

ON N E C T  
tiny giant magazine

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S P E A K O U T

T A K E A C T I O N

YOUNG  
WOMEN  
CONNECT

V I O L E N C E

P O V E R T Y

R A C I S M

## Young Women Connect

Volume 62, Number 2

Young Women Connect (YWC) is project of The Students Commission in partnership with PowerCamp, NACYoungWomyn and FAFIA, funded by the Department of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women Canada. It brings together young women in Canada, to create change on the barriers we face when it comes to race and gender, particularly in the areas of violence and poverty. We have a lot to say and sometimes we are not given the space to voice our concerns.

Our special edition of TG Magazine is an action tool that we are using not only to connect women in Canada but also to take action by contributing to the process of putting together this magazine and by using this magazine in workshops to stimulate discussion, discovery and action.

We have collected articles from young women who have expressed and shared personal stories, thoughts, reflections and analysis on different issues. Again and again in the articles we received, young women talked about how the telling of their stories was a positive and empowering experience, even if the experience they wrote about was negative. We realized that we had to keep the process of story telling going. We realized that the reader should have the same opportunity to process and discuss. This magazine is presented then as a workshop, with free space for each reader to interact with the magazine. We wanted to keep connecting young women; we wanted them to think of this magazine as theirs. In order achieve this goal, YWC and The Students Commission continues to run workshops across the country encouraging discussion, discovery and action.

We want this magazine to be an interactive action tool, which provides everybody with enough information to start thinking about the issue that each article is dealing with. Please decorate it with your comments. Use it to create your own workshops. Bring your comments and feedback to the discussion forums and online material at the electronic Tiny Giant Magazine at [www.tgmag.ca](http://www.tgmag.ca).

We want to know what do you think about this magazine. Ideas for layout, facts, quotes, discussion questions, statistics anything that you think will make this magazine a complete tool for you to organize your own workshop!

Please send us your suggestions to [tgmag@tgmag.ca](mailto:tgmag@tgmag.ca)

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When **violent acts** are committed against **Women** many of them are **unreported.**

Are the following statements reasons to remain silent? What do you think?

Women want to keep the family together and follow the religious commitment to be with their partner

Women fear that their families and friends will be ashamed of them

Their partners threaten to commit suicide

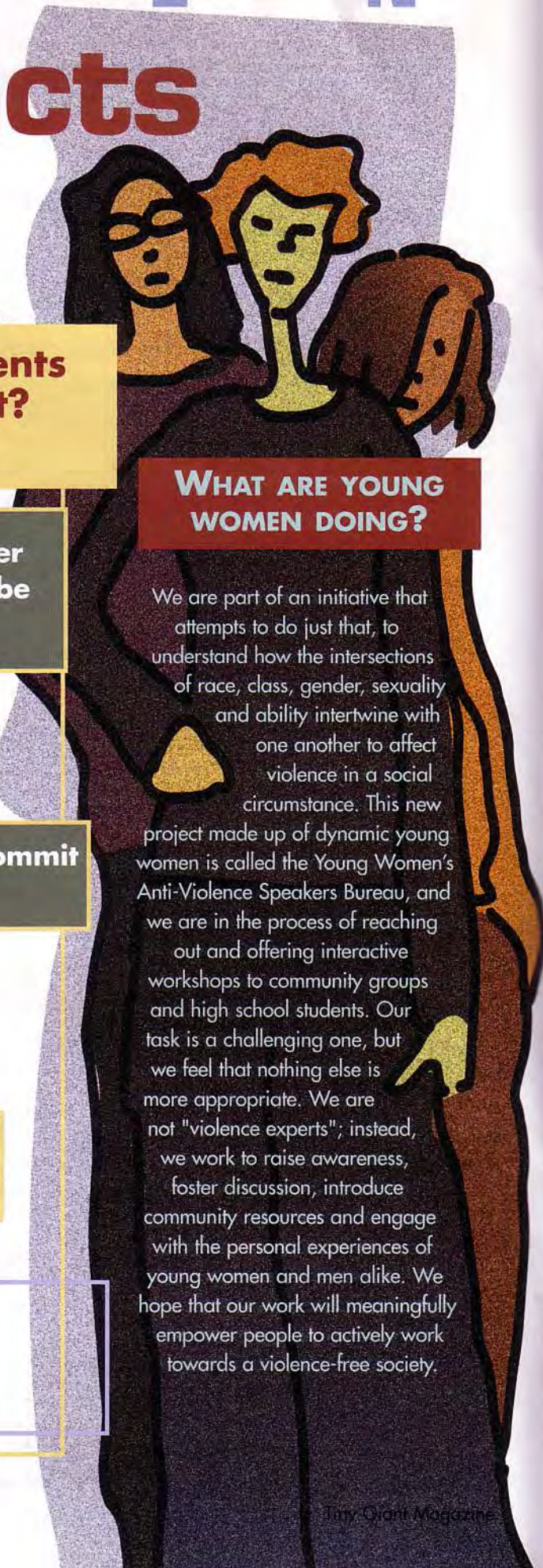
Women feel ashamed, embarrassed and humiliated and don't want anyone to know what is happening

