québec qui a fait des morts et des blessés graves dans une mosquée, le Centre culturel islamique de Québec, le dimanche

29 janvier 2017. Nos pensées les plus sincères et nos condoléances aux familles des victimes et aux membres du Centre communautaire islamique à Ste-Foy, Québec. Nous sommes solidaires avec les Québécois-musulmans en cette période difficile. Mais nous ne sommes pas surpris par le carnage. Même en solidarité avec les Québécois, particulièrement les Québécois et les Québécoises musulmans, nous appelons nos gouvernements, politiciens et médias à tenir compte de leurs actions en propageant la xénophobie et de l'islamophobie pour obtenir des gains politiques. Depuis 36 ans, nous travaillons parmi les femmes sud-asiatiques et leurs familles. Récemment, nous dénonçons inlassablement le jeu dangereux qui est joué, en particulier sur les corps des femmes des minorités, et en particulier les femmes musulmanes. La Charte des valeurs de l'ancien gouvernement du Québec, la charte actuelle du gouvernement libéral du Québec «légère» – le projet de loi 62, ainsi que les prétendues au niveau provincial et fédéral des valeurs «québécoises» et «canadiennes», l'accent continu sur les crimes dits «d'honneur», le mariage forcé et la radicalisation, contribuent créer une atmosphère de peur et de haine. Il faut l'arrêter maintenant!



Kathe Kollwitz, "Mothers and War" (woodcut, 1922)

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Qu'en pensez-vous? What do you think?

- Let us know your thoughts about the bulletin.
- Que pensez-vous de notre journal?
- We encourage you to send in your stories and articles for upcoming newsletters in any language by the 25th of every month to:
- sawccbulletin@gmail.com
- Écrivez -nous à sawccbulletin@gmail.com

CENTRE UPDATE



Centre Hours/heure d'ouverture

Monday & Thursday/lundi & jeudi 9am—9pm

Tuesday, Wednesday & Friday/mardi, mercredi & vendredi— 9am-5pm

The Centre is wheelchair accessible

Le centre est accessible aux fauteuils roulants.

Volunteers — If you are interested in helping out at the Centre, please contact Juvaria (Ext. 104 or juvaria@bellnet.ca) to coordinate a meeting!

Next Executive Council Meeting: Monday, February 20th, 2017 at 6pm. All are welcome.

Executive Council Meeting Highlights Meeting of January 30th, 2017

- ♦ We shared our thoughts and feelings about the mass killing in the Quebec mosque the day before and noted the need for much more that must be done to stop the hatred and Islamophobia
- ♦ Noted the arrival the next day of the intern from India
- ♦ International Women's Day – mark calendars for Sunday 5th and Wednesday 8th (see details further in the *Bulletin*)
- ♦ Work at the centre is going well.
- ♦ Language classes have good attendance

SAWCC Bulletin -- submission guidelines:

SAWCC members are encouraged to send submissions to the Bulletin, to share items of interest with other members. Send submissions to: sawccbulletin@gmail.com

If using the post send to: SAWCC Bulletin, 1035 Rachel est, Montreal, Quebec, H2J 2J3

Submissions should reach by the 25th of the month.

Submissions may be original work or reprints (with permission) and can include --

art, reports, photos, information, opinion pieces, short fiction, poetry, announcements, recipes, etc.

Publication criteria are guided by SAWCC's commitment to not negatively discriminate on the basis of physical and mental ability, religion, colour, nationality, age, sexual orientation and identity, caste, and class. Publication is further guided by the feminist ethos of sisterhood, and principles of intersectionality*, equality, equity, and transparency. As well, material that may compromise confidentiality of individuals without their consent will not be published.

SAWCC reserves the right to select, reject or edit submissions. When authorship identified, items reflect the views of the authors.

Before you begin celebrating Canada's 150th birthday...

By Hussan, S.K.

<https://medium.com/@hussansk/before-you-begin-celebrating-canadas-150th-birthday-e4f32f654bc1#.bbp0e0xjl>

It's begun. Canada's 150th birthday celebrations. Cities are decked. Facebook has updated us all. At a cost of \$500 million, events will be staged across the country to mark this momentous occasion. But what is it that is being celebrated?

What is Canada?

Is Canada the magnificence of the Prairies, the sparkling of the Pacific and the Atlantic? Is it the spread of beautiful trees, water and rock? Is it the Salmon or the Loon that are within the borders of the place that is Canada? No it isn't. Those have existed for millennia before Canada came to be, and largely were in better shape till Canada came along.

Is it the people you love? Your friends that you have grown up with? The laughter and joy that is family?

No it isn't. That is your community—and your community does not include everyone that lives here. For there are many inside this place called Canada who you do not love, and many that don't love you.

