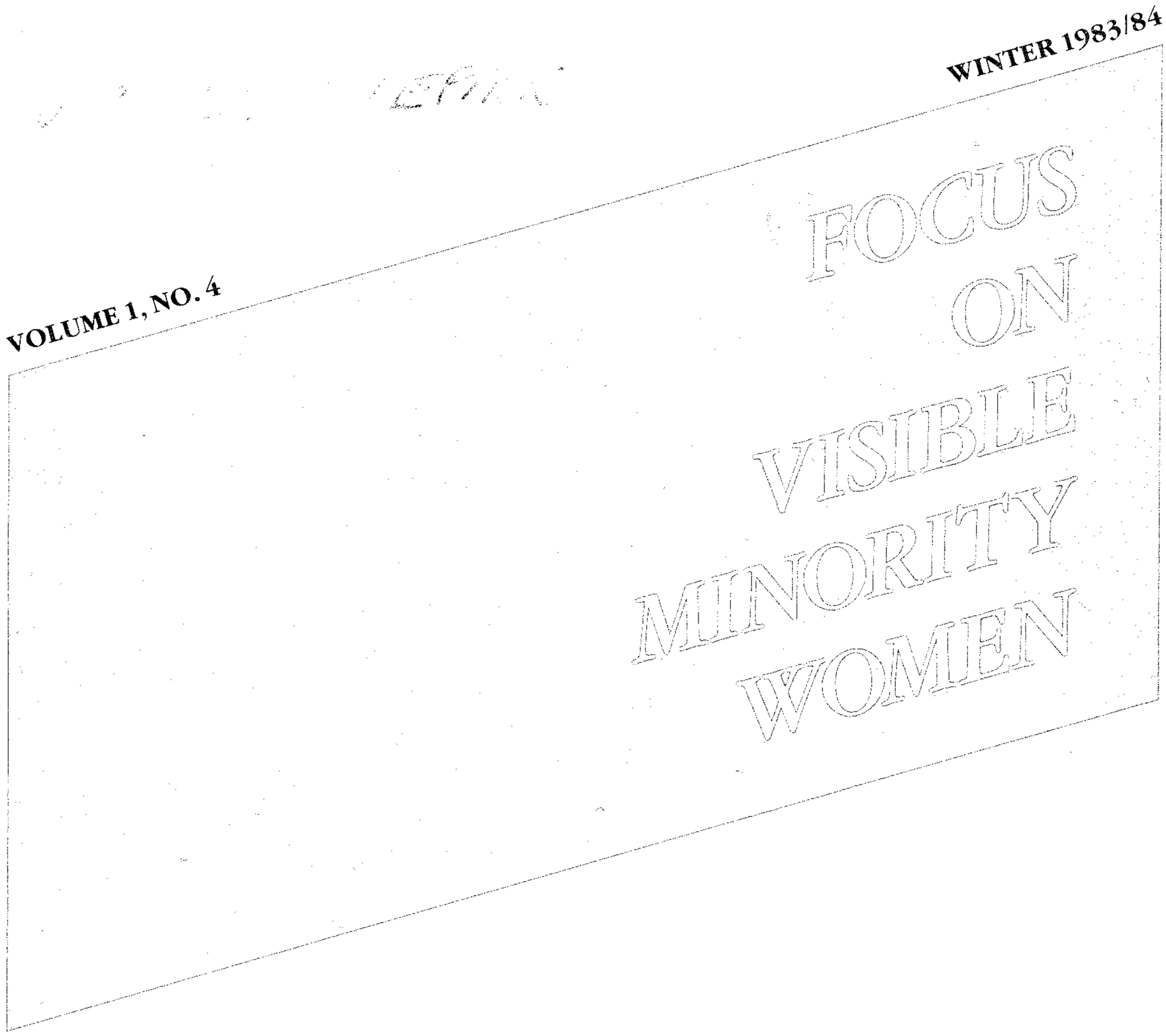
CURRENTS

READINGS IN RACE RELATIONS

VOLUME 1, NO. 4 WINTER 1983/84



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CURRENTS: *Readings in Race Relations* is the quarterly magazine of the Urban Alliance on Race Relations.

The Urban Alliance on Race Relations, formed in July 1975 "to promote a stable and healthy multiracial environment in the community," is a non-profit organization made up of volunteers from all sectors of the community.

The Urban Alliance on Race Relations is an educational agency and an advocate and intermediary for the visible minorities. It works toward encouraging better race relations, increased understanding and awareness among our multicultural, multiracial population through programmes of education directed at both the private and public sectors of the community. It is also focusing its efforts on the institutions of our society including educational systems, employment, government, media, legislation, police, social service agencies and human services, in order to reduce patterns of discrimination and inequality of opportunity which may exist within these institutions.

The work of the organization is carried out through working committees such as: Educational Institutions; Legislation; Media; Law Enforcement.

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CONTENTS

THE NON-WHITE CANADIAN WOMAN as a human being, as a topic of research, and as the subject of this issue of ***CURRENTS*** is an elusive being. Myths and stereotypes abound. Nowhere in our society is the social terrain more complex, controversial and contradictory than where a racial minority and the "weaker" gender intersect.

This issue of ***CURRENTS*** is a very tentative attempt to begin to explore some of the challenges and concerns of contemporary non-white Canadian women. Hopefully it will encourage further discussion and analysis of the socio-economic conditions faced by non-white women in Canada, of racism and the women's movement, and of sexism within minority communities. It is also hoped that it will contribute to an increased recognition of the considerable achievements and ongoing efforts of non-white women to confront these problems against considerable odds.

The pervasive oppression of non-white women in Canada has been entrenched deep in the country's history and is rooted in racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination. This oppression is manifested personally and institutionally.

Double Jeopardy

The non-white woman suffers the double jeopardy of being inhibited from fulfilling the responsibilities of a full and equal citizen in this country because of the insidious influences of both sexism and racism.

Unfortunately it can be said that neither the race relations or women's rights movement has proven capable of addressing fully the issues most relevant to non-white Canadian women.

Combatting these two areas of discrimination imposes a double role, or raises the question of what should be the priority? Should she melt into the melting pot of femaleness rather than divide the women's movement? Should she be drawing from the limited energies that should be utilised for her non-white community, and at the same time emasculate the non-white male just at the time when he is beginning to find his manhood? These are of course false and specious questions and suggest an ideological trap to insist that one struggle is more important than another.

The necessity of pursuing both is clearly justified and succinctly explained by this quote from Rosemary Brown who said: "As a liberated woman, I bring to the Black struggle the confidence which I have in myself as a person as well as the respect which I have for myself and others."

In spite of racial and sexual oppression, which affect all non-white female Canadians, non-white women of course are not a monolithic group. Due to the cultural diversity, the many goals, life styles and objectives among non-white women, it is not feasible to make them all fit into one niche. For this reason, the goals and objectives of non-white women's concerns will be achieved through a variety of organisations and ideologies.

Non-white women have traditionally participated in the many campaigns against racism. In recent years, greater numbers have confronted the impact of sexism. They are beginning to meet informally and to organise formally to discuss, analyse and solve their problems. Non-white women in Canada are defining themselves, their goals and their struggles as they work individually, collectively and in coalition to defeat racism, sexism and other forms of oppression.

Tim Rees

The Visible Minority Woman

Dr. Mavis E. Burke

Since it is our custom as Canadians to devote a great deal of time and energy to esoteric definitions of terms, and the reference to 'visible minorities' is not without its detractors, even from amongst ourselves, let me establish at the outset that, for the purposes of this article, the frame of reference is to be non-white ethnic minority women in the context of a predominantly white society. While it is true that a large number of this group have immigrated to Canada at varying points over the past two decades, it should also be recognized that an appreciable number of visible minority women are Canadian-born. The irony here is that they also often experience the same kind of rejection in the workplace and share the alienation felt by the newcomer. For those who know no other home than Canada, discrimination and continuing disadvantage in labour force participation may yet threaten the social fabric of this country. Racism and sexism challenge the concept of fair employment practices and equal opportunity employment in the Canadian workplace.

To a certain extent these problems reflect the role and status of women in general in Canadian society, even at the present time when according to Statistics Canada's latest estimate, women outnumber men by 12.6 million to 12.3 million. According to the 1981 Census, 50.7% of the Ontario population are female. One might therefore expect common cause to be made on issues affecting women, particularly the No. 1 issue of Equality of Payment – Equal Pay for Equal Work and Equal Pay for Work of Equal Value – as well Equality of Treatment in the Workplace. But there is still little if any recognition by mainstream women's groups that racism and sexism in the workplace pose specific threats to the livelihood, the well-being and the very survival of the visible minority woman in this society.

Although the total visible minority population in Ontario represents only 5% of the total Ontario population, a high proportion are women, most being located in the Toronto region. Statistics for the 1981 Census indicate that approximately 75% of women from the Black, South Asian, Indonesian, Filipino, Korean, Chinese and Japanese communities live in this region. The notable exception is the Native people with only 14% of women resident in this locality. However, as the 1981 Census indicates, visible minority women are also distributed in smaller and varying numbers across the province, in major Ontario centres.

A profile of the visible minority woman as worker indicates the majority are to be found in low paid, non-unionised areas of service occupations, in temporary jobs on contract but without tenure, or in a variety of occupations holding down jobs with no clear-cut criteria for promotion.

Within recent years, the situation of domestic workers, (a high percentage being from visible minorities), has been brought to the attention of the public, legislators and immigration authorities. As a result of the work done by INTERCEDE and representations by other groups, some changes have been made. Conditions of work require further study, including the need for opportunities to develop skills not only in language, but also in other educational areas. For many of these workers domestic service was seen as temporary employment on the way to advancement, but, without further training, this often becomes the impossible dream. More must be done to assist in setting new standards and protecting the interests of household workers while recognizing their skills in household management and childcare. There is ample evidence to suggest that the lifestyle of employers and employees fictionalised by Austin Clarke's

novel, "Meeting Point" comes closer to reality than one would care to admit. It poses some critical questions about employer-employee relationships as well as about the need for protection of non-unionised workers.

Some visible minority women may have had previous experience in the garment or textile industry. Many more have become a part of this group through the small business operator, prepared to turn a deaf ear to lack of prowess in the official languages of Canada, and a blind eye to immigration status, so that a minimum wage or lower can be offered and any claims to workers' rights ignored. Working hours and conditions injurious to health are a matter of continuing concern for the visible minority woman in this predicament.

It is understandable that women feel comfortable for a time to be working with others functioning almost entirely in their own language, but without opportunities to learn the language of work in the Canadian marketplace, there is a danger of creating their own 'Job Ghetto' with little opportunity for escape. This is equally true of other occupations in which there is no demand for communicative skill in English, as for example in the case of office cleaners who are often recruited from one ethnic group. Here too the worker will find that an intended stop-gap can become a permanent job without a future. We should demand that public and private sector employers exercise their responsibility in seeing that contractors fulfil their obligations to their workers. I see no reason why the various levels of government cannot set an example by creating a real learning environment for their own service staff composed frequently of visible minority women. In many instances Affirmative Action Programmes have not included this kind of vision.

Other visible minority women who have no language problem are increasingly found in areas such as those identified by West Indian poet, Vibert Cambridge when he asks –

"Did we stay here to continue
sleeping on our
Eaton's salesgirl clerk typist
clerical officer, grade 5 civil
service jobs?"

A major issue is the under-utilization of skills and under-employment of visible minority women. Inability to rise through the system adds to the frustrations of the workplace. There appear to be few opportunities for advancement and employers have a general distrust of foreign qualifications, reinforced by official positions on accreditation of non-Canadian credentials – a matter which needs to be pursued with greater vigour.

There is often a widespread assumption by the employer, and tacit acceptance by the visible minority woman, that there is no further for her to go. In such cases the employee may decide that any job is better than none. Until recently the only recourse would be to change jobs. A 1979 Ministry of Labour study about labour market experiences of recent immigrants to Canada (Bogue and Shakeel, 1979) indicates a high percentage of voluntary job changes before that period. Female respondents in the sample were more likely to cite the need to improve themselves as the main reason for job change, whereas males cited the need to seek better pay and better working conditions. Neither group emphasized that their job had no possibility of promotion, but it is a reasonable assumption in the circumstances.