Women believe that they need to be in a relationship to feel complete as a person

Women think that if they stay, they can save the batterer and help him or her to get better

**WHAT ARE YOUNG WOMEN DOING?**

We are part of an initiative that attempts to do just that, to understand how the intersections of race, class, gender, sexuality and ability intertwine with one another to affect violence in a social circumstance. This new project made up of dynamic young women is called the Young Women's Anti-Violence Speakers Bureau, and we are in the process of reaching out and offering interactive workshops to community groups and high school students. Our task is a challenging one, but we feel that nothing else is more appropriate. We are not "violence experts"; instead, we work to raise awareness, foster discussion, introduce community resources and engage with the personal experiences of young women and men alike. We hope that our work will meaningfully empower people to actively work towards a violence-free society.



# NOT JUST ABOUT SEXISM

... A Perspective On Violence Against Women



By Andrea Gunraj and Joanna Pawelkiewicz

Violence is a significant concern nowadays, and no one feels untouched by it, at least on some general level. The issue of violence against women has become a more central topic as well, even if it is not as focused upon as it needs to be. While 'private' violence was once a topic few people mentioned before, discussions about violence against women and particularly intimate partner violence have opened up because of the awareness-raising efforts of feminist thinkers and community activists. Unfortunately, the discussion about the violence that women face tends to focus on the problem as a unilateral, compact kind of phenomenon – too many blame it on 'the patriarchy' (the domination of women by men), an almost unexplained and unexplainable force. If 'patriarchy' were erased from the earth, it seems that things would be better and safer for everyone.

Indeed, relations between men and women are incredibly important themes when thinking about violence against women, and discussions of 'patriarchy' do begin to introduce the notion at least on a rudimentary level. But aside from talking about what women have in common, we have to talk about the many differences that exist between us. We come from different economic backgrounds, speak different languages, belong to different ethno-cultural

communities, and practice different religions. We vary in ages, sexual orientations, places of birth, and abilities. A woman is not merely a woman in a social world where

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...that gender is not the sole issue when looking at violence against women, makes the discussion complex. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why people do not talk about it very often...

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gender is not the only factor in how we experience violence and what resources are available to us. A woman is a woman of color, a queer woman, a deaf woman, a disabled woman, an immigrant woman, a two-spirited woman, a muslim woman, a young woman... Each social status and the multifaceted combination of any of them work to create a particular

dynamic that affects not only how a person is treated, but also how that person views herself and is positioned in a larger social context.

When you consider that gender is not the sole issue when looking at violence against women, the discussion becomes more complex. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why people do not talk about it very often. How would, say, a queer woman of color experience 'violence against women' differently than a low-income white woman? Surely those differences are essential ones that must be addressed to even begin to see what violence is in any setting!

Andrea Gunraj and Joanna Pawelkiewicz are two young women and co-coordinators of The Young Women's Anti-Violence Speakers Bureau, a METRAC (Metro Action Committee On Violence Against Women And Children) initiative. Please contact them with any questions or comments at 416-397-0258 or at [info@metrac.org](mailto:info@metrac.org).

# BEYOND WCAR:



## Filipino-Canadian youth continue the struggle against racism

By Ethel Farrales

As a young Filipino woman, I feel an urgent need to shout out to the world about the harsh realities that countless young Filipinos face everyday. Afraid of going to school, kicked out of malls, rocks being thrown viciously at you because of the brown colour of your skin, because you are new to this country, because you are Filipino. "All Flips must die!" – I carry the image of this graffiti plastered all over the bathroom walls in an eastside high school in Vancouver. I hear the stories over and over again of how we are targeted and harassed by the authorities just because Filipinos are becoming more visible in Canadian society. I know that we are often given the most dangerous and difficult jobs because employers think they can get away with it!

I carry with me the knowledge that racism is embedded in every fabric of this country. But I also know that with the onslaught of racism on my community, we are standing up and exposing what racism is doing to us and struggling to attain equality and dignity in Canadian society.

As a member of Ugnayan ng Kabataang Pilipino sa Canada / Filipino-Canadian Youth Alliance (UKPC/ FCYA), I was part of the UN World Conference Against Racism (WCAR) process at the local, national and international levels. Since I am a member of a Filipino youth organization, I had the support of my community and a wealth of experiences to draw from and to bring with me to the different meetings around the world. This community perspective was instrumental in forging many links with other groups combating racism and it also highlighted the

importance of youth to be involved in organizations that work with issues of racism and globalization.

