



Le Centre communautaire des femmes sud-asiatiques

MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

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Hello lovely reader,

I am off to a rocky start. If you're taking the time to read the SAWCC bulletin again– I THANK YOU. You got my draft version by accident (oops!). I wish I could say it was a prank. Yup. That's all it was. I wanted to introduce myself and be memorable so I made you read my bad spelling...lets just go with that?

But just to clear thing up, the BOOK EVENT IS NEXT MONTH. Ms.Gokhale will only be presenting in November. So if you show up on the 19th....there will be nobody there. And you will go home feeling all sad. We don't want that!

This version should please the spelling gods much better. So enjoy!

And we got off on the wrong foot. I swear I am not all that bad at spelling things. But if you really want to make sure...I guess you will have to wait for next month's issue.

Have a good October!

Adithi.S, Publications Secretary

11^e JOURNÉE NATIONALE DES CENTRES DE FEMMES DU QUEBEC

The Women's Center's Open House is on Tuesday 8th Oct. 2013!

There will be **GREAT** feminist conversation, **FREE** food, a chance to meet the Women's Center staff and talk about resources and events at the Women's Center.

This is also violence awareness month. So bring your friends and family to the Open House so that they get to know about the center.

The national day of women's centers in Quebec allows us to highlight Quebec Women Centers, what they do, and how they help to improve the lives of women. This is the day to speak publicly, to say that our feminist approach is not **ONLY** a dream, but it can become a reality through our collective hard work.

Join Us at SAWCC

Date: Tuesday, October 8, 2013

Time: 10: 30 AM – 12:30 PM

ALL WELCOME

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 22nd of every month to: adisun3@gmail.com
- Écrivez -nous à adisun3@gmail.com



CENTRE UPDATE



Centre Hours

Monday & Thursday 9am—9pm

Tuesday, Wednesday & Friday 9am—5pm

The Centre is wheelchair accessible

Le centre est accessible aux fauteuils roulants.

Membership

Have you renewed your membership this year? If not, you can do so by sending the fees to SAWCC.

Volunteers

If you are interested in helping out at the Centre, please contact Homa (Ext. 102 or homa@bellnet.ca) to coordinate a meeting!

VOLUNTEERS!

SAWCC is looking for volunteers to help with **the website** as well as **the library**. For more information please contact the volunteer coordinator Homa at 514-528-8812 Ext. 102 or homa@bellnet.ca

VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION DAY

On Friday September 27 2013, SAWCC held the annual volunteer appreciation day for our dedicated and energetic volunteers. The center relies on volunteers to run the weekly educational programs that are provided to the community. SAWCC has been very lucky to get dedicated individuals who share our ideology and commit to help empower women and support their efforts to become self-dependent. In return, they gain experience in a multicultural environment and learn about different cultures, gain new skills, meet women from diverse backgrounds and get involved in the center.



On this day we welcomed 20 volunteers to SAWCC and entertained them with games and delicious South Asian food prepared by one of the members of our catering group.

The volunteers were also sent on a scavenger hunt around the center in order to solve a puzzle and find their gifts- a recipe book and a red rose courtesy of SAWCC.

"Thank you so much to all of SAWCC for such a wonderful volunteer lunch on Friday. I am still talking about your Masala tea! So tasty!"

-Vanessa Coopeland (Volunteer English Teacher)



SOUTH ASIAN YOUTH (SAY)/JEUNES SUD-ASIATIQUES (JSA)

As the summer comes to an end and leaves crispen SAY looks forward to some exciting new adventures! The SAY space is looking quite spiffy these days as the mural is almost complete! The past month was spent planning for upcoming school activities as we will be holding workshops in 2 high schools, a cegep and a community centre. We're also looking forward to spending lots of quality time with each other as a collective and this month we spent a lovely evening "Expressing our Inner Superheroes" through art. We look forward to a second hangout activity on October 18th (5:40-7:15pm) – join us as we carve pumpkins!

If you're interested in joining the collective, finding out about meeting dates/times, or just want to say "hi" feel free to email us at say.jsa@resist.ca.