Canada is a set of laws and policies that govern institutions (schools, prisons, hospitals, border authorities, police, state funded media, etc). It is a system of government where a few individuals develop these laws and policies, never checking back on them with any of us. And this Canada has a terrible history and present of exclusion and oppression. This Canada came to be through the mass murder of Indigenous peoples, a cross country collaborative attempt to destroy Indigenous culture and way of life. A project referred to as Colonialism. And building on this foundational injustice, this Canada has been on a war path against women, migrants, queer and trans people, the sick, wildlife and the land and air itself ever since. This Canada exists to define who is Canadian, and therefore define who is not Canadian. This exclusion happens at a number of levels—first so many millions are denied the ability to live here or live here permanently. Those that do get permission to live here (citizenship) still face systemic barriers. This Canada has a chequered history of increasing war and supporting underdevelopment around the world.



But I'm proud of Canada for women's rights/LGBTQ rights/charter of rights...

When women (British national, largely white women) asked to be considered as persons, Canadian government lawyers fought against them in Supreme Court and they were defeated. They were forced to go to the United Kingdom to have this ruling overturned. When Dr. Henry Morgentaler provided abortion services, his clinic was raided; he was arrested, taken to court, and sentenced to 18 months in prison.

Women's rights is just one example, every instance of expansion of rights in Canada is a result of communities of people organizing, and Canada, that is the laws, policies and institutions, opposing those changes. Take LGBTQ rights for example, laws for decriminalization were hard fought for and even after they were passed were not upheld. It took riots and protests following Toronto Police raids of bathhouses in February 1981 for significant change in policies. Yet despite it, as recently as November 2016, Toronto Police have been raiding public parks to target largely racialized gay men.

One of the most fundamental symbols of 'Canada' is the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This too was not granted by Canada. Modelled after the UN Declaration of Human Rights—which was created, in part, to limit the power of anti-colonial struggles against European and American powers—the Charter of Rights and Freedom was gravely resisted by most of Canada's provinces and was only passed once it included a clause allowing governments to opt out. Once passed, it has had to be repeatedly tested in the courts. In every one of those instances, Canada has been on the side of restricting rights, its lawyers in court fighting against people who are trying to assert and use the Charter for greater good. Even when courts have supported the Charter, Canada has failed to uphold its end of the bargain. In 2013, for example, the Supreme Court insisted that Canada's sex work laws were unconstitutional. The government was given one year to bring forth better laws, but instead it created worse laws.

The rights and protections that we value in our society, be it the Charter or labour rights, or free speech, or any others, each of these were not granted by Canada but rather were fought against by Canada. To fold those histories of resistance in to these 150th year celebrations is to erase the history of the many people who struggled against Canadian laws, policies, police, and were imprisoned and brutalized for it. These rights and protections must be celebrated not as Canada, but as victories against Canada.

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Celebrate or reflect?

Anniversaries are when we mark one turn around the sun. And anniversaries are not always good. Sometimes we mark the day we lost someone, or a tragedy that we hope to avoid in the future.

Canada—that is the institutions that make up Canada—has come to be through colonialism, and has existed to suppress rights of living beings and the natural world alike. These are not attributes to celebrate. Rather, it is time to seriously consider the multigenerational and ongoing trauma that is Canada and gather together to determine ways in which we can finally move beyond this Canada to communities of justice, dignity, and respect for all living and non living beings.

International Women's day 2017

International Women's Day 2017 CELEBRATE WOMEN'S RESISTANCE for PEACE with JUSTICE & EQUALITY 2 EVENTS

CONFERENCE & CULTURAL PRESENTATIONS

Sunday 5th March at 2pm
Location: to be announced



All welcome!

DEMONSTRATION
Wednesday 8th March
Assemble 5pm
at **Place 6th December**
(corner Queen Mary &
Côte-des-Neiges)
Côte-des-Neiges ☺

info: wdofdo@gmail.com

Organized by **8th March Committee of Women of Diverse Origins**
an alliance of grassroots women's organizations representing the diversity of cultural communities in Montreal. Since 2002, we have organized an International Women's Day march and event that reflects our militant stand and our awareness about the world context and the role of our own struggles and actions for women's rights as human rights, for social justice and the liberation of all peoples, and women, rooted in daily struggles against war, violence, and conflict. We seek to broaden women's solidarity both locally and globally. More at: wdofdo.wordpress.com

On unceded Kanien'kehá ka (Mohawk) territory.

Dementia is a Feminist Issue

June Andrews

19 November, 2015

<http://juneandrews.net/blog/post.php?s=2015-11-19-dementia-is-a-feminist-issue>

Over 60% of people with dementia are female. Partly this is because women live longer and dementia is related to age. But that is not all.

Dementia is not a disease, but the symptom of a range of diseases the commonest of which is Alzheimer's. Unlike other diseases, the severity of the symptoms is not always directly related to the severity of the underlying disease. Symptoms are made worse by struggling with depression, loneliness, poor diet, and lack of exercise – problems that are worse for people who have fewer resources. The current generation of older women, particularly if they were married, often depended on a man's occupational pension after 65 because they mainly worked at home.

Until relatively recent times it was possible for the husband to divorce his wife without reference to her unwaged contribution to the family resources, leaving her in poverty in old age even if he was still alive.