### Building global solidarity against racism

A Youth Summit was held in Durban, South Africa before the official government conference and NGO forum. At this summit, over 500 youth from all over the world gathered to tackle issues of racism. Many discussions revolved around issues surrounding the cancellation of Third World debt, the role that globalization plays in exploiting young people (labor, trafficking, sex tourism), the role of multinational corporations, and international institutions like the IMF and World Bank. But only two days were set aside for youth to deliberate important issues and many youth were sadly disappointed about the lack of resources and time for the Youth Summit. Further, at a time when Canadian youth should be coming together to tackle racism as it affects so many of us, we need more progressive Canadian youth organizations to take a stand against racism.

Overall, WCAR took a step in recognizing slavery and colonialism as a stain on world history, but it did not go far enough in recognizing and addressing systemic racism and the grave economic inequalities that still exist in the world today. There is a pressing need to take a critical look at the continuing legacy of racism and how it is a tool of the world capitalist economy today to divide the working peoples. Coming back from the international discussions on racism at WCAR, I am more than

**...I carry with me the knowledge that racism is embedded in every fabric of this country.**

**How deeply?**

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convinced of the need to deepen the discussions of racism and view this oppression within the context of today's economic disparities. Our experience as a Filipino community in Canada is one of underdevelopment. This collective experience is a testament to the need to analyze racism within a deeper context that looks at racism within today's political economy.

### Globalization, migration and racism and the Filipino-Canadian community

Today, imperialist powers continue to use globalization in order to create the free flow of goods and capital, effectively distorting whole economies and displacing entire peoples. In countries like the Philippines, a long history of colonialism and current neo-colonialism keeps the country underdeveloped with no basic industries. Imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat capitalism push thousands of Filipinos abroad everyday as a source of cheap labor. This has resulted in the diaspora of the Filipino nation with over 8 million Filipinos scattered in 186 countries worldwide. To present this staggering statistic in a different way, it is estimated that over 2,000 Filipinos leave the Philippines everyday in order to find work, with about ten percent of its population abroad.

Canada, as an industrialized country in the era of globalization, has benefited greatly from this massive migration of Filipinos, particularly Filipino women. We are part of the latest phase of migration to Canada that is dominated by people of colour from underdeveloped countries of the South. In past decades, Filipinos were able to enter and find decent work in Canada, filling Canada's need for skilled professionals. The current situation for migrants, however, is in a worsening state. Filipinos are among the most highly educated of immigrant groups in Canada, yet their incomes

### Work the definitions

Tolerance\*: .....

Developed/Underdeveloped\*: .....

\* Some or all of the terms above may contain, reflect or promote systemic racism, value judgements or preconceived notions.



are among the lowest – lower than that of other immigrant groups and those born in Canada. Thus, they remain marginalized in Canadian society, primarily segregated as cheap labor in service-sector jobs.

### Our tasks ahead

Our collective experiences with racism illustrates how in a country like Canada which promotes tolerance and multiculturalism, systemic racism thrives to keep communities of colour and marginalized peoples underdeveloped.

Although WCAR was a step in uniting to combat racism internationally, it did not go far enough. Amidst the Canadian mainstream negative reaction to WCAR and the growing backlash, as grassroots organizations we need to move beyond just simply looking at the impacts of racism and look at the current economic inequality in the world today. Racism will never end until economic inequality ends – especially now in the context of the events of September 11th and the global war on terrorism. The global economy is in crisis and the world powers are fighting each other to hold onto their power and profits. As marginalized communities, immigrant communities, aboriginal peoples, and the working class and poor peoples in Canada, we must unite against imperialism to end exploitation and oppression around the world.

## WORKING DEFINITIONS

**GLOBALIZATION:** In the most general sense, globalization refers to the process in which good, services and capital, move more freely within and among nations. As globalization advances, national boundaries become more and more porous and to some extent less and less relevant.  
Source: *Check your head resource guide* [www.checkyourhead.org](http://www.checkyourhead.org).

**IMF:** (The International Monetary Fund) Created as the pillar of the post WW2 global economy to coordinate the international monetary system. It provides emergency loans to countries that find themselves unable to meet current international payments, in exchange for the imposition of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs)  
Source: *Check your head resource guide* [www.checkyourhead.org](http://www.checkyourhead.org).

**WORLD BANK:** Originally known as the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. Set up after WW2 to facilitate the reconstruction of economies in Europe devastated by the war. In later years, it took on the role of providing loans to majority world countries for the purposes of economic

development. The World Bank is a sister organization to the IMF – both of which are based in Washington DC.

Source: *Check your head resource guide* [www.checkyourhead.org](http://www.checkyourhead.org).

**SYSTEMIC RACISM:** occurs when people of certain skin colors or races do not have equal access, privileges and representation in a system. Schools, curriculum, places of work, media, housing, government and school councils are systems, operating in bigger systems.  
Source: *"Nobody's Born a Racist" The Students Commission*

**IMPERIALISM:** A process undertaken by one group or nation in order to expropriate for their own enrichment the land, labor, raw materials, and markets of another.

