

In Montreal on unceded Kanien'kehá:ka [Mohawk] territory



2016 — SAWCC turns 35!

Inside this issue:

SAWCC turns 35; Ramani's back	1
Centre Update / FFQ Board 2015-2016	2
Non-status women	3
Healthcare for Deepan/SAY/JSA Update	4
Year-end Party	5
Sadeqa Siddique essay	6
Justice for Suzette Jordan!	6
An appeal from a wife	7
December 6 2015 [Remembering in Tribute]	7
Two Asian Americas	8-11
Resilience & Triumph	11
Calendar	13

A very happy New Year to all our members, friends, allies and supporters. May the year see some dreams come true.

At SAWCC we embark on our 35th year with renewed commitment, excitement and anticipation. We have been working hard to consolidate what we have built over the decades, as well as adapt to changing times, demographics and priorities. However, at the core of our mission, our raison d'être from our founding is confronting patriarchy, the empowerment of women, ending violence against women and being there for our members and centre users. We have carried out our mission with dedication and commitment these many years thanks to the unswerving and selfless commitment of members, staff and users. We have with courage straddled the multiple areas of service, support and advocacy because from the get-go we saw that they were all inextricably intertwined; focusing on just one diminished what we needed for the others.



Congratulations to us 35 years of sisterhood, strength, struggle and success and to many more!!

RAMANI IS BACK!

SAWCC is very happy this new year, to welcome Ramani back to the Centre after a medical leave. We thank all the staff and the EC who stepped in to ensure the work of the Centre continued as smoothly as possible while Ramani was away. And we thank our members and clients for their understanding during this time. We look forward to the continued support of everyone as Ramani will begin part-time and move to full time work in a couple of months. "



Welcome return cake — Monday, 4th January 2016 at SAWCC

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—5pm

Monday & Thursday/lundi & jeudi 9am—9pm (as of September 7th, 2105)

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 Homa (Ext. 102 or homa@bellnet.ca) to coordinate a meeting!

FFQ Board 2015-2016



Members of the FFQ Board 2015-2016

Dolores Chew was elected to the Board of the FFQ (Fédération des femmes du Québec), at the annual general meeting of the organization on September 20th for a two year term, in the category of representative of a local member organization (SAWCC). She continues a tradition in which SAWCC has participated on the board. Mela Sarkar and Samantha Lee Chew-Quinn have been board members.

It was due to the strenuous efforts of Madeleine Parent to transform the FFQ from a white, bourgeois, francophone Québec organization that SAWCC and other organiza

tions became members of the FFQ for the first time. In 1997, Shree Mulay was awarded the Idola St-Jean prize by the FFQ.

Dolores has also joined the FFQ's Feminism, Intersectionality and Solidarity Action Committee. SAWCC participated actively in the Estates-General to plan for the future of feminism in Quebec, in November 2013. The Estates-General had been called by the FFQ, but was open to anyone who wished to participate. There was an intense struggle to get recognition of intersectionality and SAWCC mobilized along with other women belonging to marginalized communities. In Spring 2015 there was a Special General Assembly of the FFQ to adopt the proposals from the Estates-General. Again there was a struggle over intersectionality. Eventually it all culminated in a Special General Assembly, followed by the Annual General Meeting of the FFQ 18-20 September. Since SAWCC was involved in this process for the past few years it was logical to continue to participate actively to ensure that hard-won struggles were taken forward.

MEMBER NEWS

Yasmin Karmali's brother-in-law passed away in 2015. We extend our deepest sympathies to Yasmin's sister and family and to Yasmin at this sad time.

OPEN LETTER FROM THE NON-STATUS WOMEN'S COLLECTIVE of Montreal

Delivered to Justin Trudeau's office in Montreal on November 26th, 2015

We are women and mothers who live and work in the shadows, invisible and excluded. We are addressing the public for the first time together.

We live in precarity because of our immigration status. Our precarious status threatens our security, our liberty as women, our rights as workers, our families. In many ways our futures, our dreams, are blocked. Our children - born here or living here for years - are terrorized by the constant menace of deportation, which threatens to tear them away from their schools, friends and communities, or even separate them from parents. Some families have already been broken apart by the deportation of a family member and only hope to one day be reunited.

We work here, we contribute to the wealth of Canada. We clean your homes, serve you in restaurants, work on assembly lines, produce the food you eat. We pay taxes. However, we are excluded from all social programmes: education, healthcare, child benefits, daycare, unemployment insurance. We are among the most exploited people in society: we work long hours in very difficult conditions, we do not get minimum wage, we do not have job protection, we are not unionized. Despite our skills and our qualifications, we will never be promoted or "rise in the ranks" like others.