Si vous êtes intéresséEs à nous joindre, savoir les dates/heures de nos réunions, ou simplement dire "allo", envoyez-nous un courriel à say.jsa@resist.ca

DISCOVERING SUPERPOWERS!

Unlike the traditional SAY meetings, on Friday September 27, the SAY collective decided to embark on an evening of self expression when we delved into “our inner superheroes”. Members of the collective tried to embody their hidden superpowers through art. The evening was first spent creating a piece of artwork and then sharing it with the rest of the collective. Each member had the opportunity to discuss their superpowers and their art work. From a “cape of optimism”, to “chaos control”, the evening was filled with numerous ideas. The experience forced the members to be very creative and allowed us to focus on attributes we possess but might usually ignore. With food, banter and superheroes, the evening left all of us feeling very energized. It was a great way to learn what empowers us all. Hoping for many more empowering evenings with the collective!



OUI POUR L'INCLUSION! (By Indu Rekha Krishnamurthy)

On Saturday September 14, 2013, a coalition of groups known as the Collectif québécois contre l'islamophobie (CQCI--Quebec Collective Against Islamophobia) organized a large multi cultural demonstration against the new Charter of Quebec values released by Marois government. I attended the march on behalf of SAWCC and read out the SAWCC statement opposing the charter. To emphasize that I had the freedom to dress as I pleased, I wore my brightest Salwar Kameez and bindi. The rich diversity in Montreal was very visible that afternoon as place Emilie Gamelin packed thousand of protesters. The most significant moment was when I repeated the crowds slogan “Qui pour l'inclusion, Non pour l'exclusion!” and received some of the crowd's energy. I felt honored to represent SAWCC on this occasion and to witness the solidarity of the thousands of people who had turned up on that cold Saturday.



SAWCC STATEMENT TO “QUEBEC CHARTER OF VALUES”(By Mela Sarkar,Public Relations Secretary)

The South Asian Women's Community Centre of Montreal / *Centre communautaire des femmes sudasiatiques de Montréal* (SAWCC / CCFSA) wishes to deplore in the very strongest terms the Marois' government's proposed addition of a "Charter of Quebec Values" to Quebec's existing Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Our Centre has been bringing together women of South Asian origin living in the Montreal area and their friends and families since 1981. For 32 years we have united women of many faiths who work together toward our common goal of easing the transition into Quebec society for new arrivals, as well as of providing a safe and enjoyable meeting place for activities involving people from the South Asian countries, from Canada, and from many points between.

We are Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs, Parsis, Christians — some of us even “none of the above”. We have been part of the front line of feminist struggles in Quebec with women from French-Canadian, English-Canadian, and a host of other ethnic backgrounds. We make our own decisions about what constitutes appropriate dress in our workplaces, on or off the premises of our Centre. Some of us are easily identifiable as adherents of one or another major religion, others are not. The “religious neutrality” we have achieved in our working relations is far more meaningful — because it is based in genuine understanding of and respect for one another's convictions, even if we may disagree with them — than the travesty of “religious neutrality” proposed by the Marois government. Removing outward signs of religious affiliation does nothing to remove inner prejudice. We are only too well aware that individuals who may be convinced that they appear, and are, supposedly “neutral”, may in fact be no such thing. We are also only too well aware of some of the consequences of religious intolerance. Many of us come from places where differences in religious adherence have in the past, and sometimes also nowadays, resulted in violence. In murder, in death. Many deaths. We are shocked that the Marois government is proposing to enact measures that would so clearly target, and exclude from certain kinds of public employment, Muslim women who choose to wear the headscarf. We know where that can lead. The other most obvious targets — turbaned Sikh men and Jewish men who wear the kippah — don't deserve to be discriminated against in this way any more than we do. But we would point out that for many reasons, minority women of colour are among the most vulnerable members of our society, where overtly discriminatory practices are concerned.