**COLONIALISM:** A process whereby one powerful nation or people subjects another to its own authority. Closely linked to Imperialism.

**NEO-COLONIALISM:** The perpetuation of ideas and institutions that promote the process of Colonialism.

# World Conference Aga

The convening of this World conference has been preceded by 50 years of activity by the United Nations in its efforts to eradicate all racism and racial discrimination.

## Youth at WCAR



The youth work at the WCAR was challenging with many ups and downs in the process. However, at the end of the day the youth did develop a Youth Declaration and Program of Action despite the fact that only one day was officially set aside for this process. Youth continued to persevere throughout the NGO Forum to ensure that there was a Youth Document to present to governments. There were also two youth present on the NGO document drafting committee. In the Government Document there was the inclusion of some youth language that was not present at the beginning of the process. There are now several references to youth child, and girl child in the document, especially in the sections on Education and Migration. In paragraph 120, the document also mentions "the usefulness of involving youth". Though not very strong language, this is a good starting place for youth to be recognized and begin to have an impact and raise awareness in this process.

Also developed was an interim structure for a Global Youth Network that would have three regional representatives from each of the four UN regions (Americas, Europe, Africa and Asia/Pacific). In the Americas region an Americas interim committee was developed with nine representatives. These representatives would then rotate on the global committee. Leonie Tchatchat of La Groupe Jeunesse is our representative in Canada. This group plans to meet in Panama in order to plan a larger Americas youth meeting in Brazil in 2002. This network will hopefully allow us to share information, resources and projects at a grassroots level as well as to learn about the different issues throughout our region as well as globally. It was also announced that there will be a youth unit included as part of the UN Anti-Discrimination Unit they are planning to develop out of WCAR.

I believe youth is now recognized as a group in this international process, but this is only the start. Youth have to continue to struggle to ensure that their voices are taken seriously as a group but also to have youth voices present in all the different issue and interest areas. There have to be youth voices and perspectives in all the caucuses and that is the next step I think youth will need to work on.

The Youth Summit, NGO Forum, and WCAR provided youth with excellent learning, networking, organizing and strategizing opportunities. We, as youth, have a great deal to learn from this process but what is crucial is that we keep the momentum going. We must maintain relationships that have been made and share our experiences. We must remember the important roles that youth play and to keep the movement going on all levels.

asha noel

Tiny Giant Magazine

## UNITED NATIONS AND HUMAN RIGHTS

### A History

**1945:** The international community adopted the United Nations charter, where it accepted the obligation to pursue the realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion.

**1948:** The United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, which declares in article 1 that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.

Through the **1960s** efforts were partially focused on racial discrimination in Non-Self Governing territories where the end of racism was anticipated as a natural result of decolonization.

**December 21st 1965:** The General Assembly adopted The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. It defines racial discrimination as any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition or exercise...of human rights and fundamental freedoms..."

Continued on next page



# inst Racism, RACIAL DISCRIMINATION, XENOPHOBIA AND RELATED INTOLERANCE.



## United to Combat Racism: A Youth Vision

Racial discrimination is an issue that youth must speak out against. I was able to have my voice heard this summer when I had the privilege of being a Canadian youth delegate at the WCAR in Dunbar South Africa 2001.

As I heard stories of racial discrimination faced by youth around the world, I gained a global perspective of the injustices that remain unresolved in our society. Many of the youth came from countries where public policies created explicit barriers against them. For instance, the issue of juvenile justice was an issue for these youth because racial profiling, high rates of sentencing and incarceration disproportionately impact the young people of certain ethnic groups. Thus, I was excited to be involved in a process to help eradicate injustices such as these.

After three days of deliberations, our Youth Declaration and Plan of Action was created to deal with issues such as education and employment, justice, minority rights, multiple forms of discrimination, and human rights and citizenship. This twenty-five page document included specific proposals for state and non-state actors from the United Nations bodies to implement. The final copy of the Declaration was presented to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson.

Throughout the Youth summit, NGO forum, and WCAR conference, I was able to better understand the issues being discussed within the framework of the United Nations. At the NGO forum, I had the opportunity to wander through the tents and exhibits and hear stories of discrimination from various delegates from around the world. I sat in workshops with young women just like me and listened to how

**1968:** The first International Conference on Human Rights, meeting in Tehran, called for the criminalization of racist and nazi organizations.

**1971:** International Year for Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination. It appealed urgently to the States to intensify their efforts to eradicate racial discrimination in all its contemporary forms.

**1973-1982:** On November 2nd 1972, the General Assembly designated the ten-year period beginning on 10th December 1973 as the Decade for Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination. The program for the decade was structured around a worldwide education campaign and measures to be taken to implement UN instruments promoting the elimination of racial discrimination.