We who sign this letter are among tens or even hundreds of thousands of non-status people in Canada. Mr. Trudeau was elected in a Montreal riding where thousands of non-status people live. But, officially, we don't exist.

For many years, we have struggled to regularize our status. We have filed endless documents in long and costly procedures; we have proven every aspect of our lives, over and over again. We are tired of filling in forms and gathering documents and waiting for arbitrary decisions in fear and uncertainty. Some of us have degrees, some of us don't; some have families, others are single; we came to Canada for different reasons and we can't leave. We don't want to be judged individually on a case by case basis but simply accepted as human beings, equal to all other members of society.

Now, many statements made by the new Prime Minister and Ms Grégoire fill us with new hope. Maybe we are naive to hope, but without hope we cannot live.

Mr. Trudeau has said he "will take immediate steps to reopen Canada's doors, and will make reuniting families a top priority" (1). Opening the borders to immigrants, families and refugees is good news! If the government has the power and will to bring in new people, it also has the power and, we dare to hope, the will to welcome us and reunite our families; we who have been working, volunteering, contributing to society, and raising our children here for years and are already "integrated".

Mr. Trudeau and Ms Grégoire have also spoken strongly about their commitment to the rights of women and to a good future for youth. Surely those rights extend to us too, who are among the most vulnerable women in the country; and surely Mr. Trudeau also had our children in mind when he said, "Each child deserves to be raised in a world free of discrimination, violence, and exploitation, and each one deserves to grow up with proper nutrition and health care, a good education, and safe communities." (2)

We live here; we will remain here. This is our home and our children's home. We want to live in dignity, peace and stability; we want an end to the fear that constantly tortures us. In hope, we await the humanity this new government promises; we hope for change that, for once, also includes us.

By means of this letter, we are asking the Prime Minister and Ms Grégoire to meet us to listen to our demands and hear about our everyday struggles.

We are also asking the Prime Minister to take a position on the regularization of non-status people in Canada.

**Non-status Women's Collective of Montreal
26 November 2015, Montreal**

* Fatima, mother of four children, part-time restaurant worker, afraid for the future of her children

* Emma, mother of two children, part-time worker in a grocery store, nine years struggling for papers, children suffering from separation from their father who was deported more than a year ago

* Sabrina, mother of three children, working cleaning homes of Canadians, mom and kids exhausted

* Marie, looking for work, mother of two children, hoping for a better future for them in Canada

*** If you are a non-status woman and would like to add your name to this letter, please email a brief description of your situation to: femmes.sans.statuts@gmail.com.**

(1) www.liberal.ca/realchange/reuniting-families/

(2) <http://pm.gc.ca/eng/news/2015/11/20/statement-prime-minister-canada-national-child-day>

Non-status Women's Collective of Montreal
femmes.sans.statuts@gmail.com

Healthcare for DEEPAN

In earlier issues of the *Bulletin* we have been covering and updating the Kafkaesque situation of Canadian citizen Deepan Budlakoti. Unfortunately his situation remains unchanged. Among the many consequences of the Canadian government's refusal to recognize his citizenship is that he is excluded from medicare. We publish below an appeal from the Justice for Deepan campaign. Please SHARE this fundraising campaign widely. Deepan needs close to \$3000 to have bare minimum health insurance for 2016. His current coverage expired at the end of the year. [We received this request last year, but unfortunately were unable to print it in our December issue. Ed]

"We're asking you to give the gift of health by contributing to the purchase of health insurance for Deepan for one year. Insurance for someone in Deepan's strange and precarious position costs approx. \$2200 per year. But that doesn't cover things like blood work, prescriptions, and other services not related to emergency situations. So we are asking for a bit more, just in case Deepan needs to go and see a doctor within the next year. In total, we are hoping to raise \$3000 (which amounts to approximately \$8.22 per day).

For every contribution of \$25 or more, Deepan will send you (or a person of your choosing) a personal thank you on a holiday greeting card. Making a donation in someone else's name makes a great and meaningful gift for those you love. Cards will be sent as soon as possible after your donation is made.



Visit our campaign site to donate: <https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/healthcare-for-deepan--4>

Other Ways You Can Help

1. Endorse this statement to demand that Deepan's citizenship be immediately restored: <http://www.justicefordeepan.org/>
2. Forward this campaign to your friends! Like our Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/JusticeForDeepanBudlak...>) follow us on Twitter (@Justice4Deepan)!
3. Donate to the legal defense fund within your means. Sign up to give a regular contribution every month: <http://www.justicefordeepan.org/what-you-can-do...>

SAY/JSA UPDATE



Log on to Facebook and check out: Don't Touch Me: An Anthology for more information on our new anthology project!