Research shows stress in midlife is

related to women's dementia in later life, and women's lives in the last century were more stressful in many cases than men's.

But research shows other ways in which women currently would be disproportionately affected

- Care workers in dementia care are low waged and often not held in high esteem, which is reflected in their working conditions, and they are mainly women
- When an older woman has a husband with dementia she often has the life skills to care for him, so he is more likely to end his days in reasonable comfort at home, especially as she is probably a little bit younger than him
- When an older woman has dementia, the reverse is sometimes true, which is another reason why a disproportionate number of residents in care homes are women
- Men are carers for their elderly parents of course, but the majority of this work falls on female descendants, daughters, granddaughters and nieces
- Midlife stress raises the likelihood of dementia in women, and older women have often experienced stresses that we will never know...how recently did unmarried women have their children ripped away from them in an

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atmosphere of violence and disgrace? What other secrets do they carry about miscarriages that could not be discussed, or abortions?

It is really important that what is said here is not misrepresented as an angry feminist diatribe from someone who hates men and refuses to recognise their contribution

It is really important that what is said here is not misrepresented as an angry feminist diatribe from someone who hates men and refuses to recognise their contribution, which is often as heroic as women's.

However, the older ladies we care for now, in their eighties and nineties were the pioneers who did without a lot of the benefits that they subsequently won for us; maternity leave and allowances, equal rights at work, laws that worked against violence and rape, recognition of the need for education, decent sanitary products, washing machines and disposable nappies.

God bless these women and let us keep them safe from harm. And allow me to say that for the next thirty years at least...dementia is a feminist issue.

15 YEARS AFTER THE GUJARAT GENOCIDE – the struggle for justice continues

The genocide occurred in Gujarat, India, from the end of February 2002 and continued for two weeks. At least 2000 people were killed and many went missing. Many of those displaced during the violence have been unable to return to their former homes. While trials of the accused have gone ahead and sentences have been handed down the key individuals who orchestrated the genocide are still free. But the struggle for justice continues, with women at the forefront



In June 2016, a verdict was handed down in the Gulberg Society case. A special SIT [Special Investigation Team] court in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, convicted 24 individuals, including a Vishwa Hindu Parishad [World Hindu Organization; one of a family of organizations committed to making India Hindu-tva, a Hindu nation] leader, in the 2002 post-Godhra Gulberg society massacre, which left 69 people including a well-respected former Member of Parliament for India, Ehsan Jafri dead. Thirty six other accuseds were acquitted. **ZAKIA JAFRI**, the widow of Ehsan Jafri dismissed the verdict. "This verdict is half justice to me." She said that she will appeal in higher courts.

In May 2016 **RANA AYYUB**, independent Indian writer and journalist released her book, **Gujarat Files: anatomy of a cover up**. The content was so explosive that no publisher would touch it, and Ayyub had to publish it herself. Ayyub had gone undercover, posing as a young Indo-American film student, with ideological leanings towards Hindutva. She took many personal risks to carry out her investigations. The book involves individuals associated with the Gujarat genocide and its aftermath in which Muslims were killed in ordered hits and so-called encounter killings -- of Sohrabuddin, Kauser-bi, Tulsiram Prajapati and Ishrat Jahan. The book makes for chilling reading and Ayyub has been lauded for her bravery in bringing what she uncovered to light. The reader learns from the individuals concerned (e.g. senior law and order officials) that though they are bound by the constitution to serve the public, they are completely under the control of the government in power. And the fingers point right to the top. The great contribution of Ayyub's is that she got on tape what many had suspected. And she published it. In current political climate publishing this book takes immense courage.



TEESTA SETALVAD is a human rights activist who has been tirelessly working since 2002 for justice for the victims of the genocide. And for this she has been continuously harassed – charged with embezzling funds raised for the human rights work, most recently on 31 December 2016. Teesta and her husband, Javed Anand, jointly run the Citizens for Justice and Peace (CJP), a non-governmental organisation working for communal harmony. The couple has been accused of a range of offences by the Gujarat Police and the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). They have been accused of, among other things, tutoring riot witnesses, siphoning off funds meant for the Gulberg Society victims, and violating the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act. Setalvad says Modi as the Prime Minister is able to use Central agencies to persecute her. In the years since the genocide, Setalvad and Anand have fought at least 68 cases, resulting in at least 120 convictions. There has been a surge in support for her following the heat she is facing. Citizens' groups, activists, politicians and former bureaucrats are speaking out as it becomes obvious that any voice of dissent or cry for justice is treated as anti-national.



The replacement of the electoral system reform — a primer

Written for SAWCC by **Mercédeez Roberge***
[Translated from a French original by SAWCC.]