We would also like to point out that the supposedly “neutral” nature of the crucifixes that adorn a host of official, governmental Quebec locations is in fact a sham. The crucifix is not neutral. It is not “cultural”. It is a Christian symbol; in the Quebec official context it is unquestionably a Catholic symbol. If the Marois government were to recognize this fact and start by proposing to remove all publicly funded crucifixes, then their arguments might make some sense. But they don't and won't.

Finally, we would like to suggest gently to the elected officials forming the government responsible for this ill-conceived and, we very much hope, abortive proposal that they look within their own hearts. In their desire to reject their own centuries-long history of heavy-handed domination by one particular religion, in their headlong rush to garner votes from “the regions” through fear and manipulation (since they have failed to impress the population with either their linguistic politics or their fiscal policies) are they not guilty of the same kind of blanket intolerance of “the Other” that they themselves remember too well from the dark days of Duplessis?

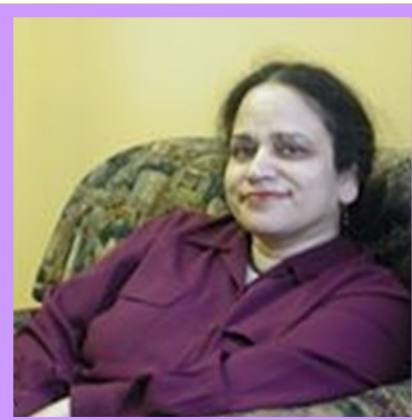
It is not the supposed Other in the daycare, school or government licensing office that this government should be striving to suppress for the public good. It is the conflict in their tormented collective soul.

On the occasion of WOMEN'S HERSTORY MONTH
we are very happy to present

NILAMBRI GHAI

"From Johanne to Janaki: Bringing Vikings to Varanasi"

Nilambri is a long-standing member and past president of SAWCC. She lived in Montreal for 16 years before moving to Ottawa in 1994. She has worked in the field of adult literacy and learning, and in the public service for 13 years. She is looking forward very much to meeting SAWCC members again. As Nilambri says, it "takes me back many years." We are also very happy to be welcoming Nilambri to the centre.



Nilambri's presentation is based on her work of several years that has resulted in the book (*From Johanne to Janaki: Bringing Vikings to Varanasi*). As Nilambri writes, it is "based on the life of my maternal grandmother, Johanne Nielsen, who married my grandfather, Bulaki Rama Chopra in 1894-95. At the time, Johanne lived in Copenhagen, and had just finished a program that allowed her to enter university - one of the very few women to have achieved this. Her parents expected her to continue with her studies and had high expectations from her. However, she fell in love with 'Rama' (as she called him) whom she had met at a conference in Stockholm. Much against her parents' wishes, she decided to marry and move to his

ancestral home in Hafizabad, British India. Once in India, she realized that Rama was already married with two children. Not much was known about Johanne since she died in 1915. All I had were some letters written in 1914-1915 that I brought with me when I came to Canada. This book is an attempt to trace Johanne's life in Denmark and in India."

Saturday 26th October 2-4pm
at SAWCC
all welcome



SAWCC is honoured to present

the documentary

Rokeya and Sakhawat Memorial

School--One Hundred Years After

(Dir. Samir Kushari)

***Iqbal Bahar Choudhury, producer,
conceptualizer and narrator will
be present.***

at SAWCC, Saturday 19th October

12noon – 2pm

All welcome

Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain

Best known outside Bangladesh and India for her feminist classic “Sultana's Dream”, one of the earliest example of feminist science fiction, Rokeya wrote this short story in 1905. Begum Rokeya [as she is generally known in Bangladesh] was a feminist, writer and social reformer in pre-1947 India.

"Sultana's Dream" which was originally published in English in *The Indian Ladies Magazine* of Madras, depicts a feminist utopia in which women run everything and men are secluded, in a mirror-image of the traditional practice of seclusion and veiling. Writing about machines and technology that had yet to be invented, the women in the story, are aided by science fiction-esque "electrical" technology which enables labourless farming and flying cars; the female scientists have discovered how to trap solar power and control the weather. Roles are reversed and the men are locked away in a technologically advanced future."