There a small library located in the Youth Space in the back and we're on the lookout for a bookshelf! If you have any leads, please let us know at sawccyouth@gmail.com

STAGES OF GRANT WRITING

1-Yes! We can do this! Our proposal is innovative and effective and represents the needs the communities we work with.

2-buzz words. EVERYWHERE!

3-I am lacking the ability to speak or relate to humans anymore and it's all because of the heteronormative hegemony capitalist saviour-complex TD Bank Avon Dove grant speak jargon

4-Ugh... you know what. I'm just going to call them. Have a heart to heart. Explain to them that we are good people and they should just give us the money without the hoop jumping.

5-it's ok. Even if we don't get the money, some other group of deserving people will and let's not re-invent the wheel, let's just collaborate! (Scramble for support letter ensues)

6- the printer ate my grant. how do we even use this printer again? why is it only printing the first page but 20 times? Does this grant cover the cost of printing and mailing this grant? [insert picture of printer spitting out papers]

7- mailing the grant - call all carrier pigeons! OR let's just all get into Iram's car and drive there, in rain and snow!

8-fuck, yeah! And it's off.



SAWCC Year-End Party

It was a huge success. Newer and older members and friends, volunteers, lots of children -- it was great to see everyone having a great time and getting a chance to catch up. There was something for everyone. It was a really concrete demonstration of what community means.

Thank you for all the hard work that went into the planning, the prep and on the day itself. A great manifestation of team work and everyone stepping in to do the necessary.



SADEQA SIDDIQUI Essay Writing Contest

The deadline for submissions has been extended to Thursday, January 14, 2016.

To honour Sadeqa Siddiqui who worked as the coordinator of our centre and was and still is committed to the mission of SAWCC, an essay writing competition will be held each year. This is our very first competition and we look forward to hearing from HIGH SCHOOL and CEGEP students aged 16 to 18 years of age.

The contest runs from **THURSDAY, OCTOBER 1, 2015 TO THURSDAY JANUARY 14, 2016 AT 12:00 NOON.**

The topics for the essay are:

Redefining of Women's Role in Today's Global World
OR

Use the verse below, written by Maya Angelou, to inspire your essay:

*When we come to it
We, this people, on this wayward, floating body
Created on this earth, of this earth
Have the power to fashion for this earth
A climate where every and every woman
Can live freely without sanctimonious piety
And without crippling fear.*

The essay should be no longer than a maximum of **750 words**.

Along with your essay you need to also submit the application form found on our website:

http://www.sawcc-ccfsa.ca/EN/?page_id=24

Your name must *only appear on the entry form*. IF your name appears on the essay you submit, it will be disqualified.

The essay must be **submitted** no later than **12 noon on Thursday, January 14th 2016** by e-mail to :

sawccbulletin@gmail.com

The judges will decide on one winning essay and two runners-up. The winners will be announced at an event in March 2016 (date to be decided). The three chosen essays will appear in the three *SAWCC Bulletins* that are published subsequent to the announcement of the selected essays.

Justice for Suzette Jordan!

Earlier we had written of the passing of Suzette Jordan, who was gang-raped and who courageously struggled for justice —

“My Name is Suzette Jordan” (*SAWCC Bulletin* Summer 2015 July-August). On Thursday 10 December (coincidentally, International Human Rights Day), a Kolkata court convicted three of the accused. Two others accused in the case are absconding. No doubt there will be an appeal, but the conviction is no small victory. Soon after the gang rape of Suzette in February 2012 the police officer in charge was making good headway in identifying and pursuing the culprits. However due to government intervention, she was transferred. It seemed that the government of West Bengal was playing politics with voter banks. No matter, Suzette and her supporters, women’s rights advocates, doggedly pursued justice, despite the slurs and slut-shaming type tactics she was subjected to by the media and elements of the public. And he accused and their family and supporters would appear menacingly in the court room. But Suzette continued her struggle for justice. It is so unfortunate that she passed



Suzette Jordan during the walk with the research Scholars of Jadavpur University in Kolkata (Express photo by Partha Paul). One of the remarkable things about Suzette is how she lent her support and strength to other sturples for justice.

away before this verdict came down. However it is public vindication for her, her daughters, her family and for women everywhere who dare to live their lives on their own terms, who refuse to be silenced and treated as victims and who choose to live free from patriarchal constraints and sexual double standards.