In the early 2000s, in Quebec, the reform of the voting system was mostly centered on the National Assembly, but since the federal election in 2015, has now become Canada wide. Since it is the same electoral system (the first-past-the-post system), it creates the same problems in Ottawa as in Quebec City, and in all provincial and even municipal assemblies. The figures are different, but it is problematic everywhere, and for the same reasons. By its very nature it is incapable of reflecting the diversity of political opinions and incapable of decently combining the fundamental components of a society. The systemic distortions and under-representations of women and racialized people are not just numbers; it affects the decisions.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau promised that there would be reform by the next election. Between June and December 2016, the Ad Hoc Committee on Electoral Reform, made up of 12 parliamentarians from five parties, has taken a major leap forward. Despite a late start, an unfavorable timeline and little attention to feminist issues and diversity there was a breakthrough. The committee broke records, receiving 574 briefs and 1000 letters, visiting almost 20 cities, to hear 763 people and groups (196 as expert witnesses and 567 in "micro-open" sessions). It is all the more impressive that the message was strong: in 88% of the presentations, a proportional electoral system was requested, which was reaffirmed by a survey of 22,500 responses (only 20.7% support the status quo). And this is reflected in the report tabled by the Committee on 1 December 2016 "Strengthening Canadian Democracy: principles, processes and citizen mobilization for electoral reform".

Some elements of the report

The Committee recommends that a new electoral system be developed on the basis of certain characteristics, which are designed to ensure high proportionality and to preserve electoral districts. The compensatory mixed proportional voting system, highly studied in Quebec, and the single transferable vote, popular in several provinces, meet these criteria.

This way of guiding the choice is very interesting, but what is even more important is that the reform should "strengthen the ability to elect members of historically disadvantaged and under-represented groups". This means ensuring that the choice will increase the election of women, racialized persons and Aboriginal people; the Committee added the representation of young people, poor or disabled. Combined with the recommendation to financially encourage political parties to present more candidates, this is a major gain.

The Committee also proposes to accompany the reform with explanations on the various spin-offs, for example on the functioning of political parties and a coalition government. This will calm many fears, for it is certain that a new electoral system will change the way we do and see politics.

As for the implementation of the reform, the Committee proposes that a referendum be held to choose between the status quo and a model designed according to the above. Achieving this proposal would mean exceeding the maturity of the upcoming elections. It would also require that the movements involved in electoral reform, for and against, have the same means of informing the entire population. This proposal is not supported by the same consensus, but for the moment it does not block the discussion; the Elections Act will change as any other law.

As for the other three subjects to be studied, namely, mandatory voting, online voting and the right to vote at 16, the Committee recommends not to proceed, but asks Elections Canada to explore technological tools to improve the accessibility of voting and do more to encourage voter participation, particularly among young people. The Committee also recommends making voting more accessible to people with disabilities.

What will be the consequences of the report?

While the Committee's work seemed to be carried out with respect, the tabling of the report took a very partisan turn. Minister (of Democratic Institutions) Monsef finally apologized, but she denigrated the work of the Committee and she reiterated that she did not hear a "Large Support". Rather than reviewing the report, she launched an Internet questionnaire that only compares responses (www.Mymdemocracy.ca). Its conclusions will be as biased as the questions; It will claim that the population is not interested, based on the low response rate (done during the holiday period, without proper study). [Since this was written, the Minister of Democratic Institutions in Katrina Gould.]

Francis Scarpaleggia, a Liberal member of parliament and chairman of the Committee, described the objective of proportionality as "radical", suggesting even the preferential ballot as a simple solution to implement. But what he did not say is that it does not change the voting method. With such a ballot, elected people would get stronger majorities, but the results would not be proportional and there would be no more elected women and racialized people.

Reform must take place, but it must be of quality

The government undertook to introduce legislation this spring, and that is what we need to do now. We must not only ensure

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that it is fulfilling its promise, but we must ensure that the choice is made on the basis of democratic principles (all votes count), but also applying gender-based analysis and anti-racist analysis. Doing the work in half measures would be a serious missed opportunity, which the Committee understood very well, since this would be tantamount to deliberately maintaining the inequalities that are known. The feminist movement must continue to be the watchdog of this vision.

The advances of recent years have resulted from the combined efforts of political parties and non-partisan movements. In this regard, we need to recognize the work of groups such as Fair Vote Canada, Every Vote Counts Alliance, as well as the work of two political parties that stand out for their persistence, the New Democratic Party and the Green Party of Canada.

These organizations will continue to press the government to respect its commitment. They will have to respond to their calls to ensure the government does not back down and deny the strong consensus that has just been expressed.

** **Mercédeze Roberge** is an activist for the reform of the voting system and for the diversification of the political class. She is a member of the board of directors of the Fédération des femmes du Québec and former president (2003-2010) of the Movement for a New Democracy (2003 to 2010).*

Additional information (in French) is in a file accessible on bit.ly/SpecialCommittee2016. You will find:

- Data, tables and graphs on voting methods, the Gallagher index, the election of women around the world, etc.
- The report of the Committee tabled on 01-12-2016
- Links to documents produced by Fair Vote Canada and the Committee, as well as to written submissions, transcripts of hearings, etc.