In this same study of visible minorities as major wage earners supporting a household, assessment of the relative success of male and female holds no real surprises but emphasizes a situation to which we need to turn our attention, as it states –

> "According to each of the indicators of success adopted for this study (intended occupation/personal income/satisfaction level), male immigrants are more successful than female immigrants. Sixty-eight percent of the male immigrants who stated an occupational preference are now working in their intended occupation, and only 61.0% of the female immigrants are working in their intended occupations. The personal incomes of female immigrants are also lower than those of male immigrants: 57.6% of the females earned a personal salary below $10,000 a year, while only 26.8% of the male immigrants earned that little."

A number of questions arise. For example, were the initial levels of education and training different for males and females or is it that the visible minority woman had lower levels of expectation for herself, even as head of household with family commitments. According to the study, on arrival in Canada female

immigrants were more likely than males to accept any job available or to accept a low paying job. It would appear that for the majority the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow is confined to an Ontario Lottery ticket.

A 1981 survey (Reitz et al) of ethnic inequality and segregation in jobs in Metropolitan Toronto, provides a useful point of reference for our assessment of the visible minority woman's situation in the full time labour force in this region. The hierarchy of average income reported in the sample is to some extent predictable. Women of West Indian origin were at the bottom of the scale, earning $6,000 less than the "Majority Canadian" woman and $3,000 less than the woman of Portuguese origin. When education and factors such as language and work experience were taken into account, visible minority women underearned by several thousand dollars, women of Chinese origin by $3,500, and West Indian Black women by $3,000.

Two issues seem relevant here, the first is the need for equal opportunity so that visible minority women can seek and find employment that makes good use of education, skills and experience. But there is also the problem of relegation to jobs that are assumed to be worth less than those occupied by men. The demand for comparable worth or equal pay for different jobs that require similar effort and skills is of tremendous importance to the visible minority woman. This is an important trend in compensation practices in the United States: As reported in *Business Week*, July 18, 1983 – "Public employers are accepting pay equity in large part because politicians recognize the voting power of women".

One of the questions we need to ask ourselves concerns the self image of the visible minority woman. How do we rate ourselves? The key factor however remains – how does society perceive us and what role has been ascribed to us? These two perspectives have to be reconciled if racism and sexism are not to continue to be over-riding factors in the workplace and in career development. According to Porter's Study of the Vertical Mosaic, new immigrants are ascribed "Entrance Status", and are allowed to share in certain occupational roles in Canadian society, being denied others that are deemed appropriate only for the "Charter" ethnic groups. So as pointed out in the 1979 study above, "the 'White Collar' aspirations of the caribbean and East Indian immigrants may be out of line with the entrance status thought proper for these ethnic groups, in spite of the personal qualifications they have to offer".

This concept of ascribed roles is very relevant to the experience of the visible minority woman and can explain some of the attitudes to her as a worker. It seems likely that education level and job skills are not the critical factor in her assignment to low status work. To those who argue that the newcomer to Canada begins at the bottom of the work ladder it should be obvious that the analogy breaks down. There is every indication that the only mobility scheduled to take place for this disadvantaged group is to be removed from this rung by seniority, lay-offs and shut downs.

In other situations, the employer may know little and understand less about previous education and career experience as well as aspirations. However, it is generally assumed that there would be no desire for promotion, that the culture of the visible minority woman would not permit acceptance of responsibility, that she is happy with her current position and sees no reason for change. More invidious still is the assumption that she has no leadership skills or administrative ability and could not be expected to compete with fellow workers from the mainstream. Employers at times conclude that in any case colleagues would not willingly accept promotion or supervision by a visible minority woman so it is consciously or unconsciously decided to exclude her from promotion lists.

The whole question of attitudes of fellow workers has to be examined as a two-way street requiring adjustment on both sides. In many situations an exotic aura associated with visible minority women encourages the persistence of stereotypes deriving more from tourist brochures than from the harsh realities of life in their countries of origin. Derogatory attitudes – such as that displayed by a recent newspaper cartoon about the visible minority woman – at times result in sexual harassment in the workplace. The protection of the law is provided by the Ontario Human Rights Code (1981) where it states that –

"Every person who is an employee has a right to freedom from harassment in the workplace because of sex by his or her

employer or agent of the employer or by another employee.'' (Section 6-(2))

An appreciable number of complaints brought to the Ontario Human Rights Commission concern racial or ethnic discrimination in the workplace. There has been an increase in complaints of sexual harassment and one case in the courts that has recently been receiving public attention with reference to visible minority women and a supervisor of another ethnic background. It remains to be seen whether the visible minority woman with workplace complaints will come forward to seek redress either through the Commission or other grievance procedures.

Networking

This brief overview has so far concerned itself with some of the ways in which racism and sexism combine to affect the employment prospects of the visible minority woman. Hopefully this has provided a context for considering my second concern of networking among visible minority women. As headlined by Joanne Kates, (City Woman, Fall 1983), this is *the* 'contact sport – networking as the hottest movement in town'. I urge you to apply this possible source of strength and solidarity to your own specific purposes.

There is the possibility of information exchange across cultures and identification with role models in various fields by using the kind of process that has developed among mainstream women. Kates highlights the opportunity to lessen 'Horizontal Hostility'. This refers to our mistrust of women with leadership potential and jealousy over career advancement, accusations of tokenism when the very appointments we request are made.

As you establish your own priorities for networking, you might wish to consider combining the more conventional meeting and greeting approach with that of the skills exchange. If there is to be a more assertive role for the visible minority woman in employment, every effort must be made to establish job preparedness. Attitude to self and to colleagues in the workplace, knowledge of the work context, of rights, responsibilities and prospects – all require attention and can be developed through co-operative activity that goes far beyond 'Yellow Page' exchanges of a social nature. There is already an excellent outline of the content needed for ''making changes'', designed by the Cross Cultural Communication Centre to meet some of these needs. One of the networking priorities could usefully be developing teams to implement programs geared to specific workplaces. I might add that too often networking is seen as tied to a single locale, whereas cable television, radio programmes or a citizens band for isolated areas can also supplement information exchange on a continuing basis. Since an increasing number of visible minority persons are going into the computer field as an occupation without traditional status ascription, networking can also benefit from special application of this technology. The proposition that I am putting forward is that networking can also benefit from special application of this technology. The propostion that I am putting forward is that networking be treated as task-oriented and use innovative communication techniques since the corridors of power have not yet embraced the visible minority person.

Combatting racism and sexism

Development of strategies and mechanisms to combat racism and sexism is of course another important focus. In my opinion there have been few attempts to develop a structured approach to changing racist and sexist attitudes and behaviour in workplaces. Where there have been attempts to discuss racism they often tend to be random efforts of a guilt-raising nature for a selected group rather than an overall plan for all those who form part of the work context. For example, a school might arrange a professional development session for teachers but ignore support and maintenance staff; or a factory manager may agree to arrange for discussions with workers on the shop floor involved in an incident but not see the need to combat racism and sexism throughout the whole operation. Here again, the Toronto Cross Cultural Communication Centre has moved ahead by providing a course for ''combatting racism in the workplace''. Additional material needs to be developed relative to various other work contexts as well as approaches with varying levels of sophistication.

Strategies should relate to the ways in which institutions or systems discriminate against the visible minority woman. This requires approaches at the policy making level.

It is surprising that Affirmative Action parameters have not been expanded to include policies that accommodate women disadvantaged by race as well as sex. It is likely that, until this occurs, the women's movement will continue to lack credibility by appearing to be selectively self-serving rather than supportive of justice for all women. This is particularly important at a time when economic difficulty exerts unbearable pressure on those who are most vulnerable to budgetary restraints and workplace pressure – visible minority women.

There can be no doubt that the merit principle, with clearly drawn job criteria, performance evaluation and an open process of advertisement, application and selection should remain the norm for hiring and promotion in the workplace. Differences of race and sex should be viewed as providing additional perspectives rather than as disadvantage for employment. In my opinion, Affirmative Action has nothing to do with hiring the incompetent and unqualified. It has everything to do with a conscious effort by policy makers to break through the stereotypes, remove the artificial barriers, facilitate entry by providing training relevant to employment in areas from which some categories of persons have traditionally been excluded. Further, it has to do with recognition that persons with relevant qualifications and experience gained in other countries could, with an opportunity to get Canadian experience, become qualified, if they are not already prepared, to enter a particular field.

Both the Ontario Human Rights Code (Section 13 – (1)) and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Section 15 – (2)) make specific provision for such programs. The Ontario provision permits –

> "The implementation of a specific program designed to relieve hardship or economic disadvantage or to assist disadvantaged persons or groups to achieve or attempt to achieve equal opportunity..."

There has however been no evidence of a rush for implementation by various levels of government or by the private sector. The objective of establishing a working relationship between policy makers and visible minority women to effect meaningful change recognizes that change is a process and that there should be continuing involvement rather than presenting a list of actions recommended for some other agency to pursue on one's behalf.

It is important to recognize that, until all Canadian institutions, agencies, boards and commissions represent the diversity of our population, special efforts will be needed to ensure that the interests of particular sectors of the society, such as the visible minority woman, will be taken into account in decision-making. Unless ways are found to make ones' views known, little if any change will take place, since it will continue to be assumed that the visible minority woman desires and deserves to remain at the bottom of the totem pole in the workplace.

It is of course essential to avoid popular assumption that legislation is all that is required to bring about change. With all due respects to the Ontario Federation of Labour and others in the labour movement who have taken a stand against discrimination, the reaction of some unions and professional associations may be one of the barriers to improving the position of the visible minority woman in workplaces in this period of high unemployment and financial restraint.

We must ask ourselves how many visible minority women are knowledgeable and actively engaged in the union or the professional association? It would be advisable to look at ways in which persons now in the workforce can become involved in helping to create an environment that makes sense of the work ethic to which the visible minority woman is, and has always been, firmly committed.

In conclusion, I would like to raise a number of questions. Without adequate statistics on the employment situation of the visible minority woman in private and public sectors, how can we obtain the public recognition needed for the problems posed by racism and sexism in the workplace? For example – how much mobility is there in the civil service?

- How can existing structures, unions and professional associations in particular, more effectively represent the interests and project the rights of the visible minority working woman?
- Do collective agreements take account of workplace diversity?
- To what extent can voluntary programs correct the historic imbalance in the position of the visible minority in the workforce?

• Do we need contract compliance provisions?
• Could employment standards provisions take account of special factors?
• How far have Affirmative Action Programmes included the special concerns of the visible minority woman?

At what point should visible minority women's groups seek linkages?
– with visible minority men
– with other women's groups
– with ethnocultural groups
– with various levels of government
– with the general public

For example, would visible minority women be justified in calling for a provincial working group on women's equity in the workplace – joining with unions, management and government – as well as other womens' groups, to build a work content inventory, refine job evaluation techniques, develop cost estimates prior to implementing private and public sector pay equity pilot programmes that demonstrate feasibility for general application.

My intention has been to indicate problems and to identify possibilities. To emphasize my belief in the possible, I end with Olive Senior's 'Ancestral Poem' from *Jamaica Woman*, an anthology of poems by Caribbean women.

".....
Now against the rhythms
of subway trains my
heartbeats still drum
worksongs. Some wheels
sing freedom, the others:
home.

Still, if I could balance
water on my head I can
juggle worlds
on my shoulders."

Dr. Mavis E. Burke is Chairperson of the Ontario Advisory Council on Multiculturalism and Citizenship.

Rosemary Brown

Interviewed by Brooke Forbes

Rosemary Brown represents the riding of Burnaby-Edmonds for the NDP in the BC legislature. She was born in Jamaica into a political family which was involved with the founding of the PNP and to a large degree still supports it. She left Jamaica to attend university at McGill in Montreal, and went on to receive a graduate degree in social work at UBC. She has an honorary degree from Mt. St. Vincent's in honorary letters. She was first elected in 1972 as a member of the provincial legislature in what was called the NDP "Sweep". The Social Credit party took charge again in 1975, but she retained her seat. One of her most memorable performances in the house was a week-long filli-buster about the community resource boards. She's known as an extremely humane politician, has served for several years as the critic for the Human Resources portfolio and is now acting as the critic for the Attorney General's office.

In this interview for ***CURRENTS****, Brooke Forbes, who is a producer with the CBC in Vancouver, talked to her during a break in the hearings of the Royal Commission on Pornography and Prostitution.*

Forbes: *What got you into politics?*
Brown: I always *was* in politics. All my life I've been in politics.