Crime is eliminated, since men were responsible for all of it. The workday is only two hours long, since men used to waste six hours of each day in smoking. The religion is one of love and truth. Purity is held above all.

Rokeya was born in 1888 into a prominent traditional [landlord] Muslim family in [British India].. She fought for the advancement of women when Muslim women in the [Indian] sub-continent had to remain [observe seclusion and veiling.]

[Her] parents were progressive minded for their time [but it] was her eldest brother who ...helped her to begin her education in both English and [Bengali].

[She] was married at the age of 16 to a ... magistrate. It was a love match, which was not a common thing during that period. Her husband ... also supported her quest for education. He encouraged her to write about women's issues that were not talked about. ...Rokeya, from early on, realised that to be emancipated a woman had to be educated. So she began her life's work.

She was a lone voice fighting for the freedom and intellectual advancement of Muslim women in India. She wrote: "We constitute half of the society. If we remain backward can the society move forward? If somebody's legs are bound up how far can she walk? Indeed, the interest of women and men are not different. Their goal of life and ours are the same."

With those powerful words Begum Rokeya set the tone for feminist movement. Because of her thinking, women are now seeking equal rights and helping in the development of our nation.

...

When *Sultana's Dream* was published in 1905, the biographical note in the edition said that her husband's reaction after reading the story was: "A splendid revenge."

She wrote: "What we want is neither alms nor gift of favour. It is our inborn right. Our claim is not more than Islam gave women 1,300 years ago." She broke all barriers, and struggled throughout her life for a better society for women who had no voice. She led the way to empowering and enlightening women.

Begum Rokeya founded the Sakhawat Memorial Girls' School in Calcutta when Muslim girls did not go to school. She went from door to door to convince parents of the need of education for a Muslim girl. At first, only five families were persuaded and the number of students was only 5.

With her realisation that in order to be independent women need to be educated first -- she led this one woman campaign against tradition, prejudice, laws of the land, and a whole lot more. When a woman becomes educated, she does not depend on the fathers, brothers or the husbands.

Over and over she had to send this message out. Her writings were mainly based on that premise. In order to gain economic freedom she also encouraged women to revive craft industries. In that sense she also paved the way for small-scale industries for women.

Begum Rokeya's writings demonstrated a confident woman with talent and knowledge.

Zeenat Khan

(The Daily Star, 1 July 2010)

Centre Communautaire des femmes sud-asiatiques

South Asian Women's Community Centre
1035, rue Rachel est, 3ième étage.
Montréal, QC H2J 2J5

Phone: 514-528-8812
Fax: 514-528-0896
E-mail: sawcc@bellnet.ca

31 years of sisterhood, strength, struggle and success 1981-2013

www.sawcc-ccfsa.ca













EVENT DATES

Oct 1—Yoga Class
Oct 8— OPEN HOUSE
Oct 10—SAY meeting 545PM
Oct 15— Family Law session
Oct 18— SAY Meeting 545 PM
Oct 19— Film Screening
Oct 22— Equality, Action and Discrimination session
Oct 24—Executive Council meeting 630PM
Oct 25— Potluck!
Oct 25—SAY meeting 530 PM
Oct 26— Women's HERstory month
Oct 29— Session to be determined

Le 1 oct—Cours de Yoga
Le 8 oct—Portes Ouvertes
Le 10 oct—Réunion du collectif des Jeunes sud-asiatiques (JSA) 5h45
Le 15 oct—Session d'information sur le droit de la famille
Le 18 oct—Réunion du collectif des Jeunes sud-asiatiques (JSA) 5h45
Le 19 oct— Présentation de film
Le 22 oct— Session d'information sur l'égalité, l'action et la discrimination
Le 24 oct—Réunion du conseil administratif à 18h30
Le 25 oct— Potluck!
Le 25 oct— Réunion du collectif des Jeunes sud-asiatiques (JSA) 5h45
Le 26 oct- Le Mois du patrimoine asiatique
Le 29 oct- Session d'information, sujet à déterminer

October 2013

Sun Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat

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