[Since this piece was written the government of Prime Minister Trudeau has just announced that there will be no reform. They have reneged on their 2015 campaign promise; proportional representation instead of the current first-past the post system. The government claims there was no consensus, but the facts paint a different picture:

- *Two-thirds of Canadians voted for parties promising electoral reform in the last election.*
- *Almost 90% of experts and 88% of public testimony at committee hearings called for the government to adopt a proportional voting system.*
- *When the Liberals launched their own online survey in early December 2016 they never even asked Canadians what system they wanted. And the timing was terrible -- a time when many people were busy with the holidays.]*

Le remplacement du système électoral : une réforme à portée de vue, à rendre à portée de main

Au début des années 2000, au Québec, la réforme du mode de scrutin était surtout centrée sur l'Assemblée nationale, mais depuis l'élection fédérale de 2015 c'est plutôt ce niveau qui est à l'avant-scène. Comme il s'agit du même système électoral (le mode de scrutin majoritaire uninominal à un tour : souvent raccourci par « mode majoritaire » ou « SMU »), il engendre les mêmes problèmes à Ottawa qu'à Québec, ainsi que dans toutes les assemblées provinciales et même municipales. Les chiffres sont différents, mais il est décrié partout, et pour les mêmes raisons. Par nature il est incapable de refléter la diversité des opinions politiques et incapable de décemment réunir les composantes fondamentales d'une société. Les distorsions et sous-représentations systémiques, des femmes et des personnes racisées, ne sont pas que des chiffres; cela affecte les décisions prises.

Le premier ministre Justin Trudeau a promis que les prochaines élections ne seraient pas sous le mode majoritaire. Cependant, depuis octobre, lui et la ministre des Institutions démocratiques, Maryam Monsef, alternent entre évoquer une réforme mineure et répéter la promesse. Pas facile de s'y retrouver.

Mais il demeure qu'entre juin et décembre 2016, le Comité spécial sur la réforme électorale, formé de 12 parlementaires, issus de 5 partis, a fait progresser le dossier d'un bond de géant. Malgré un départ tardif, un calendrier défavorable, les enjeux féministes et de la diversité peu pris en compte, il s'agissait enfin d'une avancée. Le comité a battu des records, recevant 574 mémoires et 1000 lettres, visitant presque 20 villes, pour entendre 763 personnes et groupes (196 comme témoins experts et 567 en sessions à « micro-ouvert »). C'est d'autant plus impressionnant que le message était fort : dans 88% des présentations, un système électoral de la famille proportionnelle a été demandé, ce qui a été réaffirmé par un sondage de 22,500 réponses (seulement 20,7% d'appui au statu quo). Et cela transparaît dans le rapport déposé par le Comité le 1^{er} décembre 2016 « Renforcer la démocratie au Canada : principes, processus et mobilisation citoyenne en vue d'une réforme électorale ».

Quelques éléments du rapport

Le Comité recommande d'élaborer un nouveau système électoral en fonction de certaines caractéristiques, lesquelles visent à assurer une grande proportionnalité et à conserver des circonscriptions. Le mode de scrutin proportionnel mixte compensatoire, très étudié au Québec, et le vote unique transférable, populaire dans plusieurs provinces, répondent notamment à ces critères.

Cette façon de guider le choix est très intéressante, mais ce qui l'est encore plus c'est d'avoir précisé que la réforme devait « renforcer la capacité de se faire élire de membres de groupes historiquement défavorisés et sous-représentés ».

[Recommandation 7.] Cela veut dire s'assurer que le choix permettra d'augmenter l'élection de femmes, de personnes racisées et d'autochtones; le Comité y ajoute la représentation des jeunes, des personnes démunies ou en situation de handicap. Combiné à la recommandation d'encourager financièrement les partis politiques à présenter plus de candidates, on parle alors d'un gain majeur.

Le Comité propose aussi d'accompagner la réforme d'explications sur les différentes retombées, par exemple sur le fonctionnement des partis politiques et d'un gouvernement de coalition. Cette pédagogie calmera bien des craintes, car c'est certain qu'un nouveau système électoral changera la manière de faire et de voir la politique.

Quant à la mise en place de la réforme, le Comité propose qu'un référendum se tienne pour choisir entre le statu quo et un modèle conçu selon ce qui précède. Réaliser cette proposition signifierait dépasser l'échéance des prochaines élections. Cela nécessiterait aussi que les mouvements impliqués dans la réforme électorale, pour et contre, disposent des mêmes moyens pour informer toute la population. Cette proposition n'est pas appuyée du même consensus, mais pour l'instant elle ne bloque pas la discussion; rappelons que la Loi électorale se modifie comme toute autre loi.

Quant aux trois autres sujets qu'il était chargé d'étudier, soit le vote obligatoire, le vote en ligne et le droit de vote à 16 ans, le Comité recommande de ne pas procéder. Il demande cependant à Élections Canada d'explorer des outils technologiques pour améliorer l'accessibilité du vote et de faire plus pour encourager la participation électorale, notamment des jeunes. Le Comité recommande aussi de rendre le vote plus accessible aux personnes en situation de handicap.