I wasn't active while I was a student at McGill because, during the Duplessis era, students were being deported for being actively involved in politics. So I stayed out of it at that point. But as soon as I moved to B.C., I became involved with the NAACP, or the BCAACP, as it was called at that time. In 1967, just after the Royal Commission on the Status of Women started, I became actively involved with the women's movement, was one of the charter members of the Vancouver Status of Women Council and remained in it until I was elected to the Provincial Legislature.

There are a couple of things that acted as catalysts. The first was while I was working as a counselor at Simon Fraser University, dealing specifically with women on welfare, mostly single mothers who were trying to get an education. Not only did the system not help them, but actually did every thing possible to prevent them from achieving their goal. Their support was cut off as soon as it was discovered that they were at university. I found that very destructive because it was a deliberate attempt on the part of the government to enshrine people in poverty.

Secondly, the recommendations of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women report acted as a catalyst in terms of my involvement with the women's movement. Also I was very much encouraged by women in the NDP seeking political office as one way of trying to deal with the whole aspect of minority groups and women and poverty in a political context.

Thus, believing firmly then, as I do now, that democratic socialism is the route to take in terms of addressing oneself to these problems, I decided to run in the provincial election of 1972.

Forbes: *What was that first campaign like?*
Brown: The toughest part of it was winning the nomination because the person I was running against for the nomination was actually my husband's partner! It made for some very strained relations between the two men – it certainly didn't upset me at all. The end result of it is, of course, that they are no longer partners! But that was their problem; it certainly wasn't mine.

But then it was very exciting and exhilarating. I was part of the NDP sweep, the province was ready for change, and I was lucky that I was a part of it.

Forbes: *Looking back over those years as a member of the legislature, what would you choose as your greatest success or triumph?*

What single thing are you proudest of?
Brown: I think the most daring thing I did was to run for the federal leadership in 1975, and it certainly has been *the* most exciting experience I've had...and in a lot of ways certainly changed my perception of Canada. Everywhere I went, moving from one end of the country to the other, I found acceptance and enthusiasm and a lot of support. I found it really exciting that the country would have been prepared to take a risk on a person who was female and a member of a minority. I'm not sure that any other political party would have responded in as positive a way to my candicacy as the NDP did.

Financial donations came in from women who belonged to all political parties: the commitment of women to my success was quite overwhelming.

And the same can be said of people from the black community, many of whom I know are not New Democrats, but who were excited about my running and offered encouragement in the form of letters or phone calls or cards, and in some instances, money. So that was exciting.

The thing that I feel the best about was that I was a part of the drafting of the Human Rights Code. I went into politics so that we could have a decent Human Rights Code in this province and it was one of the first things we did when we were the government. Emory Barnes, the black MLA from Vancouver Centre, and I had major roles in the wording of the code, and defined the issues that it covered. One of the most devastating things I've had to experience is to see the present government destroy the Human Rights Commission and the Human Rights Code. I've come to realize that you have to keep doing the same thing over and over again. You can never walk away from an achievement and say "Okay now we've got it in place, let's move on to something else." You can't do it. Certainly that's been my experience with the abortion issue. It's like a cyclical thing, every time we think we've made a step forward it comes back again, and we have to start fighting again. One of the things that I've learned from politics is that you just keep right on fighting. There's no end.

Forbes: *You're referring to the Social Credit's sweeping budget and legislative changes that destroyed the Human Rights Commission. I'd be interested to know what* are *you doing about that situation?*
Brown: Well, the Human Rights Commission wasn't really destroyed by the budget...it was destroyed by a difference in philosophy. If you listen to some of the speeches of the government members, they tell you that while human rights legislation is protecting the interests of minority groups, they are doing it at the expense of majority groups. For example, in order to protect the East Indian farmworker they're infringing on the rights of the white farmer who hires them. Or legislation designed to protect the rights of the single parent, in terms of housing, infringes on the rights of the landlord who should have the right to decide who he or she rents their accommodation to. So they see, philosophically, human rights as a very *bad* thing. That is the reason the Code was gutted and the Commission staff was fired. Unless we can change their philosophical approach to minority rights, we're never going to have human rights legislation that's going to truly protect people who need protection.

Forbes: *I think the most vocal and articulate opposition to Premier Bennett's sweeping changes last summer was over the Human Rights Commission. Is that fight won?*
Brown: No. I don't think we're going to win it. We're told that the bill is going to be reintroduced. Our experience with the government is that when it reintroduces legislation all it does is to say in a different way what it wants to do anyway. So the wording will be different, and it will take us a little bit longer to realize that the Act is still not giving the level of protection that it should be giving. There is no question that philosophically the opposition to human rights is ingrained in the government and I don't see that changing. I don't see any member of the government at all who would fight or try to protect the rights of minority groups.

Affirmative Action

Forbes: *Let's talk a bit about affirmative action.*
Brown: I believe affirmative action has to be, even for a short period of time, the route that women and other minority groups must use as

their means of access to opportunities in the work force.

Forbes: *The NDP is very tied up with organized labour. Isn't there something of a conflict there?*
Brown: No. We've really fought this one out on the floor of the convention. Although labour is committed to the concept of seniority, they realize that there are going to be instances where, for a time, not forever, doors are going to have to be open to members of minority groups who may not have seniority. That is the only way that we're going to be able to do anything about achieving the goal of equality, which is what we're all committed to.

Forbes: *If you look at the situation in the United States, and the way affirmative action goals have changed under the current administration, don't you feel a little discouraged?*
Brown: Yes. I think it was too successful.... That's the reason why the Republicans were so opposed to it. It was working, and in quotes, the number of uppity blacks in the United States was increasing too rapidly for Reagan. I don't buy the argument that things were moving too fast and had to slow down. I've been listening to that argument for two thousand years. I've been waiting and deliberate speed is just too slow. We have to deal with the unpleasantness that comes with it, but if you really are committed and you really do believe in it, then you just have to go ahead and do it.

Fillibustering

Forbes: *Tell me about fillibustering.*
Brown: It was very hard work. When I decided to fillibuster the bill dealing with the Community Resource Boards, I went into training, physically. Exercising every morning, I went down to the gym at the legislature building and worked out with the bicycle and the mats. I also did walking and jogging. I brought my weight down, built my muscle up, and the most important thing was to try to control my bladder for as long periods as possible, which was necessary because I couldn't leave to go to the bathroom. However the side effect of that is that I just about wrecked my bladder.

Forbes: *I don't imagine this is the first time you've heard this...but I don't see how you do all that you do...and of course you also have a family and take an active part in community events.*
Brown: It's a lot easier now with my youngest son now graduating from high school, and the other two kids having graduated and left home. The only two times I can honestly say that I thought about leaving politics were occasions when I had difficulties with child care. When it looked as though I was just not going to be able to get someone to take my place in the home, I thought I would have to quit and come home and do it.

Forbes: *I guess it also explains why the issue of child care has always been so important to you as an MLA.*
Brown: Absolutely. And now it's a bigger issue than ever because of the fiscal policies of the government. I see day care as part of early childhood education. To leave a child during those early years with someone who's just going to plunk them down in front of a TV until you get home from work is depriving the child of stimulation during some of his or her most receptive years.

Forbes: *How much of a contribution do you think the government should make to setting up this pre-nursery public daycare set-up?*
Brown: One hundred per cent. Society is the only one who benefits from that. When those children move through the system with that good start in life, they're productive, and they're happy, and they're well adjusted. We don't have to spend money on mental health associations for them, we don't have to spend money on containment institutions for them, and then when I'm old, they're earning enough so that I get a decent old age pension! Everyone benefits.

Forbes: *Besides the issues that we've mentioned, what other concerns predominate with your constitutents?*
Brown: There isn't any work out there for young people. It's absolutely devastating for young people. After a couple of years, they start to blame themselves, decide it's their fault. That's a number one, major concern... helping them get that first job.

Forbes: *How?*
Brown: By just harassing the government. Never stop harassing the government. For example, we need to plan for the technological revolution that is going to dynamite women out of the work force. They'll be replaced soon. Meanwhile the schools are teaching redundant skills such as typing and shorthand. And now under the restraint programme, in order for schools to afford computers, people are looking around to raise money privately to be able to do that. It's just absolutely gross what the schools are having to go through in order to get the basic necessities that kids need to function in today's world.

Forbes: *It must have been suggested to you at some point that as a politician you're somewhat exotic.*
Brown: *(laughing)* I actually see myself as everybody's grandmother with my flaming white hair. I somehow see myself as being a benign grandmotherly figure...and that's the reason I can get away with some of the things I do, because no one wants to insult that kind of person. Not in the legislature of course. Nobody has any respect for white hair there!

Forbes: *What are your goals for the future?*
Brown: Well one of my major goals in life is to encourage more and more women and more and more minority group people to get into political life. Shirley Chisolm said that politics is where the decisions are made. Political decisions define where you work, and where you live, how much rent you pay, what kind of health care you get, what kind of education your children have, what sort of environment you have to live in, whether you live at peace or you go to war. Those are all political decisions, and they're much too important for anyone to say "I don't want to be a part of that." Whenever I hear people saying they're not interested in politics, or that they don't get involved in politics, I think to myself how short sighted they are, because really what they're saying is "I'm allowing other people to make these important decisions on my behalf, and I'm not giving them any guidance. I'm not even expressing any opinons as to whether or not I approve of the decisions that they're making." I think that is very incorrect.

When I speak to students I always tell them "get political. Get in there, because if you don't you'll just have to accept whatever gets handed to you in life." If there's any encouragement that I can give young people it is that politics is not a dirty business. There have of course been some people in the political system who have abused their responsibilities and the rights and privileges that have been given to them. But you don't have to. Politics can be a very powerful force for change.

Minority groups have got to crack that political system. There are going to have to be more Lincoln Alexanders and there are going to have to be more Rosemary Browns. I mean, for one thing, we're not going to live forever...and it takes too long, so they better get in there and start doing something representing themselves...and their sisters and brothers.

Profiles of Working Class East Indian Women

Interviewed and translated by Prabha Kholsa

TWO HUNDRED PANTS A DAY

Kewal Hundal is forty-eight years old and works in one of the largest clothing manufacturing plants in the Metro Toronto Area. The factory employs about five hundred workers. They work in one shift from 8 a.m. to 4.45 p.m.

Ever since I started working here I have been sewing pants. The factory makes men's clothes, specifically, three-piece suits for places such as Tip Top Tailors.

Almost all the workers are women. Although there are all kinds of women working here, I would say the majority are Chinese women. A few men work here, but they primarily work in the area where the material is cut, and I don't know what they are paid.

All the rest of the sewing, cutting and pressing work is done by women. The work is divided into many categories. For example, even though I sew pants, the parts I sew are basically the four seams, two for each leg. Four other women do the same work as me. Two of them are Chinese, one is Black and one is Portuguese. People are not transferred from one part to another very often.

Most of us are paid by the piece. Only a few women, about 10 out of a 100, get an hourly rate. At the hourly rate, you begin at $3.50 an hour and then you get a 50¢ raise every 6 months. There are a few women who make up to $4.50 an hour. But they really make you work on the hourly rate.

I can do 150 to 200 pants a day. I get paid by the piece. So I make $18.00 for every 100 pants. Smetimes, when the material is easier to handle, I can do up to 220 pants a day. Some of the women are really fast, and they can sew 200 or 300 pants a day. So they make more money.

the women who work on the pants are in one area of the factory and those who work on the coats are in another. We are divided into separate sections so that those women who do the buttons are in one area, the ones who sew the zippers are in another, and so on. All the work is divided, like an assembly line with different women working on the collars, others sewing the sleeves and the coats, and still others doing the pressing. The clothes have to be ironed during the different stages of sewing, so the pressers are spread out throughout the factory.

There is no uniform wage here. In some areas, the women make more than in others. Like, the women who sew the buttons can make $50.00 to $60.00 a day. But again, they have to work really fast, and not waste any time. There is no overtime. Everybody goes home at 4:45 p.m. We get about 45 minutes for lunch.

There used to be another union here and we used to get two fifteen minute breaks. Now we have a different union and we don't get the breaks anymore. As you know, I don't speak English, so I don't always know what is going on. There used to be a young Indian man who talked to me and told me what was happening in the factory, but he doesn't work here anymore. Some of the women seem to prefer to work right through lunch and don't mind if they don't get a break. Others do.

I want to continue working here, because it is so difficult to get another job these days. And anyway, it is better than some of the other work that our people are doing.