Mohamed Harkat needs our help — an appeal from his wife Sophie

Dear Friend and Supporter,

This Thursday, International Human Rights Day [10 December 2015, ed.] , marks the 13th anniversary of my husband Mohamed Harkat's arrest under a secret trial Security Certificate. That's 13 years of solitary confinement, brutal house arrest, and constant attack of his name and those of his loved ones.

Unfortunately, our last Supreme Court of Canada challenge resulted in a profoundly disappointing decision that found Security Certificates "not perfect or ideal", but constitutional. Then, 16 months later, in the middle of the election campaign, Moe was suddenly issued his inadmissibility letter under a Harper government, kickstarting a deportation process against Moe that has him fighting forced return to Algeria, where he is at great risk of detention, torture or death because of the never-proven allegations against him.

Moe does not want to be separated from his family, friends and supporters across the country. He has been living in Canada for 20 years and loves this country. He calls Canada his home and came here to build a better life.

Moe was detained behind bars for 43 months and has been held under several types of house-arrest/bail conditions (the toughest in Canadian history) over the past 10 years. All that, without ever being charged or knowing the so-called evidence against him. Under a secret trial Security Certificate, a judge only has to rule on whether there are reasonable grounds to believe that the allegations against him may have been true in the past, could be at present, or may be in the future, all based on the lowest standard of proof and based on anything not normally admissible in a court of law.

For those of you who know me, you know that I have kept hope alive that someday the truth would come out, or that there would be an opening somewhere. Well my friends, there is something in the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act that allows the new government an opportunity to put an end to the threat of deportation to torture and allow Moe and me to get on with our lives after all this time.

Under section 42.1 (1) of IRPA it states:

The Minister may, on application by a foreign national, declare that the matters referred to in section 34, paragraphs 35(1)(b) and (c) and subsection 37(1) do not constitute inadmissibility in respect of the foreign national if they satisfy the Minister that it is not contrary to the national interest.

Here's how you can help. If you know Moe personally, we invite you to write a letter about his character and his struggle and explain why you think he is not a threat to National Security and that it is not contrary to Canada's interests to allow him to live here (just as it has not been contrary to Canadian interests for him to have been here for the past 20 years!). Please include details of your relationship with him and the importance of why he should stay. Make sure to include your name and address at the bottom and once completed please send to letharkatstay@gmail.com. It is important that these not be letters that make wild accusations or political statements naming government ministers or judges. This is an opportunity to ask this new government to exercise its discretion and make a decision that is humanitarian and compassionate in the best sense of the words.

If you do not know Moe personally, but wish to support him, please download and use this template [[Template--Let-Him-Stay.docx](#)]. You are free to change and adjust the template. Sign and return to letharkatstay@gmail.com

PLEASE SEND LETTERS BY January 15th, 2016

I will be preparing this file and my goal is to collect over 1000+ support letters. The more the better. After all those support letters are collected, we will then request a personal meeting with the Public Safety Minister, Hon. Ralph Goodale and present him with the file (of support letters and supporting documents from groups/organizations) to prove that Moe should not be sent back to Algeria where he his life is in danger.

Also, we have **LOST ALL LEGAL AID** so donations are desperately needed to continue our legal battle. We need to raise \$15 000.

Please send cheques or money orders to:

The Justice for Mohamed Harkat Committee

14 Perkins Street, Ottawa, ON, K1R 7G5

or you can do e-transfer at www.justiceforharkat.com/donate We would really appreciate any donation big or small.

The struggle for justice has lasted long enough. It's time for it to end and for us to get our lives back! We just want a normal life and to move on. Please help us make this a reality. Please help us tell Minister Goodale to do the right thing and let Moe stay in Canada.

Thank you for your continued support and solidarity. We could not do this without you!
Sophie Harkat

December 6 [REMEMBERING in TRIBUTE]

Life rolls by smoothly
 We are given to imagining
 In this safe and stable country –
 Canada.
 We spin our cocoons,
 Enclose ourselves in our bubbles,
 And do our living
 Without concern.
 All too soon it is shattered, this myth.
 I once knew a woman named Laura,
 We'd stand on the bus line together,
 Laugh and chat about life,
 Good things and sad,
 Say "Bye, have a good day"
 At the top of the hill and
 That was the extent of our exchange.
 Then one day, a Sunday,
 I opened the weekend paper
 And Laura's beautiful face looked at me.
 She'd been killed by her husband,
 Whom she'd mentioned sometimes,
 Off work because of an injury.
 I once knew a woman named Mila,
 She was my pilates teacher.
 The best in my book

I never again took
 A course in pilates after Mila.
 A friend called me one Sunday,
 "Have you seen the paper?" she asked.
 I approached it with dread,
 And there was the account.
 Mila's husband had shot her and
 Their two daughters.
 We have a poster at SAWCC
 Of Milia Abrar
 Who paid the price with her life
 For the choice she made
 To be whom she wanted to be.
 Today is a day to remember them all,
 All the women who were
 Children and sisters and mothers
 And daughters,
 Women being women,
 Living, THEY SHOULD BE,
 Breathing,
 Being as their right,
 Who they want to be.