Quelles seront les suites du rapport?

Alors que les travaux du Comité semblaient s'être déroulés dans le respect, le dépôt du rapport a pris une tournure très partisane.

La ministre Monsef [maintenant, le ministre est Katrina Gould] a fini par s'excuser, mais elle a dénigré le travail du Comité et elle répète toujours qu'elle n'a pas entendu un « large soutien ». Plutôt que d'examiner le rapport, elle a lancé un questionnaire internet qui ne permet que de se comparer aux réponses des autres (www.mademocratie.ca). Les conclusions qu'elle en tirera seront autant biaisées que l'étaient les questions; elle prétendra que la population n'est pas intéressée, en se basant sur le faible taux de réponse (fait sans pédagogie et en plein temps des Fêtes!)

Francis Scarpaleggia, député libéral et président du Comité, a qualifié de « radical » l'objectif de proportionnalité proposé, suggérant même le bulletin préférentiel comme une solution simple à implanter. Mais ce qu'il n'a pas dit, c'est que cela ne change pas le mode de scrutin. Avec un tel bulletin, les personnes élues obtiendraient des majorités plus fortes, mais les résultats ne seraient pas proportionnels et il n'y aurait pas plus de femmes et de personnes racisées élues.

La réforme doit avoir lieu, mais elle doit être de qualité

Le gouvernement s'était engagé à déposer un projet de loi ce printemps, et c'est à cela que nous devons maintenant travailler. Nous devons non seulement nous assurer qu'il respecte sa promesse, mais nous devons nous assurer que le choix se fasse en fonction de principes démocratiques (que tous les votes comptent), mais aussi en appliquant une analyse différenciée selon les sexes et une analyse anti-raciste (que toutes les personnes comptent). Faire le travail à moitié constituerait un grave rendez-vous manqué, ce qu'a très bien compris le Comité, puisque cela équivaldrait à maintenir délibérément les inégalités que l'on connaît. Le mouvement féministe doit continuer d'être le chien de garde de cette vision.

Les avancées des dernières années résultent d'efforts combinés de partis politiques et de mouvements non-partisans. À cet égard, il faut souligner le travail de groupes comme Représentation Équitable au Canada (Fair Vote Canada), celui des membres de l'Alliance pour que chaque électeur et électrice compte, ainsi que le travail de deux partis politiques qui se démarquent par leur constance, soit le Nouveau parti démocratique et le Parti vert du Canada.

Ces organisations vont continuer de talonner le gouvernement pour qu'il respecte son engagement. Il faudra répondre à leurs appels pour empêcher le gouvernement de reculer et de nier le fort consensus qui vient de s'exprimer.

Mercédeze Roberge

Militante pour la réforme du mode de scrutin et pour la diversification de la classe politique. Membre du conseil d'administration de la Fédération des femmes du Québec et ex-présidente du Mouvement pour une démocratie nouvelle (de 2003 à 2010).

Des compléments d'information sont réunis dans un dossier accessible sur bit.ly/ComitéSpécial2016 . Vous y trouverez

- Des données, tableaux et graphiques sur les modes de scrutin, l'indice de Gallagher, l'élection des femmes à travers le monde, etc.
- Le rapport du Comité déposé le 01-12-2016
- Des liens vers les documents produits par Fair Vote Canada et par le Comité, de même que vers les mémoires déposés, les transcriptions des auditions, etc.

[Depuis que ce document a été écrit, le gouvernement du premier ministre Trudeau vient d'annoncer qu'il n'y aura pas de réforme. Ils ont renié leur promesse de campagne de 2015; Représentation proportionnelle au lieu du système électoral majoritaire. Le gouvernement prétend qu'il n'y avait pas de consensus, mais les faits donnent une image différente:

- Deux tiers des Canadiens ont voté pour des partis prometteurs de la réforme électorale lors des dernières élections.
- Près de 90% des experts et 88% des témoignages publics lors des audiences du comité ont demandé au gouvernement d'adopter un système de vote proportionnel.
- Lorsque les libéraux ont lancé leur propre sondage en ligne au début de décembre 2016, ils n'ont même jamais demandé aux Canadiens ce qu'ils voulaient. Et le moment était terrible - un temps où beaucoup de gens étaient occupés avec les vacances.]

Open for Me My Heart: An anti-racist Feminist Queer Muslim Response to Systemic Xenophobia

The following speech was spoken on January 30th, 2017 at a Vigil in response to the anti-Muslim murders in sainte-foy, quebec.
Open for me my heart:

An anti-racist Feminist Queer Muslim response to systemic xenophobia

Kwe, Adaberz, Assalamu Alaikum, Bonjour,

J'ouvre mon discours avec une section du koran dont ma mère m'a récemment introduit:
Oh rabb! Open for me my heart.