THREE CHILDREN DIED LAST YEAR

Most of the farmwork in British Columbia is concentrated in the Fraser and Okanagan Valleys and is done by immigrant workers. In Greater Vancouver, the majority of farmworkers are primarily Indian or Chinese. There is also a small percentage of working class whites. Farmwork is seasonal, and consequently, a large proportion of the workforce is migratory. Some, like the Quebecois workers, travel to the Okanagan Valley every summer to pick fruit. Due to inadequate housing, they usually have to resort to tenting. Many of the farmworkers in the Fraser Valley live a great distance away in the interior of British Columbia. They are accommodated in converted sheds or barns. It is estimated that the majority of the 10,000 farmworkers in British Columbia are girls and women between the ages of 8 to 70 years old. Kuldip Kaur Bains, who is interviewed below, is sixty-three years old, a grandmother and a worker.

We come down to this farm about March-April, and we live here the whole summer till the end of August, beginning of September.

This is the third year we have come to this farm: me, my husband, my daughter-in-law and her two children. My son works at the saw mill in Williams Lake. That is where we live. And my daughter-in-law comes later when the children have finished school.

We live in this barn here, that has been converted so that it can now accommodate five families. It's been divided up into five sections, but as you can see, it's all rough work with an unfinished plywood ceiling and the walls are bare gyproc. Nothing has been painted or anything. And there aren't enough light bulbs and there are no windows. We have two bunk beds next to each other with a small table. We keep our clothes and other things under the beds.

In the area outside the bedrooms we have two fridges which we all share and five gas plates – one for each family. The washrooms are outside, around the back and there is no light there either. There are no showers and we wash ourselves by carrying water in buckets. There are two toilets and two small divided areas where we clean ourselves.

We have to make a living, so we just learn to accept these things. It is very difficult for me to get any other work. I'm old and I don't speak English, so this is the only work I can get. We get up early in the morning, make some breakfast, and lunch to take with us to the fields. We don't come back here until the evening.

The work is hard and back-breaking. But only us Indians do it. Nobody else will. And we get paid so little. For example, if we pick raspberries we get $2.50 for one flat which weighs 16 ½ lbs. It takes a lot of picking to fill one flat and towards the end of the season it takes even longer. But we don't get the whole $2.50, because the farmer deducts money for allowing us to stay here in his barn. So what we get to keep for ourselves is something like one dollar out of every $2.50.

When we are picking broccoli and cauliflower, we use sharp knives and quite often people get hurt. But there is no first aid on the farm and they usually don't take us to hospital unless it's very serious. So most of us carry bandages with us. Many of us have rashes. People say it's from the pesticides we use on the vegetables and fruits, but the farmer is not doing anything about it.

It's also dangerous for our children. Some of the older children work with their parents but the younger ones stay with their mothers in the field. Three children died last year, because no one was looking after them. They were just playing by themselves.

Because of all these problems, I joined the Canadian Farmworkers Union. They said that if we are all united we will be able to get better money for our work and also be covered by the Worker's Compensation Board. We don't get many of the benefits that other workers get. After all, aren't we like other people? We do the work like everyone else and we should get these things. How would they eat if we were not doing this work?

IS THERE A UNION HERE?

Sudha Patel has lived in Canada for eleven years.

One of my first jobs was at this factory that makes things like paper bags and other paper products. We had many different machines to work with. We made big bags for industrial use and the smaller ones like the ones you get at grocery stores. There were only a

few Indians in the factory. Actually, I think there were only two or three of us.

The way the factory was set-up was that when we came in in the morning, there was a list on the wall indicating which person was assigned to which machine for that day. The machine would be listed with someone's name next to it. And some of the machines were really fast.

Every morning when I would make my way to the machine with my name, the other women who worked there would always tell me, "No, you can't work at that one. You come and work on this one here." Everytime, they would move to the fastest one. I had to work really hard and fast. It was so difficult to keep up to the speed of the machine. And I was really tired by the time I got home in the evening. I don't speak English, even though I do understand some, and I never knew who to complain to about the speed of the machine.

So one day I decided that I had had enough of this. I looked at the list and went to the machine which was assigned to me. Again, these women told me that I couldn't work on it. But this time I said, "No, the list said that I was to work on this one, so this is where I am going to stay."

Well, because of all the noise and confusion the foreman came over and asked what was going on. After he had assessed the situation he said that I had to work on the other machine and not the one with my name on it. Otherwise I could leave right now. So I left, got my lunch and came home. What was I supposed to do?

The next day I went to apply for unemployment insurance because I didn't know how long it would take me to find another job. But at the U.I.C. office they told me that I couldn't apply for U.I.C. They told me that there was a union in the plant and that I shouldn't have walked out, that I should have talked to the union.

I didn't know about the union. I did have a union card, so I guess it's partly my fault. But I didn't know that the union would do anything about it. They never told me about the union and what it was for. Of course, I guess everybody was in the union but nobody did anything about what had been going on for a long time. And I didn't know who I was supposed to talk to.

I do believe in protecting our rights, but if they don't tell us, how are we supposed to know? I didn't even know the name of the union.

I WANT TO LEARN ENGLISH

My name is Charanject Dhillon. I was twenty when I came here, five years ago. I had just graduated from the local college in India with a B.A. My first four or five months here, I didn't do anything. I missed home a lot, and used to cry everytime I received letters from my friends. Then, after a while, I started realizing that I should get a job, or I should start going to school. So I took English classes. I used to go downtown twice a week to Manpower classes. I took the classes for about three months and then started to look for a job.

I only looked for the jobs that didn't require much English, because I didn't speak enough then. I was looking for work in a restaurant, hotel or motel to do cleaning as a chambermaid. Finally, I found one. It was for only four hours a day and I was making three dollars an hour. I worked there for a full year, until a friend told me that I should apply for a job at the restaurant where she worked. When you are first here, it is difficult to know where to look for work. Anyway, they finally hired me as a kitchen helper.

I went back to the motel, and told the owner that I was going to stop working there because I now had a full-time job. He said, "Where?" I said "In a restaurant." He said, "Oh ya, you'll probably be washing dishes." You know, that is the attitude they have – that our people only wash dishes. I still remember that. I will always remember that.

I was taking classes all the time then; that's how my English improved.

I worked in the kitchen so I didn't have to deal with the customers. It was mostly our people in the kitchen. The waitress and carhops were all white. I always felt like something was going on. For example, when the waitresses have to ask other white people for something, they smile and speak nicely, but when they have to talk to us, they don't smile at all, and are very rude. I've noticed that.

I'm now working as a nurse's aide. If I had a choice, I would like a more creative job: even working in the office. I wouldn't do this

work if I had a choice. The work is not any better, but it is better paying; we have a union and benefits.

I wish I could continue to learn English, so that I could say what I feel like inside. Right now, I can't. Many times, I find myself stuck for words. I want to be good in English so that I can get a good job. Now I know what other women are doing and I know I can do the work, but I think I will have some problems communicating with others. I think the other people think you are dumb if you cannot communicate with them.

Prabha Khosla was born in Tororo, Uganda. Presently she works with the Toronto Committee for the Liberation of Southern Africa and also acts as an organizer/interpreter for working class Indian women at work.

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INITIATIVES

Good Enough to Stay

Judith Ramirez

Judith Ramirez describes not only the situation faced by foreign domestic workers, but also presents a case study of a community development process by which one of the most exploited and powerless groups in Canada has begun to participate in influencing some of the most fundamental decisions which affect their lives. It describes the process of successfully influencing the political system – the various strategies employed and the need for persistence. The article also shows the need and utility of effective coalition-building.

"We scrub the floors, we cook the meals, we raise the children – Why aren't we good enough to stay?" shouted Eulene Boyce, a West Indian domestic worker, into the hand-held megaphone. Around her a large contingent of fellow-workers from the Caribbean, the Phillipines, and Europe marched together along the sidewalk. "Landed status now", they chanted, and "if we're good enough to work, we're good enough to stay". The scene was the INTERCEDE Demonstration at the Immigration office at 480 University Ave., in Toronto, in November, 1981. Domestic workers and their allies were calling on the Minister of Immigration, Lloyd Axworthy, to take immediate action on his long awaited promise to reform the inhumane 'work permit' system.

Since 1973, foreign domestic workers had been recruited to come to Canada on temporary work visas, forbidden by law to change their status to permanent residents. The work visas issued under the Temporary Employment Authorization Program are still renewed yearly and tie the domestic worker to a specific employer. They not only cannot change sector of work, for example from domestic work to factory work, but they also cannot change from one domestic job to another without government permission. As well, foreign domestics work without benefit of a contract, with no protection under provincial labour laws, and with pay rates averaging $50 (plus room/board) for a 50-60 hour week.

Sixty thousand women entered Canada under these slave-like conditions from 1973-79, according to the Immigration Commission. And thousands more have come since then. The vast majority are visible minority women from the economically depressed Caribbean countries, and, more recently from the Philippines. Live-in domestic work has become the preserve of third world women – a captive labour force which could be disposed of at will. The average stay for a foreign domestic in Canada has been three years, after which they have been unceremoniously ordered to leave the country, only to be replaced by other third world women waiting back home. The

Temporary Employment Authorization Program has been a revolving door of exploitation which has met the considerable demand for live-in domestic work in Canada at the lowest possible cost to the employers and government alike.

Intercede

INTERCEDE (International Coalition to End Domestics' Exploitation) is a community coalition which formed in the fall of 1979 to combat this system of indentured servitude by lobbying government for a new immigration policy which would allow for basic protections under the law and, above all, for the right of domestic workers to settle in Canada permanently.

At the heart of INTERCEDE's work for domestic workers' rights is the view that their slave-like treatment reflects and reinforces the low status of housework in this society, and the equally low status of those who perform it, i.e. women, and most especially third world women. The women's movement has shown that the prevailing view of housework is a thoroughly sexist one. Housework is not seen as "real" work, but as a "spontaneous" activity of women, an expression of women's "nature". This means that housework is done "for love", that is to say, for free. No one feels the full force of the equation between women and free housework more than the third world woman. She is still being brought to the 'advanced' countries like Canada to labour like a beast of burden with pay rates and working conditions which were outlawed long ago for "real" workers. To sexism is added racism, making the hardest and lowest paid housework jobs the domain of women of colour.

Effective lobbying

Employment Standards Act. Though the minimum wage rate legislated for domestic workers is lower than the Standard one, and there is no regulation of the hours of work or of overtime, a first step was taken in recognizing domestic workers as part of the ranks of 'real' workers.

INTERCEDE prepared its first brief in December, 1981, which was directed to the Ontario Minister of Labour. It urged the government to recognize domestic work as *real* work, with economic value, and on that basis, extend basic protections under the law to those who perform domestic services. Shortly after, the Ontario government introduced changes which included domestic workers under some of the provisions of the

INTERCEDE's second brief was directed to the Task Force on Immigration Practices and Procedures which was examining the infamous "work pursuit" system for foreign domestics. In its recommendations, INTERCEDE called on the federal government to draft a new policy based on the recognition of the value and demand for the services provided by foreign domestic workers.

Many organizations supported INTERCEDE's efforts in the long months of lobbying for a new immigration policy. Among immigrant organizations, the Ottawa-Carleton Immigrant Services Organization and the International Association of Filipino Patriots played a leading role. Women's groups such as the Y.W.C.A. allied themselves with INTERCEDE and attended meetings with government, press conferences, public forums, etc. Church groups such as PLURA and the United Church's Home Missions in Canada provided financial and moral support.

As the 'landed status campaign' developed many domestic workers came forward to fight for themselves and their friends. Once isolated and fearful, many now felt a sense of hope and collective strength. Community meetings held by INTERCEDE, to decide on strategy were attended by growing numbers of domestic workers, especially West Indian women. As they took a greater role in determining the direction of INTERCEDE's work, the organization changed from being a coalition of community groups for domestic workers' rights to an organization of domestic workers with community support.

The week after INTERCEDE's demonstration in November, 1981, a new policy for foreign domestic workers was finally announced by immigration minister Lloyd Axworthy. The chief provision was to allow domestics who had worked continuously in Canada for two years to apply for landed immigrant status from within the country. Canada's eleven thousand foreign domestic workers at last had the opportunity to settle here permanently!

Also of importance were measures in the new policy which require employers to pay at

least 25% above the minimum wage, extend the services of Canada Employment Centres to foreign domestics, and require a written agreement signed by both the employer and the domestic worker stipulating pay, hours of work, duties, etc.