*SAWCC, Dec. 5, 2015 for the Dec. 6 annual memorial gathering
 at SAWCC – Jennifer Chew*

Review — Two Asian Americas

by Karan Mahajan (October 21st)

<http://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/the-two-asian-americas>

In 1928, an Indian immigrant named Vaishno Das Bagai rented a room in San Jose, turned on the gas, and ended his life. He was thirty-seven. He had come to San Francisco thirteen years earlier with his wife and two children, "dreaming and hoping to make this land my own." A dapper man, he learned English, wore three-piece suits, became a naturalized citizen, and opened a general store and import business on Fillmore Street, in San Francisco. But when Bagai tried to move his family into a home in Berkeley, the neighbors locked up the house, and the Bagais had to turn their luggage trucks back. Then, in 1923, Bagai found himself snared by anti-Asian laws: the Supreme Court ruled that South Asians, because they were not white, could not become naturalized citizens of the United States. Bagai was stripped of his status. Under the California Alien Land Law, of 1913—a piece of racist legislation designed to deter Asians from encroaching on white businesses and farms—losing that status also meant losing his property and his business. The next blow came when he tried to visit India. The United States government advised him to apply for a British passport.

According to Erika Lee's "The Making of Asian America," published to coincide with the fiftieth anniversary of the Immigration and Nationality Act, signed into law on October 3, 1965, this swarm of circumstances undid Bagai. In the room in San Jose, he left a suicide note addressed, in an act of protest, to the San Francisco *Examiner*. The paper published it under the

headline “Here’s Letter to the World from Suicide.” “What have I made of myself and my children?” Bagai wrote. “We cannot exercise our rights. Humility and insults, who is responsible for all this? Me and the American government. Obstacles this way, blockades that way, and bridges burnt behind.” Bagai could have been speaking for the mass of Asian-Americans—Chinese, Japanese, Indians, Koreans, Vietnamese, Cambodians, Hmong, and Filipinos—who escaped colonialism or economic hardship at home only to encounter a country rancid with racism. Racism, as Lee shows, was the unifying factor in the Asian-American experience, bringing together twenty-three distinct immigrant groups, from very different parts of the world. It determined the jobs that Asians were able to acquire, the sizes of their families, and their self-esteem in America. If Asian America exists, it is because of systemic racism.

A few weeks ago, Donald Trump climbed a stage and crassly mimicked a Japanese (or was it a Chinese?) accent, in supposed admiration of the old stereotype that the Japanese are soulless, rapacious businessmen. This was just after Jeb Bush defended his use of the term “anchor babies” by saying that it was “more related to Asian people” than to Latinos. In September, the F.B.I. finally dropped all charges against Dr. Xi Xiaoxing, a Chinese-American physicist at Temple University arrested, in May, for passing on sensitive superconductor technology to China. The F.B.I. had claimed it had blueprints of the technology, but when independent experts examined the blueprints, they found that they weren’t for the device in question. “I don’t expect them to understand everything I do,” Xi told the *Times*. “But the fact that they don’t consult with experts and then charge me? Put my family through all this? Damage my reputation? They shouldn’t do this. This is not a joke. This is not a game.”

These are just a few recent stories, of course, but they stand in for many others. Asian-Americans are still regarded as “other” by many of their fellow-citizens. And yet one finds among some Asian-Americans a reluctance to call out racist acts, in part because of their supposed privilege in comparison with other minority groups. Meanwhile, much of the history of Asians in America, a history that now spans nearly half a millennium, has been forgotten.

The first Asians to come to North America, Lee writes, were Filipino sailors. They came aboard Spanish ships in the late fifteen-hundreds, and were subjected to such a torrent of vermin and filth on these vessels that half died en route; when they got to colonial Mexico, many refused to cross the Pacific again. They settled in Acapulco and married local women. Asian America began in desperation.