**1978:** First World Conference to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination (Geneva). Its Declaration and Programme of Action reaffirmed the inherent falsity of racism and the threat it posed to friendly relations among peoples and nations. It condemned apartheid "the extreme form of institutionalized racism", as a crime against humanity, an affront to the dignity of mankind and a threat to peace and security in the world. In addition it recommended that, because of the severe economic inequalities that resulted from racial discrimination, efforts to combat racism should include measures aimed at improving the living conditions of men a women.

**1983:** Second World Conference to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination (Geneva, August 1-12). It reviewed and assessed the activities undertaken during the decade and formulated specific measures to ensure the implementation of UN instruments to eliminate racism and racial discrimination and apartheid. It called for measures to be taken against all

Continued on next page

ideologies and practices, such as apartheid, nazism, fascism and neo-fascism based on racial or ethnic exclusiveness or intolerance, hatred, terror or systematic denials of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Additionally, it noted the double discrimination often encountered by women; it stated the urgent need to protect the rights of refugees, immigrants and migrant workers. It welcomed the establishment of the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations. It also recommended the launch of a second Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination.

**1983-1992:** Second Decade for Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination. The programme called upon the mass media to play a role in disseminating information on methods and techniques to be used in combatting racism, racial discrimination and apartheid. Other recommended measures included those to promote and protect the human rights of persons belonging to minority groups, indigenous populations and peoples and migrant workers; and the establishment of recourse procedures for victims of racial discrimination.

**June 1978:** The second World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna). The conference took note of the somber reality of the increase of intolerance, xenophobia, racism, and racial discrimination in many countries, and highlighted the rights of minorities, women, and indigenous peoples.

**1994-2003:** Third Decade for Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination. It has comprised a broadened view of racism, including the realization that all societies in the world are affected and hindered by discrimination. The international community has undertaken to determine the basic roots of racism and to call for the changes necessary to prevent the eruption of conflicts caused by racism or racial discrimination. Globalization is exerting new social pressures, requiring new methods to combat racism and a renewed commitment.

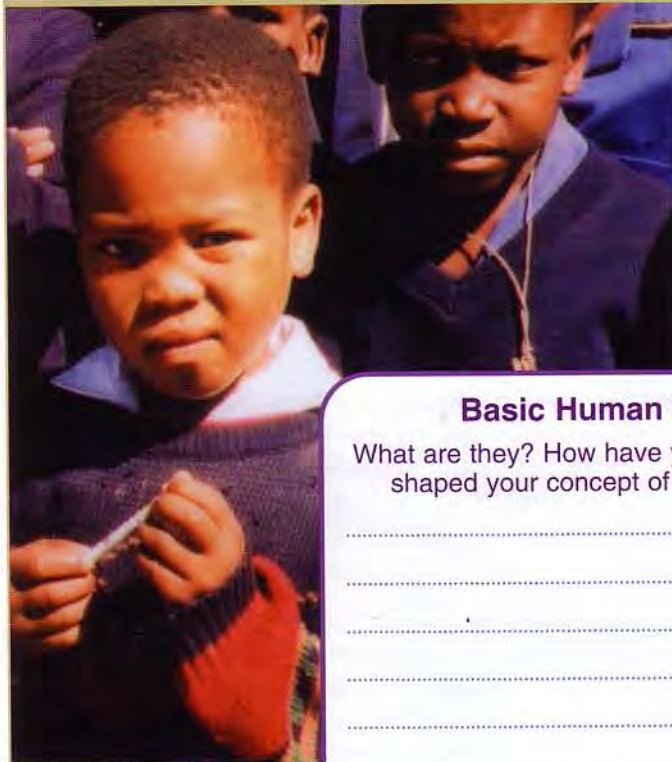
**2001:** The World Conference Against Racism (South Africa).

Source: United Nations Department of Public Information, Fact sheet number 2.

they desire basic human rights that I have come to take for granted. These included such rights such as freedom of speech, access to clean water, adequate nourishment, education, health care and a voice in government.

There are hundreds of experiences now logged into my consciousness from South Africa. It was encouraging to know that the United Nations does want to hear the voices and views of our young people on racism and ways to stop it. I now realize that change can be inspired by youth in stages, firstly through awareness, understanding, acceptance and finally action. I am grateful to have been given this opportunity and feel truly driven to continue anti-racism work in the future. Anything is possible if one has a passion for it. I hope that youth continue to take advantage of opportunities such as these and get involved to make a difference for the future.

*Ruby Dhand is currently a third year university student at the University of Western Ontario in London, Ontario. She is studying Political Science and History and is a resident of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. In the future, Ruby hopes to be a human rights lawyer.*



### Basic Human Rights

What are they? How have your experiences shaped your concept of what is right?

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# BOTTOMS UP

Alcohol, what's the big deal?