The reaction of domestic workers and their supporters to the new policy was, of course, positive, in spite of the fact that landing was made contingent on meeting "assessment criteria" to demonstrate "potential for self-sufficiency". The policy calls for each domestic worker to be scrutinized on the basis of her education, skills in and out of domestic work, upgrading while in Canada, family and community ties, financial management, personal suitability, and number of dependents. If she is found wanting in any area(s) by the immigration officer 'assessing' her, she is given up to two years to demonstrate her "potential for self-sufficiency". If she 'passes' her 'assessments' she is granted landed status. If not, she is given one final year to work in Canada at the end of which she must leave the country.

How fairly and flexibly the 'assessment criteria' would be applied at local immigration offices quickly became INTERCEDE's chief concern. Individual immigration officers have a lot of discretion and many were opposed to the policy because it gave foreign domestics 'special privileges'. For their part, many domestic workers were up in arms at the very thought of having to prove "self-sufficiency" to the government. "I supported five children *before* I came here, and I've supported five children *since* I came here, and they want to know if I can manage on my own?" asked Mary Dabreo, from St. Vincent.

Of particular concern to INTERCEDE was the fate of lifelong domestics with dependents, most of whom are visible minority women from the Caribbean countries. Because the policy places so much emphasis on "self-sufficiency", candidates who have no dependents, and with skills and/or upgrading in fields other than domestic work, where wages are higher, are far more likely to qualify for landing.

After much discussion in meetings attended by up to two-hundred and fifty domestic workers, INTERCEDE took the position that no woman who came to Canada to do domestic work should have to acquire a second trade in order to qualify for permanent residence. The value of her skills and experience in performing housework, and in meeting a well-established need in the Canadian labour force should weigh heavily in her favor when undergoing "assessment".

Photo credit: Share

November, 1981, INTERCEDE demonstration in front of Immigration Office at 480 University Ave., Toronto.

Photo credit: Share

February, 1984, INTERCEDE speaks at Equal Pay For Work of Equal Value Forum. (Left to right: Edith Johnson, OFL; Marcella Mckinly, domestic worker from Jamaica; Judith Ramirez, INTERCEDE coordinator; Eleanor Ryan, Ontario Status of Women Council.

This, of course, is where the provincial labour laws work against the foreign domestic who wishes to continue in domestic work after landing. She must prove "self-sufficiency" to the federal immigration commission, but provincial labour laws are so weak that a "self-sufficient" wage for domestic work is almost a contradiction in terms. Without careful interpretation and implementation of the "assessment criteria", the new immigration policy could easily become a cruel joke which places career-domestics, with children to support, in a catch-22 position.

In its most recent brief to the Ontario Minister of Labour (November, 1983)[1], INTERCEDE cites the federal requirement to pay foreign domestics at a rate of 25% higher than the minimum wage... "as a substantial upgrading of domestic work which INTERCEDE views as an example for provincial governments to follow" (p.2). It goes on to say that "this is especially so in Ontario where a full *two-thirds* of all foreign domestic workers are living. As these women get landed status under the new federal immigration policy, their pay can *drop* to...the figures legislated in Ontario's Employment Standards Act, thereby losing $142.00 per month for the right to reside permanently in Canada. What a welcome!" (p.2.).

Monitoring public policy

After the new policy had been in effect for one year, then-immigration minister Lloyd Axworthy commissioned INTERCEDE to study its implementation. In March, 1983, INTERCEDE submitted a comprehensive report, "Implementation of the Special Policy on Foreign Domestic Workers", based on extensive interviews with domestic workers, immigration officials, and community leaders in Ontario and British Columbia. Two things emerged clearly in the report's findings:

1. Life-long domestic workers, with several dependents, who wish to remain in the field of domestic work after landing, were expected to have the greatest difficulty in qualifying for permanent residence.
2. Where specific problems were identified in the implementation process, the effect was consistently to jeopardize a particular group of domestic workers, ie. those from the Caribbean.

In spite of the fact that the policy and its "assessment criteria" are intended to provide all candidates, regardless of age, racial group, and family status, with a fair and equal chance, INTERCEDE's findings make it disturbingly clear that that may not, in fact, be happening. Those at most risk are the women most connected to housework and mothering, black women who are life-long domestics who have children of their own to support.

INTERCEDE continues to view this policy as a significant step forward for foreign domestics in Canada, but it concluded in its report that it "...would consider it a major failure of the policy if a disproportionate number of those rejected come from a particular ethnic group, age group, or grouping based on family size" (p. 25). Immigration officials have said that they concur.

INTERCEDE: From a coalition of community groups for domestic workers' rights to an organization of domestic workers with community support

At present, INTERCEDE is continuing the work of monitoring the policy's implementation and its most recent recommendations to government include:

1. community-based counselling to 'high risk' domestics who are having difficulty meeting landing criteria;
2. access to statistics and the relevant breakdown by country of origin, age, and number of dependents, of those rejected under the policy;
3. the appointment of a special assistant to the immigration minister who will review cases of domestics who are rejected unfairly under the policy.

The present Minister of Immigration, John Roberts, has taken up the commitment of his predecessor, Lloyd Axworthy, to monitor the policy and work with organizations such as INTERCEDE. He has recently approved funding for a full-time "Service Unit" under the auspices of INTERCEDE which will ensure that any domestic requiring in-depth counselling in the Toronto area will finally be able to get it. Two visible minority domestic workers, landed under the new policy, are being hired to staff the "Service Unit", and counsel their fellow-workers still going through the system.

Since INTERCEDE was formed four and a half years ago, domestic workers have banded together, across racial and national lines, and, along with their allies, worked tirelessly for their rights. For all that remains to be done to end the legacy of exploitation endured by domestic workers, Canada now has a more humane immigration policy because domestic workers fought like hell to get it.

Judith Ramirez is the coordinator for Intercede.

More information and copies of briefs may be obtained from Intercede, 348 College Street, Toronto, Ontario M5T 1S4.

Coalition of Visible Minority Women

The Coalition of Visible Minority Women has been formed in Ontario "to build unity among visible minority women through open discussion of common experiences and to create a support system for our collective fight against racism and sexism wherever they occur." This initiative is a direct follow-up to the first provincial conference dealing specifically with the concerns of "Racism, Sexism and Work" held last Fall, which was sponsored by the Ontario Human Rights Commission and the Ontario Women's Directorate.

Among the topics discussed were:

- racism and sexism in employment – hiring, promotions and problems on the job;
- government as employer and legislator – its response to visible minority women;
- labour legislation and employment standards for the unorganized;
- education as a preparation for employment;
- The working conditions of domestics, farm labour, Workfare;
- role of unions and professional associations;
- working women and child-care;
- self-employment, co-operatives and small business;
- affirmative action.

Perhaps even more important than the content of this conference was the vehicle it provided for participation and networking among visible minority women throughout Ontario. As a concrete result of this process the Coalition has been meeting on a regular basis, has formed five committees (on education, labour, media, youth, and workshops & seminars) to plan activities for the coming year, and has established the following aims and objectives:

- to fight against racism and sexism wherever they occur;
- to monitor, expose and gain access to the media for adequate coverage and representation of issues pertinent to visible minority women;
- to establish mutual links with other organizations which support us on common issues;
- to provide information about the rights of workers: unionized and nonunionized and to work with labour organizations in a collective effort to improve employment conditions and opportunities for visible minority women;
- to seek representation on various government committees, boards and organizations and to raise issues affecting visible minority women;
- to promote the participation of visible minority women in the educational process through monitoring of curriculum material, resources, and the racial composition of teachers;
- to promote youth involvement in this coalition and to provide them a forum for voicing their concerns;
- to lobby government at all levels to change existing policies and legislation to enable full and equal participation of visible minority women in Canadian society;
- to create new institutions to address the specific needs of visible minority women.

With these objectives reflecting both an internal and external process, an initial series of workshops has been planned that will provide a critical analysis of the different experiences and issues encountered by women of colour from different backgrounds. By generating a greater awareness and body of knowledge on how both racism and sexism have impacted upon visible minority women of varying origins, the Coalition will be better equipped to pursue its objectives in the wider community.

The Coalition of Visible Minority Women can be contacted at: P.O. Box 1307, Station 'A', Toronto, Ontario.

Parliamentary Committee on Racism

We now await the report of the all-party Parliamentary Committee that held hearings across the country last Fall seeking information on "the participation of visible minorities in Canadian society". What will be the outcome of this inquiry?

The answers will depend, at least in part, on us. In particular, all the individuals, groups, organisations and agencies, across the country, who spent countless hours trying to convey, through briefs and submissions, the serious nature of the problems faced by non-whites. As Carol Tator, President of the Urban Alliance on Race Relations stresses "together, unified by mutual goals and a shared vision, we must ensure that the concerns and recommendations identified in the briefs become translated into a massive programme of action."

In order to pursue this rare opportunity, on November 30, 1983 the Urban Alliance invited to a meeting all the Toronto based organisations and individuals who had presented briefs to the Parliamentary Committee.

The purpose of this meeting was to provide a structured setting in which contributors to the Parliamentary Committee could share their perceptions and concerns and decide whether or not they wished to take any further action.

One of the decisions this coalition decided upon was to hire a researcher to analyse as quickly as possible the content of as many briefs as could be collected from across the country. Within a period of four weeks the Urban Alliance managed to obtain more than 60 briefs from Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and British Columbia. Together, these briefs and testimonies constitute perhaps one of the most important collections of knowledge and information about race relations that has ever been collected in Canada. One of the major problems hindering improved race relations is the lack of communication, coordination and access to the information that exists across the country in the form of research, models and projects dealing with all aspects of race relations. The volunteer sector in particular has suffered from this lack of access. The body of knowledge contained in all the briefs and testimonies represents therefore a unique quantum improvement to the level of information sharing.

The content analysis of the data will also give us an incredibly rich and accessible resource for further research and analysis. It will also provide us with an important basis of comparison with the official report that comes out of the Parliamentary Committee and thus as a guide for continued lobbying and advocacy to resolve the issues that have been identified throughout the country.

Brief and testimony characteristics

The briefs that were submitted to the Parliamentary Committee range in length from three to eighty pages. In some briefs only one or two issues or themes are discussed. In most, however, between four and the total number of themes which emerged from the content analysis carried out by the researcher Dr. Monica Armour are addressed. Some authors present statements of opinion and many are sprinkled with concrete examples or cases of individuals and group experience with racism and prejudice. Other briefs are presented in a scholarly form and are footnoted. Monica Armour found that the tone of the briefs ranges from extremely polite while expressing gratitude for the opportunity to make their presentation – to ironic, sharply phrased and critical of the Parliamentary Committee's process. Some authors express hope for a positive and productive outcome of the Committee's endeavor; others are skeptical and express frustration with years of negative experience with other governmental committees whose espoused purposes were to uncover unpleasant truths and remedy the situations that produced them but whose outcomes often "whitewashed" the truth and produced little if any positive change.

Striking consistency is found across all briefs and verbal submissions to the Committee in the identification of issues of importance to non-white Canadians. No disagreement appears about either the nature of the issues or the degree of importance

which is attached to them by authors and witnesses. Some minor differences are expressed related to how certain issues or strategies used to deal with them should be prioritized. Some differences of opinion are expressed, for example, about the relative usefulness of attempts to change attitudes in individuals as contrasted with legislated behavioural change in organizational behaviour. Most submissions placed more stress on the need for institutional and systemic change rather than individual attitudinal change.

Perhaps the most striking characteristic of all the briefs and testimony is the consistently high degree of commitment, intensity and passion with which their authors' thoughts, experiences, and feelings are expressed. Issues and themes raised through their contribution to the work of the Committee hold intense social, psychological, cultural, economic, and political meaning for the authors and witnesses. Contributors made their presentations in carefully reasoned tones and words. Yet, they also shared their feelings with Committee members. It is clear that the issues raised, while making a contribution to the work of the Committee, hold significant meaning and generate considerable concern for those who have expressed them.

Major issues or themes that emerged from briefs and testimony relate to the participation of visible minorities in Canadian society in areas of employment, education, immigration, law enforcement and community organizations. In addition, the multiculturalism policy, political parties, Canada's international policy, research and funding are addressed. Several briefs gave special attention to the situation of visible minority women and most briefs addressed the issue of overall policy in all of the areas mentioned above.

Finally, comments were made about the Parliamentary Committee's process; several briefs issued warnings of what could occur if the issues raised by their briefs were not addressed and resolved; others described hopeful positive visions of what Canadian society might be like if those issues are addressed and dealt with satisfactorily.

The content analysis is being printed and is available from the Urban Alliance on Race Relations.