Many of the immigrants in the seventeen-hundreds and eighteen-hundreds came from lands sucked dry by colonialism, such as the Guangdong province, in China, reeling from drought and famine after the Opium Wars. Lured by contractors and agents, Chinese, Indian, Korean, and Japanese men travelled across the globe to toil on sugar and tobacco plantations in the British West Indies, Hawaii, and the Deep South as indentured laborers or “coolies,” working ten hours a day, six days a week, for five or more years before gaining freedom. (Some Asian women were hired as indentured servants, too, mostly in an attempt to pacify the men.) When the men gained their freedom, though, they often chose not to return to their homes—either, Lee writes, out of shame (their earnings didn’t match their boasts to people back home) or because they had married locals during their lonely sojourns and couldn’t take them back. Lee cites a few of their melancholic letters to family members, but one wishes she had gone deeper into the psychology of exile: many immigrants subsist on a diet of denial, believing, sometimes until their deaths, that they will go back.

From the initial ports of entry, Asians, particularly the Chinese and Filipinos, radiated outward, so that, in the mid-eighteen-hundreds, there was a Filipino fishing village in Louisiana and a Chinatown in Havana, as well as active Chinese communities along much of the West Coast. Lee describes life and labor in these communities well, explaining, for instance, why Chinese immigrants got into the laundry business during the Gold Rush. (At the time, it was cheaper for someone living in San Francisco to have clothes washed in Honolulu than to get them laundered in the city. Chinese immigrants seized the opportunity that provided.) Lee is particularly acute on the racism these immigrants endured. Chinese were called, at various times, “rats,” “beasts,” and “swine.” The president of the American Federation of Labor said that the presence of the Chinese in America was a matter of “Meat vs. Rice—American Manhood vs Asiatic Coolieism.” Kaiser Wilhelm woke from a nightmare in 1895 and commissioned a hideous painting showing the archangel Michael beset by heathen hordes from the East—the famed “yellow peril.” When more Chinese started coming after the Gold Rush, employed on large projects like the Pacific Railroad, anti-Chinese sentiment became shrill. In 1882, on the basis that Chinese workers undercut wages, Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, banning low-skilled and family immigration, and making the Chinese, in Lee’s words, “the first illegal immigrants.” (As Jiayang Fan noted in a recent piece for this magazine, “The act, which wasn’t repealed until 1943, remains the only federal law ever to exclude a group of people by nationality.”) Special agents known as “Chinese catchers” appeared on the border with Mexico, and the Secretary of Labor despaired that “not even a Chinese wall” along the border would stop Chinese immigration. In 1871, in the largest mass lynching in American history, seventeen Chinese men were murdered by a mob of five hundred, in Los Angeles.

Other Asians—Indians, Koreans, and Japanese—followed, and they, too, faced xenophobia. Koreans, who wished to fight for

Two Asian Americas cont'd...

their freedom from Japan, were treated as Japanese subjects; Indians were considered British subjects. But these groups were not as large as the Chinese, and thus not as threatening. Still, stereotypes spread fast. Of thirty-nine immigrant groups, Indians were, according to the 1911 United States Immigration Commission, “the least desirable race of immigrants.” The editor of the Bellingham *Reveille*, in Washington, described Hindus as “repulsive in appearance and disgusting in their manners,” and, in 1907, the entire South Asian population was forced out of Bellingham in a single night with cries of “Drive out the Hindus.” (Bellingham, a lumber-mill town, had a long history of receiving—and then expelling—poor Asian laborers.) In another famous episode, when the Komagata Maru, a ship from Hong Kong, tried to dock in Vancouver, British Columbia, to challenge the racist 1908 Continuous Journey Regulation law—which held that Asians could only emigrate to Canada if they made a near-impossible non-stop voyage from the country of their citizenship—it was sent back to Calcutta. The people onboard were jailed by the British, and twenty-six were shot dead as they resisted arrest.

American policies toward Asians reached a nadir in 1924, with the implementation of a law that sought “to preserve the idea of American homogeneity” and denied admission to the country to most non-whites. Immigration from Asia was banned completely, with the establishment of an “Asiatic Barred Zone.” In the years immediately before and after, no plea by Asians to become citizens succeeded. When Bhagat Singh Thind, a Sikh-American who had fought with the United States Army in the First World War, argued before the Supreme Court that he was an Aryan and should, therefore, be allowed to keep his citizenship, his case was dismissed on the grounds that the “great body of our people instinctively ... reject the thought of assimilation” of South Asians. Takao Ozawa, an assimilated Japanese man, sued for naturalization, in 1917, citing his Christian values, his American education, and his desire to “return the kindness which our Uncle Sam has extended to me.” He was denied, because he wasn’t Caucasian. This low point in immigration was followed by the internment of Japanese-Americans during the Second World War.