**I HAVE HAD MY SHARE OF ALCOHOL AND I CAN TELL YOU THIS. IT IS NO BIGGY. MY NAME IS LIZZY NELSON AND I WAS A TEENAGE ALCOHOLIC 3 AND A HALF MONTHS AGO.**

BY LIZZY NELSON, VANCOUVER



Alcohol, what's the big deal? I have had my share of alcohol and I can tell you this. It is no biggy. My name is Lizzy Nelson and I was a teenage alcoholic 3 and a half months ago. I started drinking in the summer of grade seven, going into grade eight. The sad part is I was a late bloomer. Half the people I hung out with started drinking a year before me. With alcohol it seemed it was love at first sight, an instant connection. I was always more of an outgoing person, someone who had no problems socializing and could keep a steady conversation. But when I began drinking it all took a turn for the worst. When I enrolled at Kitsilano High School I began meeting new people and making new friends. I was excited to know there were lots of people my age with the same interests. Grade eight parties were huge and it seemed it was a pretty normal thing to drink every weekend and get with guys, socialize and make new friends. "I'm in high school now," I thought. "That's what we do, we're all just experiencing new things." Believe me, if I knew I wouldn't be able to talk to guys I like, or meet people sober and be the rowdy old Lizzy I used to be, then I would have never have gone down that road because as much as I wish I could change the past, I can't. For three years straight I drank every weekend and everyday of the summer that I could. When you're always drunk you begin to forget who the real

you is and slowly lose touch with your personality. I continue to go to parties on the weekend with my friends. They drink and I don't and it seems all right, but I don't think I'll ever have as much fun at parties as I would drunk. It's not that alcohol makes everything better, the problem is everything appears to be better due to intoxication. Conversing is no problem. Basically it seems like you can talk to anyone (no problem) about anything. I think alcohol artificially enhances everything. It's like you get in the moment where nothing and nobody matters. It is all a big exaggeration.

I think a lot of girls in particular begin drinking due to lack of self-esteem and no confidence. The 21st century revolves around fitting in. The brand of clothes you wear, make-up, perfume and cologne, the lingo you use, the way you walk or talk, even the colour of frames your glasses are seem to matter in today's YM or Seventeen magazines. It's ridiculous. No wonder about a quarter of grade ten students of today are teenage alcoholics. It is like you have to fake everything about yourself or just turn into the monster society has created. Alcohol makes us feel relaxed and accepted. Why can't we be socially accepted for the way we are, instead of being drunken sluts or loud obnoxious bitches?

Continued on next page



**...With alcohol it seemed it was love at first sight, an instant connection. I was always more of an outgoing person, someone who had no problems socializing and could keep a steady conversation...**

Guys? That's a whole other problem. Are you tough? Are you a Mack? Are you popular? These are the questions there asked in grade eight and nine when suddenly you're not the top of the class anymore; you're a "grommet". I remember every Friday a fight was held where the grade twelve's would choose two "grommets" and they would fight at a park nearby. Everyone swarms the two in a circle as they fight for their reputation. Let's say you lost the fight and there's a party later on. You were intimidated earlier so you didn't fight as well. You know the guy's going to be there tonight and it's nothing a little alcohol can't fix. You show him who is boss.

These kinds of things happen all the time. I've seen it. My friends have been beaten up and have beaten other people up in a drunken rage. Of course they regret it in the morning, well most of the time. Also, nobody wants to look like a wimp. It's almost mandatory that a guy can defend himself, not only himself but his girl as well. It's all about image these days. So think about it next time you're offered a drink. Do you feel socially accepted for who you are, or who you want to be? And is alcohol going to change that? Do you really need its artificial support? What are you afraid of that's making you drink? The real you? Make the right decision and base it on your thoughts and opinions.

Don't fall for the same bullshit I did.

## **DID YOU KNOW THAT ALCOHOL AFFECTS WOMEN DIFFERENTLY?**

- Women generally require smaller amounts of alcohol to achieve the same blood alcohol as men.
- Younger women tend to report beginning to drink at an earlier age than older women.
- In comparison with younger men, younger women are less likely to drink to please others. However, older women in comparison with older men are slightly more likely to drink to please others.

(Taken from: Health Canada document: Horizons two, Canadian women's alcohol and other drug abuse: Increasing our understanding)

## **THINK ABOUT IT...**

- \* Why do you drink?
- \* Have you ever felt you should cut down on your drinking?
- \* Have people annoyed you by criticizing your drinking?
- \* Have you ever felt bad or guilty about your drinking?
- \* Have you ever had a drink first thing in the morning to steady your nerves or to get rid of a hangover?

# Letter to a rapist.

I recently read an article entitled "By any Other Name." It was an article about rape and the experiences womyn have with men that seem like rape and yet are not called "rape" because it is a term that womyn are hesitant to use, ashamed to name their experiences by what they are. They are hesitant because they think rape only happens between strangers, or that it only happens if a womyn is beaten up or if a womyn fights back with all her might. But these are not the only situations that constitute rape. Reading that article has helped me to recognize this and to write this letter to you.