Feminism, Racism and Class

Frances Henry and Tim Rees

This special issue on visible minority women raises many important questions associated with the socio-economic status of minority women in Canadian society. These problems in the main stem from income disparities, inadequate health and child care facilities, strains on domestic life and other issues related to the day to day concerns of ordinary life.

But there is another issue, one that is perhaps more theoretical in nature but which should be addressed if we are to adequately treat the theme of visible minority women. We must also explore the relationship between economic class exploitation, gender oppression and racism. To what extent are non-white women the victims of patriarchal oppression? To what extent are they the victims of the capitalist divisions centering around class? To what extent are they the victims of racism and overt racial discrimination? Are visible minority women the victims of racism, class exploitation or the patriarchal bias in society? The answer is, of course, all three and visible minority women are in the unfortunate position of being oppressed by three different but interrelated forces working in modern westernized societies.

The Women's Suffragist Movement in North America dated from the beginning of the anti-slavery struggle. It was not only contemporaneous with it, but it owed its existence in a large measure to this phase of the struggle for human rights.

It was impossible for the early Suffragists to agitate continually for the abolition of slavery without, of course, desiring freedom for themselves or realizing the parallel between its situations and their own. If the slave belonged to his master, the married woman belonged, no less absolutely, to her husband as did her property, her earnings, and even her children. Both were disenfranchised; both were deprived of education and subject to economic disabilities which they shared with no other class. Even the right of free speech

was not extended to women when it meant public speech, as she found when she wished to join in the protest against slavery. Even amongst the Abolitionists, her presence on platforms and committees caused serious dissensions.

The most striking instance of this was offered at the World's Anti-slavery Convention held in London in 1840 when the credentials of the American women delegates were refused for no other reason than that they were women.

The women's movement of the last decade or so again, in large part, owes its inspiration to the civil rights movement of the 1960's. However, non-whites have had inconsistent and sometimes strained alliances with movements for women's rights.

By and large, non-white women have not been present in the mainstream of the women's movement. As Winnie Ng states[1], immigrant women remain the "muted shadows", the silent partners of Canadian society and the women's movement.

Non-white women have the highest ratio of unemployment, the most restricted access to job-related fringe benefits, the highest ratio of lay-offs, and are located in the most menial jobs.

With such an experience it would seem natural, as Ng argues, for immigrant women to embrace feminism and for women from the women's movement to seek out their doubly exploited sisters. But few links have been made, the bonds have become frayed, and the roots discarded. The exploitation of minority women in the domestic as well as employment situations would appear to be beyond the grasp of the majority of Canadian women.

Robert Allen[2] demonstrates that the race and class orientation of the leaders of the women's movement at least in the U.S. present a clear dichotomy between their goals and those of non-white women, most of whom are depressed economically, as well as socially.

Other reasons for the minimal participation of minority women in the women's movement may be explained by differences in language and priorities, in traditional cultural values, ignorance on both sides, and the fact that organizing within the minority women's communities is just beginning. Another explanation that has been offered is the manner in which the women's movement activities are organised: Most of the meetings are highly structured and formal, and usually held in the evenings and on weekends when many minority women are either too exhausted or too busy to participate.

In addition, many argue that white women are no less racist than white men, and their middle-class issues are irrelevant to non-white women.

Consciousness raising

Also important is the criticism levelled at the Women's Movement in the approach to racism.[3]

In the few attempts to overcome the whiteness of the women's movement feminists have tended to treat racism as a moral problem, a defect in sisterhood, and thus as an interpersonal issue. To understand how to treat one's non-white sister, so the argument goes, one has to first understand one's own prejudiced behaviour. To understand one's own prejudices, one has to become conscious of what they are and where they came from. Hence, consciousness raising – the coming together in small groups to share experiences and so reveal the dimensions of oppression. Consciousness raising has been a popular female form of thrashing out an issue; it encourages the 'personal' change that makes political transformation and action possible. It has been seen as a specifically female form of organising since the beginning of the women's liberation movement. But althout it may have been an ideal and tested female form of coming to consciousness of one's own oppression as a woman, that does not mean it can be extrapolated as a method of dealing with an issue such as racism. In fact, it has been argued that it often serves as a way of exonerating racist attitudes – to acknowledge them and discover that others share them.

Although many non-white women have gained as individuals from consciousness-raising it cannot be seen as a serious means of the ever-increasing urgency to attack the institutional forms of racism that pervades our society. Institutional racism in fact is completely ignored when racism is relocated as a personal problem.

Anti-racist feminism

A number of recent works[4] see a strained

relationship continuing to exist between non-white females and the mainstream of the current women's movement. The main problems are: the perception of many non-white women that their main struggle is against racism rather than sexism; the opinion that the concerns of non-white women are different from those of white women; racism in the women's movement; and the fact that many non-white women have suffered discrimination at the hands of white women.

The women's movement has been criticised for failing to provide policies or programmes which speak to the oppression of the majority of women – which would mean working-class women including non-white women. What it has done is to universalise the middle-class woman's experience of oppression and her demands which have tended to centre around her sexuality.

While the women's movement struggles with the conflict between the traditions of femininity and their aspirations and abilities, working class and non-white women are organising at different levels – struggling over pay and job discrimination. A number of writers such as Angela Davis[5] argue in fact that the successful transformation of racist and sexist concerns can only be achieved by hitting at their root – economic exploitation.

What non-white women should be asking white feminists then is not to render them more 'visible' as such, but more importantly to challenge the use of some of the central categories and assumptions of recent mainstream feminist thought.

Socio-economic conditions of non-white women

Non-white women are institutionally penalised as non-whites and as females. Although Canadian data is hard to come by, indications are that there is an alarming number of poor non-white women who are confronted with triple oppression. Discrimination against these women include unemployment and underemployment, deteriorating education for themselves and their children, and inadequate health care.

Another critical issue is the devastating impact of negative non-white female images. The negative stereotypes transmitted through television, films, music, novels, poetry and advertisng have an enormous influence on the way in which people are perceived, as well as the manner in which people perceive themselves. For example, one of the most pervasive stereotypes in North American culture is the notion of the matriarchal black women – a woman of strength and dignity who keeps her family together without the aid of a man in the household. The strong Black woman is both a result of capitalist exploitation which keeps her man often economically insecure and jobless thus forcing her to become the household provider. Although her job is likely to be menial, there is often more scope in doing domestic work and she is often more likely to be employable than is her man. Both of them are equally affected by the dynamics of racism which effectively serve to deny equal access to the desired resources of society.

Thus one might suggest that the dominant problems facing Black women (and perhaps other minority women as well) are those related to class and racism. Sexism or gender oppression which is at the core of the White dominated feminist movement certainly takes a distant second place.

Can race be subsumed under class and patriarchy? Marxists subsume both under class whereas feminists by and large subsume both under patriarchal domination. In both systems, the role of individual and state racism is denigrated. It is no surprise then that Black women and other visible minority women are ill at ease with the White dominated feminist movement. Their concerns are less with sexist exploitation than with getting a meal on the table. It is the economic divisions of class and the spectre of state racism which prevent minority women and their families from having the necessities of life.

1. Ng Winnie, *Still Ain't Satisfied*, The Women's Press, Toronto, 1982.
2. Allen Robert, *Reluctant Reformers: Racism and Social Reform Movements in the United States*, Anchor Press, New York, 1975.
3. Bourne Jenny, *Race & Class*, Vol XXV, No 1, pages 1-23, Summer 1983.
4. Steady Filomina Chioma (ed), *The Black Woman Cross-Culturally*, Shenkman, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1981: Reid Iney, *Together Black Women*, Emerson Hall, New York, 1972; Rose la Frances Rodgers, Sage, Beverly Hills, 1980.
5. Davis Angela Y, *Women, Race & Class*, Random House, New York, 1981.

Saskatchewan Coalition Against Racism

Bill Rafoss

Race relations in Regina have often been the focus of national attention. Usually the controversy surrounds the inter-action between the native community and the larger community.

This is a story in itself, as the native community battles to have a voice in school board decisions, or tries to have police dogs tethered, or tries to gain access to recreational facilities for their children.

However there have been some new developments in cross-cultural inter-action in Regina that is also deserving of note. In late October, 1983 the Saskatchewan Coalition against Racism presented a brief to the Parliamentary Committee on the participation of Visible Minorities culminating months of organizational work that saw them emerge as a major force in race relations in Regina.

The Coalition, or S.C.A.R. as it is known, is an alliance of over twenty-five ethnic, Indian/Native, Human Rights, Church and Labour Organizations. It was initially formed in late 1982 when interested groups came together to respond to racist statements that were made by a member of the Saskatchewan Legislature. After the Member was disciplined by the Premier, The Coalition disbanded, feeling its aims had been successfully achieved.

To this point, the Coalition had been somewhat loose and informal, but when former Multiculturalism Minister Jim Fleming announced a Parliamentary Inquiry into racial intolerance, some members of the Coalition saw this as an opportunity to re-unite in a formal way, with elected officers and a mandate of action.

Organizing began in June, 1983. Letters went far and wide inviting interested groups to come to a founding meeting at the local library. A news conference was held to bring publicity to this new cause.

Special care was given to inviting representatives from visible minorities in Regina. In the past, their concerns about race relations in the schools or with the police were often over-shadowed by the larger problems facing the native community.

The response was better than expected. The meeting room at The Regina Public Library was filled to capacity with people representing the native community, East Indians, several Black organizations, Civil Liberties groups, Churches and organized labour. Working women, organizations for peace and Latin American support groups also came out.

The Coalition was formalized and set about the task of preparing a brief for the Parliamentary Committee. It dedicated itself to undertaking educational programs and to encouraging governments to implement anti-racism measures. A steering committee was elected to manage the affairs of the alliance. The Saskatchewan Coalition Against Racism was now an official voice, filling a void that had existed because multi-cultural groups had previously tended toward the folk festival approach to race relations.

The Coalition worked through the fall, documenting its case, seeking out testimonials and doing the important media work that is necessary to maintain interest in an issue such as this. In October, their brief was presented to the Committee as the primary organization representing minority groups in Saskatchewan, especially non-native visible minorities.

The Parliamentary Committee was the impetus in bringing together this Coalition in the first instance. The challenge that now lies ahead will be to stick together, to maintain a high profile player in the campaign against racism.

The prognosis looks good!

Bill Rafoss is Director of Education for the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission.

Towards a Multicultural Theatre

Vera Cudjoe and Robin Breon

Have you ever wondered why we seldom, if ever, see black actors portraying major roles on the stages of this country's classical repertory theatres? For Canadians, seeing a black actor treading the boards in a major role at the Stratford or Shaw Festival theatres might be something of a novelty – to some it would seem downright out of place. Indeed, actors who are visible minorities in this country are highly invisible when it comes to classical theatre and enjoy only minimal participation within the modern popular theatre.

In an effort to gain a deeper understanding as to why this problem exists and with a view toward creating greater opportunities for visible minorities in the theatre, Black Theatre Canada recently sponsored an educational conference on visible minorities and the theatre broadly titled Shakespeare and Other Cultures.

The idea for the conference was really an off-shoot of BTC's highly acclaimed 10th anniversary production of A Caribbean Midsummer Night's Dream which was produced last summer and was the recipient of a Dora Mavor Moore Award in the category of Innovation and Artistic Excellence. It was the first predominantly black production of Shakespeare in Canadian theatre history.

The opening address of the conference – held at the Toronto Board of Education – was entitled Toward A Multicultural, Multiracial Theatre and was delivered by Woody King, Jr., Artistic Director of the New Federal Theatre in New York City. In his remarks, Mr. King stressed that the presence of Black theatre in today's society adds greatly to our understanding and appreciation of art and culture as a whole. Numbering Black Theatre Canada along with the New Federal Theatre and the Negro Ensemble Company in the United States he said, "Black people today need, more than ever before, an outlet for creative and cultural expression in all the areas of the arts. Especially needed is more sensitivity to the development of black artists – and indeed all visible minorities – who may not fit into what white society generally views as "the cultural mainstream".

He gave, as an example, the play Three Sisters by Chekhov. "At the university level, there is no reason why this play could not use a Black woman, an Asian woman and a Native Indian woman to make up the three sisters if that was the composition of the class. The exclusion of visible minorities in the theatre begins from the first day they enroll in theatre arts at university", he said. He went on to say that Black Theatre Canada's work in this area has been an important breakthrough. "We need broader interpretations of the classics if the theatre is to mirror a true reflection of our multiracial society", King stated.