Then the fate of Asian-Americans began to turn. The Cold War remapped dynamics between nations. Taiwan, the Philippines, and South Korea, considered weak nations, were now allies. Their citizens couldn’t be targeted by official policy in the same way. The civil-rights movement, meanwhile, took on open racism, including that faced by Asians. Still, when Lyndon Johnson signed the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, dismantling racial quotas and allowing skills- and family-based immigration, he didn’t do so to help Asians; rather, Greeks and Poles and Italians had cried foul about the larger immigrant quotas for Northern Europeans, and those cries had been heard. Johnson, not known for his modesty, cautioned that it was “not a revolutionary bill” and would “not affect the lives of millions.” He was wrong. In the years after, Asian-American life changed enormously, with the population swelling from less than one per cent of all Americans, in 1960, to nearly six per cent, or 19.5 million, today. Refugees from the Vietnam War, in the sixties and seventies, made Asian America, and America itself, even more diverse, and women, largely excluded in previous eras—less than one per cent of the Chinese entering the United States in 1900 were women, thanks to the Chinese Exclusion Act—poured in. Asians began to appear in the “model minority” jobs we associate them with today.



ILLUSTRATION BY BOYOUN KIM

There are now, in a sense, two Asian Americas: one formed by five centuries of systemic racism, and another, more genteel version, constituted in the aftermath of the 1965 law. These two Asian Americas float over and under each other like tectonic plates, often clanging discordantly. So, while Chinese-Americans and Indian-Americans are among the most prosperous groups in the country, Korean-Americans, Vietnamese-Americans, and Filipino-Americans have lower median personal earnings than the general population. Over-all Chinese-American prosperity obscures the higher-than-average poverty rate for Chinese-Americans. In 2000, Asian-Americans were more likely to have college degrees than other adults in America, but also five times as likely as whites to have fewer than four years of education. More damningly, the reputations of Asian-American groups, just as in the past, can turn on a dime, with national or international events triggering sudden reversals. After 9/11, for example, the I.N.S.’s National Security Entry-Exit Registration System required the fingerprinting and registering of immigrants from twenty-five nations, twenty-four of which were Arab and Muslim. (Portions of the program were discontinued in 2011.) Hate crimes spread to encompass groups such as Sikh-Americans, with a mass shooting at a temple in

Two Asian Americas cont'd...

Wisconsin as recently as 2012. In February, when a middle-aged white man in North Carolina shot three Muslim college students dead over what the police claimed was “an ongoing neighbor dispute over parking,” the father of one of the victims pointed out, “I am sure my daughter felt hated, and she said, literally, ‘Daddy, I think it is because of the way we look and the way we dress.’”

In the eyes of some, Asians in America are, Lee writes, “perpetual foreigners at worst, or probationary Americans at best.” If Asians sometimes remain silent in the face of racism, and if some seem to work unusually hard in the face of this difficult history, it is not because they want to be part of a “model minority” but because they have often had no other choice.

Resilience and Triumph

“Preface” by Yasmin Jiwani, from *Resilience and Triumph—immigrant women tell their stories*.

Ed. Rashmi Luther, Vanaja Dhruvrajan, et al [Book Project Collective], Toronto: Second Story Press, 2015.

Stories just have a home in a community of listeners for whom the story makes a claim that will be remembered. — Parin Dossa (*Politics and Poetics of Migration*, 2004, p. 22)

When I was asked to write this preface, I was both thrilled and honoured. Thrilled because I had never read such an extensive collection of immigrant women’s stories — stories that traversed different time periods, stories that encompassed such a diversity of styles, formats, and narratives. The honour comes from being able to comment on this brilliant collection representing women who have forged the path, clearing the way for me and others like me, and who have, in their writings, stories, and voices mentored me in so many different ways. From them, I draw the courage to go on, to persist and like flowing water, erode the barriers of patriarchy, white dominance, and exclusion. From them, I draw the strength to continue in what sometimes seems like an endless struggle.

Resilience and Triumph: Immigrant Women Tell Their Stories, comes from a home, to use Parin Dossa’s words, and is told to listeners in the wider context of a national home so as to claim space as a legitimate and valued repository of knowledge. The narratives that it recounts are of strength and resilience in the face of adversities; persistence in the face of exclusion; rejuvenation in the face of isolation; and above all, hope against all hope. It is a collection that immediately brings to mind Antonio Gramsci’s powerful call for “pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will,” highlighting the myriad injustices that immigrant women have faced and their theorizing and political mobilization in countering these, but also, the fortitude of their perseverance against the odds.