To: .....

*For many years I have carried around a memory. The memory of a hot summer's day when you invited me to your parent's home for a swim and so you could give me my birthday present. We went swimming and then we went back inside and I went into your brother's room to change. Then you came in. I remember kissing you and then I remember saying no, that I didn't want to have sex or for the situation to go any further. I remember saying no a few times. You did not stop. You raped me.*

*I wish I had fought back harder but I now know that even though I didn't do this, you still had no right to continue... You should have stopped...*

*I do not want to call this incident "by any other name" anymore. I want to call it what it was, and it was rape. And I no longer want to be the only person to carry this burden, to have this memory or to be confused about what to call that incident.*

*I wish I had the courage to deal with this right after it happened. But I was confused, not sure if what I had experienced was wrong or not. I was 15 and I was naive, scared. I talked to you after, visited with you. But I never forgot and I always felt that something was wrong about what occurred. As time passed I finally got the courage and the education to be able to address this situation, to be able to think about it and eventually to be able to talk about it. I realized that it was wrong. I stopped having any contact with you whatsoever but your memory and the "birthday present" you gave me continued to haunt me. I have since grown the courage to name the incident, to begin to realize that I am not at fault, that it doesn't matter that I did not fight back harder, and that even though I was very confused about what happened and about whether or not it was rape that it is never too late to call something by its name. It is not too late for me to realize this and to start addressing the incident in a way that is appropriate and in a way that recognizes that you violated me in a violent manner... You can choose to react to this letter however you deem appropriate. You can chose to ignore it, to deny it, to slander me, or to acknowledge and address this.*

*I do not write this letter to ruin your life or make you feel like a bad person. I do not think you are a bad person, but I do think that what you did was bad...*

*My purpose in writing this letter is twofold. Firstly, I want to rid myself of this burden, to finally name my experience so I no longer have to second guess myself, my own actions, or my own feelings about the incident. And, I suppose, part of me wants you to have to carry this burden with you as I do. I do not want to be the only one that thinks about this and is overcome with all kinds of sorrow when I think about that day.*

Secondly, I want to let you know that I know what you did. I hope you know it too, and maybe you have even addressed this within yourself and maybe you are more respectful to womyn now. I feel I have to tell you this for myself and for other womyn. I do not want you to do this to other womyn; I hope you have not. I hope that by writing this letter you may get help if you have not already done this. I hope you have the courage to address this, just like I finally have the courage to address it. I hope you find the strength to apologize to the womyn that you have pressured and/or that you have raped. I hope you get information and learn what is appropriate sexual behavior and what is not. I hope that you recognize that by being pushy when it comes to sex you are being disrespectful and you are sexually assaulting womyn. I hope you know that no means no and that once no is spoken you must stop and you must not try to convince the person to change their mind.

...I hope you know you raped me.

After you have done these things, I hope you find peace, just as I hope that I find peace after mailing this letter. I hope you find the courage to make amends with yourself, to educate yourself and to stop this behavior, if you have not already done so.

Sincerely,

The Womyn who Survived You

**Got to get  
something off your mind?**

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**I wrote this the summer of 2001**, shortly after my birthday, in an attempt to finally rid myself of my demons, give myself the gift of self forgiveness, reclaim my spirituality and re-own my birthday.

I believe all womyn should sit down and write a letter to the men in their lives that have engaged in acts of violence against them. I believe that by calling rape what it is, instead of by "any other name" we begin to shed our shame and begin to place blame where blame belongs. The process of not healing became a vicious cycle I could not rid myself of. I did not tell anyone because no one would believe me; I waited so long no one would believe me; I haven't done anything about it for this reason – no one will believe me. The truth is, I didn't believe myself because of the stereotypes and misconceptions surrounding rape. I didn't want to call it rape; I preferred to call it by any other name. It made me feel less dirty, less of a victim and ultimately, less of a person. I believe similar incidents have happened to many womyn who still continue to call what happened to them, by any other name. By so doing, we are

continuing to accept some of the onus for what happened to us. We are continuing to accept part of the blame. But it is not ours to own and it is only when we return the shame, the guilt and the self-loathing to the rightful owner, the rapist, that healing begins.

I believe this simple act of writing letters can change the world, by helping to end violence against womyn and helping to heal womyn. We owe it to other womyn; we owe it to the men, but most importantly, we owe it to ourselves.