Also present at the conference was Cecil O'Neil, Director of Production for the Stratford Shakespeare Festival. When questioned as to why we do not see visible minorities participating in any major capacity at the Festival, he answered that the problem may partly be one of perception. O'Neil said that of over 600 actors who recently auditioned for the Stratford Festival, only four were visible minorities. It was his feeling that "the majority of folks probably believe they just don't have a chance." Conference participants generally agreed that some type of affirmative action program was needed to rectify this problem. "If BTC could work with Stratford to set up some kind of workshop for visible minorities, I think it would be a positive step", he concluded.

Other workshops held throughout the day included Remmelt Hummelin and Darryl Wildcat from the Association for Native

Development in the Performing and Visual Arts who spoke about Indigenous and popular theatre movements. They explained how Native people have generally preferred non-traditional performing spaces rather than the traditional proscenium arch stage. This was one reason why the town of Peterborough was chosen for the Indigenous People's Theatre Celebration in 1982 which brought together groups from all over the world.

Enid Lee is a teacher and educator who has done extensive research in the area of multicultural relations and examining the presence of predjudice and bias in school curricula. Her workshop, entitled Africa and the Elizabethans, examined the importance placed upon Shakespeare in the classroom situation and the need to re-examine the extent to which the playwright relayed the attitudes and prejudices of the Elizabethan era. She used as an example the play Othello which is a story of great humanism and struggle but one which many academics have used to perpetuate their own forms of racial stereotypes over the years.

Also on the panel of speakers was Phillip Ing from the Canasian Artists Group who spoke about that group's experience in producing "Yellow Fever" by Rick Shiomi, a play (in the murder/mystery genre) that deals with the lives of Japanese-Canadians in the years following World War II. Dr. Azra Francis, Professor of Theatre Arts at Windsor University who also acted as artistic director for A Caribbean Midsummer Night's Dream, conducted a workshop entitled Speak Me A Speech – Approaching the Language of Shakespeare.

Conference participants included a number of students and educators as well as representatives from the Secretary of State for Multiculturalism. During the discussion following each presentation, participants were able to express themselves on a wide range of issues. At one point it was stated that there is a need to generally expand the working *definition* of legitimate cultural expression in this country. The Canada Council's recent decision to exclude jazz (Black Classical Music) from musical categories eligible for support was one example given of the alarming insensitivity displayed by the various arts councils when considering questions of cultural expression as it relates to visible minorities.

By all accounts the conference was considered a successful initiative in a heretofore unexplored area of the Canadian arts scene. A number of recommendations were put forward with suggestions for future implementation in various areas. To summarize briefly it was recommended that:

1. The inclusion of visible minorities within the various Canadian theatres at all levels of production including administrative, artistic and technical areas should be looked upon as a unique opportunity to enrich our cultural heritage and to enable the theatre to offer a true reflection of Canadian society.
2. To further this end, there is a need to implement affirmative action programs throughout the theatre arts industry. Classical companies such as the Shaw and Stratford Festivals should be especially sensitive for the need to assist in training and nurturing talented actors who are visible minorities.
3. There should be some visible minority representation on the various arts councils and agencies (including the Ontario Arts Council and the Canada Council) that are so important in distributing funds and formulating cultural policy.
4. Special attention and support should be given to those organizations that have consistently provided a platform for the cultural expression of visible minority groups in Canada. It should also be mentioned here that in our own local situation the City of Toronto, Metro and the Province should be

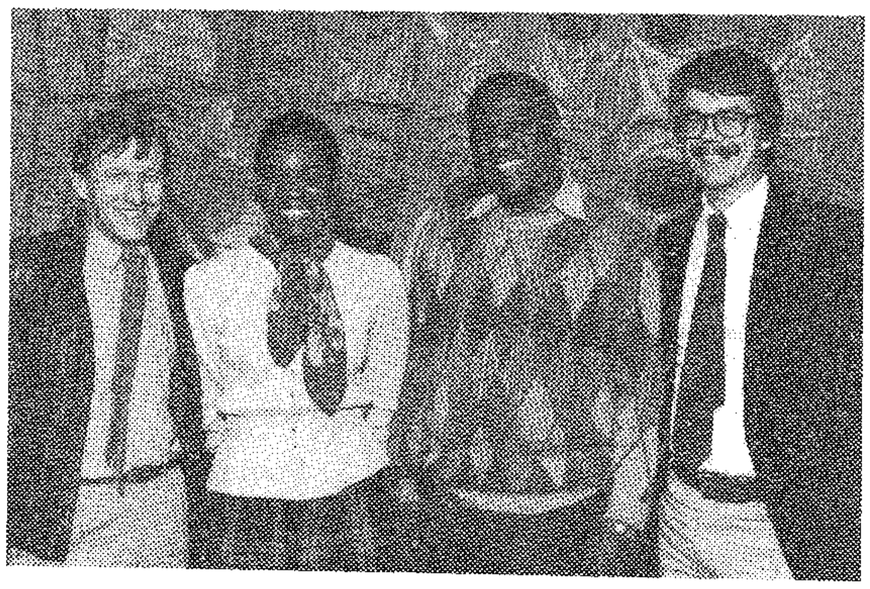

Photo by Lightwaves

From Left to Right: *Cecil O'Neil, Director of Production, Stratford Shakespeare Festival; Vera Cudjoe, Executive Director and Founder of Black Theatre Canada; Woody King, Jr., Artistic Director of the New Federal Theatre; Robin Breon, Administrator and Public Relations Officer, Black Theatre Canada.*

called upon to assist in providing proper housing for such institutions in the same substantial way that they have come forward for numerous other artistic groups and social service organizations.

The conclusion of the conference featured the film Proud Valley starring the great Afro-American singer, scholar and actor Paul Robeson.

Vera Cudjoe is Executive Director and Founder, and Robin Breon is Administrator and Public Relations Officer, of Black Theatre Canada.

FINDINGS

Discrimination or Adjustment?

Visible Minority Women in the Labour Force

Liviana Calzavara

Do visible minority women experience more income inequality than other women? It is well documented that working women in Canada have always earned less than men. In 1979, the year this survey was conducted, women who worked on a full-time basis earned 63 cents for every dollar earned by men.[1] Data from a 1978-79 Toronto study indicate that full-time working women in each of nine ethnic groups surveyed earned less than men.[2] The study found that: majority Canadian women earned 81 cents for every dollar earned by majority Canadian men, Chinese women earned 72 cents for every dollar earned by Chinese men, West Indian women earned 61 cents for every dollar earned by West Indian men, German women earned 69 cents for every dollar earned by German men, Italian women earned 49 cents for every dollar earned by Italian men, Jewish women earned 63 cents for every dollar earned by Jewish men, Portuguese women earned 83 cents for every dollar earned by Portuguese men, and Ukrainian women earned 72 cents for every dollar earned by Ukrainian men.

There is also evidence that ethnic minority women not only earn less than men but also less than majority Canadian women. Majority Canadian women are defined as those women of Anglo-Saxon descent who are at least third generation Canadian. For every dollar earned by majority Canadian women (in 1979) Chinese women earned 88 cents, West Indians earned 77 cents, Germans earned 96 cents, Italians earned 80 cents, Jews earned 82 cents, Portuguese earned 60 cents, and Ukrainians earned 1 dollar.

These findings suggest that ethnic minority women are doubly disadvantaged. They earn less than men and less than the established majority Canadian women. My present study takes us one step further by asking whether visible minority women face a triple disadvantage. Do they encounter race discrimination besides gender and ethnic discrimination? This question is answered by comparing the average annual earnings of majority Canadian women and that of visible and non-visible ethnic minorities.

The reported results are based on interviews with 648 women who live in the Metro Toronto area and who are full-time labour force participants. The visible minorities are represented by Chinese and West Indians. The

non-visible minorities are represented by Germans, Italians, Jews, Portuguese, and Ukrainians. The data were collected in 1979 and therefore may not be representative of the situation as it exists in 1984.

Size of income gap

How does the income of visible minority women compare with that of other minorities and that of the majority Canadian? On average, ethnic minority women earn 87 cents for every dollar earned by majority Canadian women. When this is broken down by visibility of the minority, we find that visible minority women earn 85 cents and non-visible minorities earn 86 cents. Visible minority women earn 97 cents for every dollar earned by non-visible minority women. These findings suggest that being a member of a minority ethnic group has more of an impact on the size of the income gap than whether one is a member of a visible minority or not.

There are differences in the size of the income gap of the Chinese and that of the West Indians, just as there are differences in the size of the income gap of the groups who represent non-visible minorities. The Chinese earn 89 cents for every dollar earned by majority Canadian women while the West Indians earn 79 cents.

Controlling for qualifications

The fact that an income gap does exist or does not exist is not proof that there is discrimination or not. There are a number of other factors which affect income besides discrimination. People's wages are also affected by their qualifications and by the nature of their occupation. Members of some group may be paid less because they are less qualified, and or they may be concentrated in occupations which are lower paying. On the other hand, an income gap which does not appear to exist may surface when one controls for qualifications or occupation.

In order to determine how much of the income gap results from intentional or systemic discrimination, the effects of three aspects of qualification were eliminated. The three aspects are ability to speak English, number of years of education, and number of years of work-experience. According to our sample both English fluency and years of education are important determinants of wages. Every year of education contributes $615 to one's annual income. The ability to speak English contributes another $1,205 to one's yearly income. Each year of work-experience contributes a further $95.

Once qualifications are controlled there appears to be a very small income difference. The income gap between majority Canadian women and ethnic minority women is .97. For non-visible minorities, it is reduced from .86 to .97. So that non-visible minority women earn on average 3 cents less for every dollar earned by majority Canadian women (an average annual income difference of $303). For visible minorities the gap is reduced from .85 to .93. Visible minority women on average earn 7 cents less for every dollar earned by majority Canadian women (an average annual income difference of $553). It appears that controlling for qualifications accounts for most of the income gap which exists between majority Canadian women and minority ethnic groups. It is also true that while the gap for visible minorities is slightly larger, it is statistically insignificant. There is very little ethnic discrimination, and racial discrimination in the wages of women in the Toronto labour force.

Nature of occupation

Two other findings would seem to indicate that the 7 cents gap is more a function of the nature of occupations in which the groups are concentrated rather than racial discrimination.

First, Chinese women experience the same income gap that non-visible minority women do. When qualifications are controlled for, Chinese women earn 96 cents and non-visible minorities earn 97 cents. West Indian women, on the other hand, earn 87 cents. This finding can either be interpreted as indicating that the West Indians face racial discrimination but the Chinese do not. Or, one can argue that given the West Indians' relatively recent arrival in Canada, they have not (as of 1979) had the chance to seek out higher paying jobs. A tabulation of the occupational distribution of ethnic groups shows that West Indian women are more heavily concentrated in blue-collar occupations than was true of the other groups. In 1979 they were mainly

employed in clerical occupations, food and beverage preparation, personal service occupations, and packaging.

Conclusion

For non-visible minorities and Chinese there is little or no wage discrimination. In order to reduce the income gap, they can increase their qualifications (i.e. English fluency, education, work-experience). For West Indians the solution is not as simple. The West Indians unlike the Chinese do face a disadvantage. Given my data limitations it is not clear whether the inequality results from unfamiliarity with the occupational opportunities available or from intentional discrimination against Blacks. More recent income data is needed to assess whether their situation has improved in the last five years.

Dr. Calzavara is a sociologist who is presently a Research Associate at the Centre for Urban and Community Studies, University of Toronto.

1. Paul Philips and Erin Philips. *Women and Work: Inequality in Labour Markets*, James Lorimer, Toronto, 1983.
2. J. Reitz, L. Calzavara and D. Dasko, *Ethnic Inequality and Segregation in Jobs*, Research Paper No. 123, Centre for Urban & Community Studies, University of Toronto, 1981.

REVIEWS

THE COLOR PURPLE
Alice Walker
Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1982

Tell nobody but God.

This remarkable novel centres around Celie, a semi-literate, black Georgia woman who endures hair-raising experiences and writes letters to God.

'You better not never tell nobody but God. It'd kill your mammy.' Thus reads the epigraph to The Color Purple. So Celie, the young black girl raped by her father, writes her letters to God, and in her own grammar speaks to him of the miseries of her poor life.