I acknowledge the unceded Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk) land on which we are gathered here to mourn tonight. As an anti-racist Feminist Queer Muslim South Asian Woman, I acknowledge the grief and injustice that this land experiences and witnesses on a daily basis, including ongoing systemic oppression against Indigenous and Black Nations, against Migrant and Racialized communities, including Muslim communities, and against Queer, Trans, Woman identifying people part of these communities.

After a day of checking in with family in the U.S. amidst fascism, including systemic violence against refugees and Muslims, I found myself in moments of speechlessness, grief, rage, and uncertainty upon hearing the tragedy in Ste-Foy. I continue to be faced with an incomprehension to understand how much systemic hate can exist in this world, and how much hate can be transformed into organised murder. I am thinking about those in Ste-Foy, those who died at the mosque, those who have been wounded, physically, emotionally and spiritually. I am thinking about those who are fighting to survive. My thoughts are with you.

I want to say that this injustice stops here and now, that systems based on oppression, power, and privilege leading to the tragedy we are trying to grapple with today must end now. It must. I also know that so many of us have been saying this for far too long, including protesting state-sanctioned white supremacy and xenophobia, like the racist and misogynist (un)reasonable accommodation commission, and the so-called charter of values. And so, I invite us to take a moment to reflect on our humanity, and to keep holding each other in all of our complexity, lived realities and identities, to keep holding each other as community, to keep holding each other in space, in words, in art, in conversation, in breath with deep love, care, and compassion. To keep holding, to keep holding, to keep holding. Please let us remember to keep taking care of ourselves as we take care of each other during this trauma. To my family, friends, and communities who are living in fear and sadness, let us breathe in resilience, let us breathe out resilience. We will make it through, even if through the haze of our tears, in solidarity in our fight for social justice and liberation.

I end with words from my dear ammi who continues to teach me the values and politics of love, care, openness and justice. She could not be here tonight because she is taking care of family members. And so, when I asked what message she would want to share, she expressed her condolences to the families, and wishes strength and serenity upon them. May those who passed away rest in peace. She also stated in our mother tongue Urdu/Hindi: Sub ko reineh ka haque hay poureh doonia mein. Everyone has the right to live in this world. Aman kay sath rehenh. May we live with/in peace.

Farha Najah
Solidarity Vigil, Tio'tia:ke
Parc-Extension
January 30th, 2017

THE SISTERHOOD OF SAWCC

Recently it has come to our attention that the Staff has been subjected to disrespectful behavior. We work very diligently in promoting our sisterhood throughout the organization. All contributions are valuable. Therefore there is no place in SAWCC for rudeness or condescension. Instead we should interact with understanding.

We may not say this too often but we greatly appreciate the staff at the centre. And in order to show this a respectful attitude towards staff members is essential. We should not stop, though, with the staff. Respect for each other should be all pervasive.

South Asian Women's Support Space

South Asian Women's Support Space

free
for women ages 17-30
peer-to-peer support
chai and snacks provided



SAWCCYOUTH@GMAIL.COM
FOR MORE INFO
MEETING LOCATION:
2110 MACKAY

Member News

DURGA CHEW-BOSE LISTED ON THE CBC SPRING 2017 BOOKS PREVIEW

Quoting from the CBC site where SAWCC member Durga Chew-Bose's *In Too Much and Not the Mood* is listed, we are told that she "flings us headlong into her most intimate philosophical and occasionally brooding thoughts. The result is a lyrical and piercingly insightful collection of essays..." Her writing is being compared to Lena Dunham, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Zadie Smith and labelled "a stunning debut". The book will be out in May 2017.

Warm congratulations, Durga.



Center news: SAWCC Intern

SAWCC is very happy to welcome KOMAL SHARMA, who will be interning with us for February and March. Komal, we very much look forward to all you bring and we hope that in return we are able to offer you a worthwhile internship experience.

Below, Komal tells us something about herself.

"In between"

I am a 24 year old woman caught in 'in between's' of this and that. While I let *this* be everything that the world demands of me, it is the *that* I have let occupy the most of me.

That, a four letter word which defines the rebellious, assertive yet calm self I have inappropriately carved in a world full of the self-proclaimed first sex. Officially, a masters student of English Literature at S.N.D.T. Women's University, Mumbai (India), I have come to Montreal to experience the '*differance*' as a man named Derrida once said.

His friend Foucault spoke about the non-existence of any capital letter T truth i.e. your truth is as true as mine. I wonder how people who should not be named, across the world will react to it (All political puns intended.) It is the spiral of ideas like these that play in my head. With all that the world is undergoing today, I hear them scream at night and whisper throughout the day. I am the hysterical woman that a wise man once warned the world about and I spend most of my pleasure time connecting with the ones in sync with my madness. And yes, I am a feminist. A ferocious one.