This work is truly inspiring on a number of levels. On the one hand, it documents a buried history—the history of the women who have immigrated to Canada and made their second and sometimes third homes here. This strategic move effectively dislodges the normative and dominant national story—in which women who are identified as racialized minorities are often erased and their contributions minimized. The erasure and/or minimization of herstory has occupied feminist historians for several decades, and their efforts at uncovering the submerged narratives of women’s lives in the making of the nation is revealing, as is evident in the series in which this present collection is featured. That herstory speaks to the hidden, yet core grounding of the nation, which women’s lives represent. It is this feminist spirit that animates the stories that are compiled in this anthology.

Tactically, this collection offers enormous insight into the range of ways in which immigrant, racialized women have survived and thrived. Drawing, in many cases, from the inspiration they received from their mothers and grandmothers, their narratives gesture to the importance of cultural/familial continuity — emphasizing the role this collection breathes life into the role of the mother, not simply as a reproducer, but as a strong, resilient force of power whose material and spiritual embrace one simply

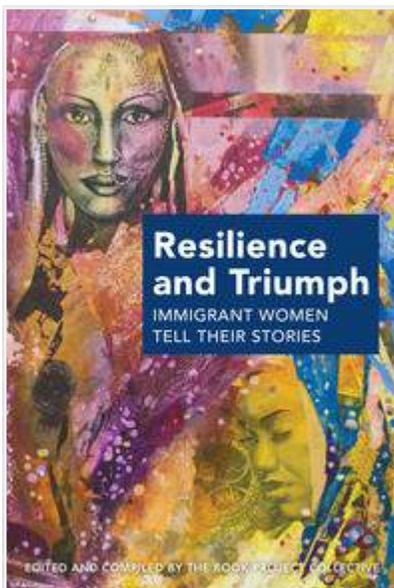
Resilience and Triumph cont'd

cannot forget, nor survive without. The mother then comes to represent all that is life-giving and affirming and where she is corporeally absent, her properties resonate with a faith community, cultural lore memory.

What is all the more remarkable is the lived history embedded in, and embroidering, the stories that are captured in *Resilience and Triumph*. Here, one gets an acute sense of not only the struggles and the achievements, but also of the broader, context in which these women lived and continue to live. Their stories speak to the everyday — the lived realities at the ground level — and though short, they testify to the force of individual actions in gathering momentum for social change. The everyday organizing, similar to the organizing that went into making this collection possible, reflects the power of tactics in altering a course of history, in making institutions accountable, and in fomenting social change. Those tactics range from the very act of asserting oneself, taking voice and speaking truth to power, to collective mobilization through a multitude of forms, whether it is in the practice of everyday life or through performance in poetry, literary, or artistic productions.

The sheer diversity of this collection of narratives is enough to dismantle the discourse on homogeneity that characterizes stereotypical views of immigrant women, of racialized communities, and processes of 'fitting in.' We are made aware of what we are attempting to 'fit' into and the ingenuity with which we do this. As the stories reveal, not all of us have suffered the same hurdles, nor have all of us succumbed to traditional patriarchal impulses within our communities. Instead, many of us have chosen to walk our own paths, creating a hybrid existence that borrows from numerous sources to refashion lives worthy of living and lives worthy of remembrance.

As a woman who comes from a similar racialized immigrant background, this work makes me acutely aware that we have made a contribution to this country, its institutions, its practices of governance, and its evolving culture, no matter where we hailed from and no matter where we end up. That's the inspirational message I draw from the voices in this collection. These voices make me realize, more profoundly, that although the racism and sexism we face is daunting and at times paralyzing, if not deleterious to our very existence, collectively we can and do make a difference in agitating for a more just and equitable society. *Resilience and Triumph* is telling Canada that we exist, and that though the current political tide of neoliberalism seeks to eradicate our footprints, dismantling our organizations and subjecting us to all forms of exclusion, it cannot annihilate our symbolic and cultural memory of who we are and the kinds of contributions we have and continue to make to the nation. *Resilience and Triumph* is history in the making.



The book includes contributions from SAWCC members, friends and allies. It is divided into sections: I Arrival: losses & gains; II Integration or assimilation? A process of negotiation and settlement; III Identity: women's journeys to becoming and belonging; IV Exploring feminisms; V Activism: shaping our world.

**South Asian Women's Community Centre
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Jan 15th—staff meeting	15 jan—reunion du personnel
Jan 25th—SAWCC Executive Council meeting (6PM)	25 jan—Session d'information sur l'environnement et le recyclage 10H30)
Jan 26th—Info session on environment and recycling evaluation (10:30AM)	27 jan—Dîner communautaire (12H00)
Jan 29th—Potluck (12:00PM)	25 jan — Réunion du Conseil exécutif de CCFSA (18H00)

January 2016

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
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