This novel is the articulation of the inarticulate: in two senses, because Celie is truly of the silent majority, schooled only in submission, and because her experience is literally 'unspeakable', consisting as it does of incest, loss of her children, sterility, forced marriage, domestic violence and general contempt; atrocities perpetrated upon her by the black men closest to her – her father and husband. But in the community of other black women she gives and receives love – with relatives and friends, and especially with her husband's mistress, Shug, and her absent sister, Nettie. And with love she finds self-esteem, and with self-esteem finally she finds happiness.

We may be tempted to read Celie's winning through from poverty to comfort, from isolation to community and from self-contempt to self-esteem as a somewhat contrived utopianism. Especially with the miraculous return of her long-lost children and the revelation that her 'father' was merely a stepfather; we may feel that the author cannot bear at the end to deny her character any element to complete her happiness, and if so, we may enjoy the happy ending as we enjoy the resolution of a fairy tale, guiltily aware that life isn't like that. But is that true? Some of Celie's happiness is given, but more of it is earned. As she grows older she grows, even if unconsciously, in her capacity to control her life. If as a child she was powerless against her father's lust and her husband's violence, she is not condemned by this to perpetual oppression as an adult. Through her love for Shug she frees herself from her husband's violence, then from him and finally from her hatred of him. In speaking of her father's lust and her fears for her children, if only to God and her sister, she can learn that these fears are unfounded; the rape remains, but not the incest. And eventually she can confront and so deny

the concept of 'God' as a force external to herself, imagined as 'that old white man' and re-imagine 'him' as inside herself, and 'inside everybody else'.

Alice Walker, who was born in Eatonton, Georgia, captures with remarkable honesty and candor, the casual and intense relationships of the farm people in the South in the period between the World Wars, their Saturday night roisterings and their fierce, often wordless passions, their promiscuities and loyalties, their seemingly insurmountable problems of male-female relationships and those they have with the larger white community. She deals with these fierce, interpersonal reactions and stoicisms in a straightforward sort of way.

This remarkably sensitive and taut story can be read not only as a realist novel but also as an allegory of the black woman's learning to speak. Knowing from the start the nature of her experience (the dumb are not stupid), she can speak it only to herself (to God). But she learns to speak honestly, and love honestly, other black women, with whom she also learns to reinterpret her experience. She is then able to begin to recognise that it is not all suffering, and that she has within her the responsibility and the right to refuse to suffer, to notice too 'the color purple'. Finally she can speak to everyone and everything: 'Dear God. Dear stars, dear trees, dear sky, dear peoples. Dear everything. Dear God'.

This is a hopeful book. And hope is a risky thing; it can too easily be dismissed as naivety. But only by taking risks can the writer open us up to possibility. This Alice Walker does supremely, in making us aware that only by facing up to the meaning of blackness and femaleness in a racist and sexist society can we hope to relate honestly not only across the barriers of race and sex, but within them. We have it within us, she says, to try.

CLEAR LIGHT OF DAY,
Anita Desai, Penguin, 1980
FIRE ON THE MOUNTAIN
Anita Desai, Penguin, 1977

Third World Literature

Canadian readers are generally unaware of the calibre of literature in English emanating from the third world. Yet, familiarity with such writing is essential if the issues of cultural diversity, racism and social development are to be adequately addressed in Canadian society. The following reviews sample a fraction of the wealth of third world literature which could provide a useful insight for those of us working towards a multicultural environment.

Anita Desai is one of the foremost writers of modern Indian fiction in English. Her central characters are inevitably women and her works render a most sensitive portrayal of their social predicament. The universal theme of the hardships and struggle of women weaves its way through her remarkable novels *Clear light of day* and *Fire on the mountain*. The two novels now published by Penguin are highly recommended for their original and

creative writing.

Clear light of day recreates most effectively the life of a small neighbourhood in a forgotten pocket of Old Delhi. Studded with overgrown gardens, crumbling brick walls and abandoned homes, it epitomizes the stagnant past. Desai reveals a backwater which harbours the lost illusions and shattered hopes of not only a middle class Hindu family but also of an entire nation. The deserted estates of muslim families compelled to flee for their lives are a reminder of the atrocities of the partition – the hopes for an independent united India rendered a myth by the events of 1947. Although the British have long ceded their rights to the Indian soil, the heavy burden of their legacy which divided a nation permeates the novel.

Against this backdrop, Anita Desai portrays the remarkable character of Bim, a plain but intelligent single woman imprisoned in her role as a family keeper. While her brother Raja and sister Tara attempt to shape their own lives, she must remain to care for Baba, the retarded younger brother. Yet, Tara's busy but glamourous life as a diplomat's wife or Raja's successful business career are a far cry from Bim's personal notions of fulfilment. She cannot easily forget her earlier ideals in spite of the ordeals of her daily existence. Unlike Tara, Bim cannot accept the officiousness and pomposity of Bakul, her diplomat brother-in-law. In her moments of exchange with the much travelled Bakul, it is Bim's perceptions which are weighty, incisive and closer to the truth. Bakul is a vain superficial creature concerned with appearances while circumstances left Bim no such luxury of choice. She cannot ignore Raja's blatant compromise of his principles for wealth or Baba's illness. Due to such painful experiences, her outlook holds greater depth than Bakul can even begin to conceive. However, the bitterness that has over the years lined her existence gradually disperses when Tara's return engenders another look into the past.

The narration takes place in the old rambling house crammed with undisturbed relics Bim has known since her childhood. Anita Desai's novel unfolds like an unending pageant of evocative imagery and haunting music. She captures poignantly the subtle emotions, moods, colours and scents that filter through the enchanting garden of that brooding household. Beautifully constructed, *Clear light of day* is an exquisite novel which makes for delightful reading.

Fire on the mountain focuses on the last years of the elderly Nanda Kaul. Tall, gaunt and austere, she retreats to a lonely cottage on a hill station in search of the tranquility which evaded her all her married life. The arrival of her unusual great grand daughter is a disruptive influence on Nanda's structured existence but one which compels her to face the harsh truth of her life.

Through Raka, Anita Desai delivers a most refreshing and convincing perception of a child's world view. Offspring of an unhappily married mother, Raka is a fragile, secretive but self sufficient child. She expects little from her elders other than to be left to herself. Raka is no ordinary little girl, nor is her world that of other children confined to tidy playgrounds and parks with watchful 'ayahs'. Raka has her bright eyes fixed firmly on the far mountains away from the bustle of the mall. She searches for the hidden face of Kasauli off the beaten track. Her favourite haunts are the steep cliffs open to the winds, the ravines and the paths that snake away from habitation. In the rugged wilderness and austerity of Carignano, her great grand mother's house, Raka unexpectedly finds her true home.

The novel is remarkable for its sensitive and moving portrayal of childhood and old age. Raka's world is full of movement that is as lithe and soundless as the animals that inhabit the sere landscape. Nanda's structured world on the other hand is one of stillness, contemplation and reflection. Her past streams through her mind like the perpetual breeze through the pine trees. Although initially reluctant to accept each other, a strange affinity develops between the two. Raka fits into Nanda's house as unobtrusively 'as an uninvited mouse or a cricket'. Nanda gradually recognizes in Raka an extraordinary companion who makes few demands. The stark isolation of Carignano onlooking the silent hillsides develops a rare bond between age and childhood. In the face of this binding relationship, Nanda can no longer exist with the fabrications of her own past as a child, wife and mother.

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GETTING THERE
Deborah Barndt, Ferne Cristall, Dian Manno
1983 Between the Lines

Images of immigrant women

Getting There is a collection of educational materials about immigrant women surviving in and adapting to a new culture. It is about social obstacles: the barrier of language, the lack of decent work, the dominant, distorted images of women seen everywhere. It is about a collective method of learning that tries to break down those obstacles, a method that resulted in the photostories of Gloria and Aurora.

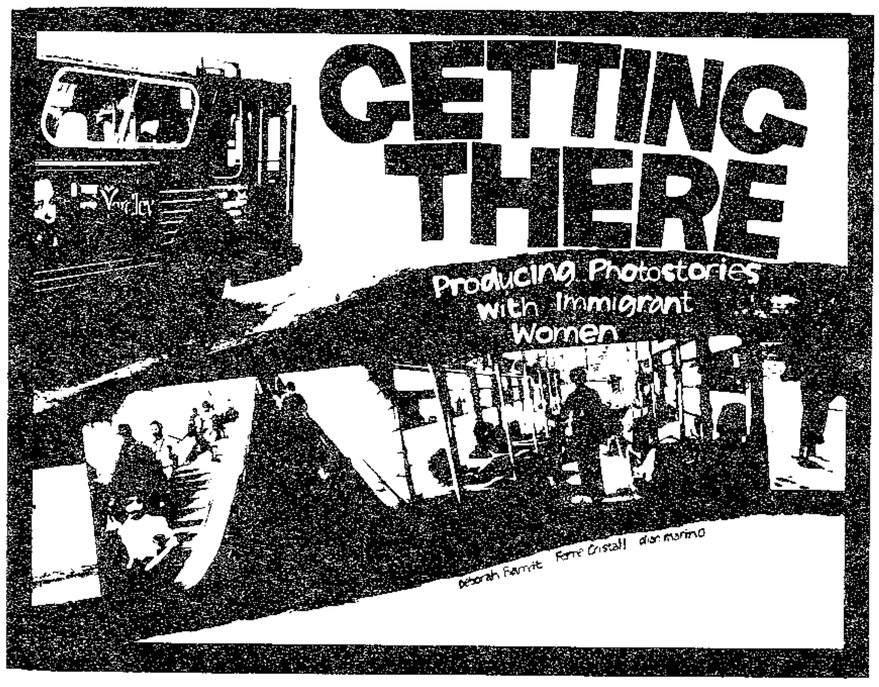
The photostories provide a dramatic and visual reminder of the difficulties society places in our paths – even when it comes to something as seemingly easy as "just getting" to work or to a job interview. The photostories that emerge in many ways represent the broader experience of women everywhere – the journey to "get there" politically, economically and culturally.

The methodology used in the production of the stories starts from the issues of everyday life and encourages people to talk to each other about their experiences. The basic principle is simple: that people learn and take action best when they explore common issues together.

Along with the photostories are short background essays on immigrant women and work and on the contradictions between advertising images and on the lives of women. The book also contains a step-by-step introduction to "How the Photostories Were Made" and an activities and discussion guide.

The publication is a collaborative effort of the Development Education Centre and the Participatory Research Group which are both Toronto-based collective engaged in research and educational work on social issues.

Getting There is both an introduction to an innovative method of learning based on personal and social experience and a book of provocative photoessays. It is of interest not only to people in English as a Second Language, literacy classes and employment programmes, but also to those involved in education through unions, community organizations and women's groups.



ART OUT OF AGONY
A book of transcribed interviews from CBC Stereo Morning
1983 CBC Enterprises

The Holocaust Theme

"Art out of Agony", both as a radio series (presented in five parts on Stereo Morning C.B.C. F.M.) and as a book of transcribed interviews, is a remarkable achievement. The subject of the Holocaust has been explored many times in recent years but rarely has it been treated so creatively and with such dignity. This series richly deserves the award bestowed upon it by the League of Human Rights as the outstanding radio programme of 1983.

Stephen Lewis as interviewer, with extraordinary sensitivity, intelligence and humility, discusses with novelists, artists and film makers a subject which is, in many ways, both unimaginable and unspeakable. The audience, both readers and listeners, is provided with a rare opportunity to share in the insights of these incredibly eloquent artists as they struggle to explore the quintessential example

of man's inhumanity to man. Together they perform the role of interpreter. Their words and images help to illumine the anguish of victims as they try to cope with living and surviving the most barbarous experience in human history.

Each reading, every interview, contains within it testimony to the terror and tragedy of millions of men, women and children who were part of Hitler's final solution. Questions are posed for which there are not necessarily answers, but which must be asked by all of us. As Stephen Lewis suggests, "New Generations must be made aware of the nightmares of the past, and how they connect, organically, with the destructive impulses of the present."

Art and the Holocaust speaks to both Jews and non-Jews alike about the perils of ignoring anti-semitism and all forms of racism. While it is undoubtedly painful to confront the issues raised by this important series, those who

art out of agony

The Holocaust Theme in Literature, Sculpture and Film

cherish equality, justice and freedom are obliged to consider the meaning of the Holocaust in the context of their own lives and the society of which they are a part.

Carol Tator

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Through a content analysis of the briefs and testimony submitted to the Special Parliamentary Committee on the Participation of Visible Minorities in Canadian Society, this special issue will provide a comprehensive and state-of-the-art picture of the issues that need to be addressed in improving race relations in this country.