Agent 728, City of Montreal asked to pay \$40,000 for racial profiling

Catherine Solyom, Montreal Gazette, Montreal Gazette, January 12, 2017

The Quebec Human Rights Commission has awarded Julian Menezes (seen here in a Gazette file photo on June 6, 2016) \$40,000, after investigating his complaint that he was roughed up and taken on a "starlight tour" by notorious Agent 728 back in 2012. Allen McNinnis / Montreal Gazette

After investigating his complaint that he was roughed up and taken on a "starlight tour" by notorious Agent 728 back in 2012, the Quebec Human Rights Commission [HRC] has awarded McGill lecturer Julian Menezes \$40,000.

"This decision is a major victory not only for my civil rights and dignity, but also, for all Montrealers, especially those who are often victims of racially-biased policing," Menezes said at a news conference Thursday.

The HRC cites Montreal police officer Stéfanie Trudeau — aka Agent 728 — for racial profiling, recommending that she personally pay Menezes \$10,000, while her partner, officer Constantinos Samaras, pays him \$5,000. Samaras allegedly failed to identify himself and intervene when Trudeau used unnecessary force and hurled racial epithets at Menezes.



In addition, Trudeau, Samaras and their employer at the time — the City of Montreal — are asked to pay \$25,000 in moral damages, believed to be the highest amount the HRC has recommended in a case of racial profiling.

Fo Niemi, executive director of the Centre for Research-Action on Race Relations, which represented Menezes, said the amount reflects the involvement of Trudeau — who has been found guilty of assault in a criminal case and faced a separate complaint before the police ethics commission for pepper-spraying protesters the same day she detained Menezes — as well as the nature and severity of the abuse. Trudeau retired from the police force in October 2015.

The incident with Menezes dates back to May 2012, when amid nightly student protests Menezes and two friends witnessed Trudeau giving a cyclist a ticket. Trudeau then turned her attention to Menezes, who is of South Asian origin.

According to Menezes, she handcuffed him, threw him in the back of the squad car, called him a "F-ing Indian" and drove him across the city, speeding up and slamming on the brakes repeatedly so his face would hit the Plexiglas divider between the front and back seats.

Then at 3:30 a.m., Trudeau and her police partner allegedly dumped him in the north of the city with no money for a cab home and a \$146 ticket for "continuing to do an act" which the ticket failed to specify.

"(The ruling) sends a very important message, not only to the police department and police officers but hopefully it can give victims new hope about the process," Niemi said.

The decision also stipulates that the Montreal police department has 90 days to update its action plan on racial profiling and report back to the HRC. The last action plan expired two years ago, Niemi said. However, the ruling is not binding, Niemi said.

The city and the officers have until Friday to comply with the recommendations or be brought by the Commission before the Quebec Human Rights Tribunal.

The Montreal police did not want to comment Thursday on whether they would fight the ruling.

Typically, it can take six months before there is a hearing and two years before the Tribunal reaches a decision.

Of five racial profiling cases heard by the Tribunal thus far, the Commission has won two and lost three.

In the meantime, Menezes is also waiting for a hearing before the Police Ethics Committee, scheduled for April 7, where Trudeau has been cited for illegal detention and arrest, use of racial slurs, excessive use of force, mistreatment, unjustified fining and negligence regarding Menezes' health and safety.

"I look forward to these hearings and to the law coming down in my favour, because despite what I lived through, I still hope that we live in a just society where all citizens are protected by the law," Menezes said.

Centre Communautaire des femmes sud-asiatiques

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36 years of sisterhood, strength, struggle and success 1981-2017

www.sawcc-ccfsa.ca

Feb 7 at 10:30 - Recipe Exchange
Feb 14 at 10:30 - Decorative Design
and Handicraft
Feb 21 at 10:30 - Health System and
your Rights
Feb 24 - Pot Luck
Feb 28 at 10:30 - Breast Cancer

7 fev à 10:30 - Échange de recettes
14 fev à 10:30 - Design décoratif et
artisanat
21 fev à 10:30 - Le système de san-
té et vos droits
24 fev - Dîner causerie
28 fev à 10:30 - Cancer du sein

February 2017

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7  Recipe Exchange	8	9	10	11
12	13	14  Decorative Design/ Handicraft	15	16	17	18
19	20	21  Health System/ Rights	22	23	24  Pot Luck	25
26	27	28  Breast Cancer				

Membership Renewal

It's that time of year! Please renew your SAWCC membership to ensure you get all the mailings and can participate fully in the organization.

Changes to your information (address, phone number, etc. email, etc.)? Download the membership form from our website, insert the correct information and send it along with your membership dues.

<http://www.sawcc-ccfsa.ca/EN/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Membership-form.pdf>

Please mail cheque to: SAWCC, 1035 Rachel est, Montréal, Qc., H2J 2J5.

Make cheque payable to: "South Asian Women's Community Centre".

Indicate in the note section: "membership".

Making a donation to SAWCC at the same time? Donations of \$20 or more will receive a tax-deductible receipt (for 2017 tax year).

If including a donation indicate as well the amount towards "donation".

Membership dues:

\$15.00 (for salaried)

\$7.00 (for non-salaried)