In Sisterhood and Solidarity,

Paola Konge

# RED

*I go for refuge in the Sangha, the spiritual community; I commit myself to living the enlightened life.*

*- The Buddhist Refuge Prayer*

*We needed a context, a culture, a community of other vaginas.*

*- Eve Ensler, "The Vagina Monologues"*

rebecca jaremko bromwich

Red wax dripping on a corduroy miniskirt. Thickening autumn dusk. Full moon, harvest moon, waxing, rising. Candles burning. Women marching. My sisters to one side of me, and my friends on the other. This will also be the shape, four years later, of my wedding party. Tonight, though, there is no groom in the warm throng that spans four blocks on the Calgary street.

*We have the right; take back the night.*

Tanned legs moving, laughing sounds. Sandals and high-heeled shoes. Horns honking. Above us a five story billboard sign with oil men painted gloriously resplendent in their shirtless greasiness as they work on an oilrig set against the darkening sky. Little trickle of women, red candles, marching.

## Violence

## Protest

**Take Back the night:** Rallies organized in different countries around the world, where women speak out against violence against women – specifically domestic violence, sexual assault, sexual harassment and stalking.



A ride along with the police in Calgary. Dusk seen differently from a moving car. I am in the backseat. The police, burly caricatures of boyishness, pleasantly banter, talking about "Indians and other undesirables". We are called to the scene of a domestic dispute. The man inside has a gun. It is the first time I have seen rifles. Loaded, clicking, heavy steel. The police are sweating in the winter night. I am shivering. The megaphone, then Silence.

A woman runs outside in her nightgown, barefoot, dirty, bleeding.

No shots are fired.

They take her to a mental hospital.

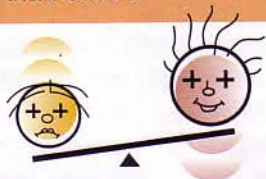
They take the man away.

I walk through their tiny apartment after. All is filthy. Shredded curtains, food on the floor. Six televisions, all on different channels. I peer under beds. I am looking for children. The police ask, are there any children?

We don't find any. I am never sure.

**Racism:** Belief, attitude or behavior that one group, because of race, ethnic background or colour, is superior to or more important than others

## Poverty



Marching:

*Take your rosaries off my ovaries.*

She is a timid little woman. Blonde hair cut in a simple style. No make-up.

"When did you first find out you were pregnant?" It is the first question we are to ask, in the little waiting room face to face in the chairs, a small table and a large Kleenex box between us.

Making the appointments for the women. Writing in pen. Never pencil. Have to be sure.

Blue letters. Never red. Never lurid red.

Sometimes boyfriends. Holding hands, them sweating too, or sad. Sometimes tentative smiles.

"Where do you see yourself in five years?" Sometimes they smile then.

Other times, the woman is alone, like this blonde woman: "After he raped me. It was two weeks later."

**Take your rosaries off my ovaries:**

## Abortion

### CONNECT

Thoughts > action... action > issues...  
issues > positive change...

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# NAOMI WOOLF:

## Marriage

*Naomi Woolf: I am a treasure. She is writing about her wedding dress.*

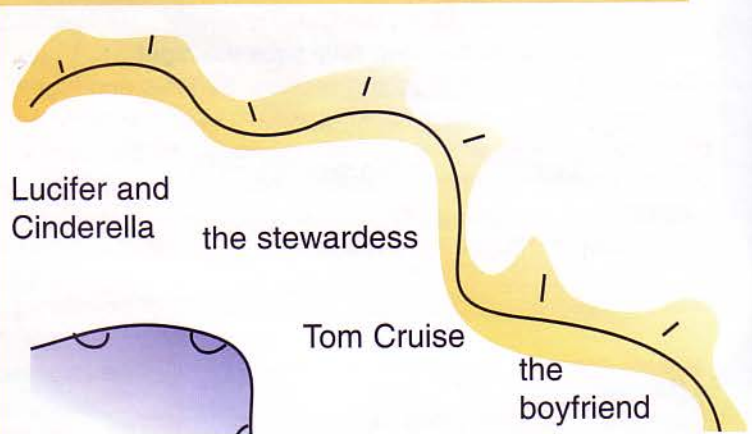
I write all over this book. Promiscuities. Her words, bold typed letters, then mine, in pencil, slanted, spilling out from the margins, spilling out onto the blank pages between chapters, letters dancing over the page to the rhythm in my head of the clack-clacking of my ancient black typewriter: the letter "A" stuck. I had to lift it back up. Clack clack in the basement room where I slept when first on my own. My room. Clothes folded in a corner. I had not thought to take hangers. Or socks. Blankets on the floor.

No bed. I screwed a deadbolt into the door. Just to be sure.

*If your vagina could dress, what would it wear?*

V-Day. Women. On the stage. A rapture of applause. A standing audience. Flowers. It is surreal. Holding hands and bowing. Thinking of it now, it is as if the Hall was spinning, red, black, purple, the house coming down, tumbling delicious heat down from the rafters. Lurid red.

*Cat number three: Lucifer. Pronounce it "Rucifee" like the mice did in Cinderella. "That ain't right," says the man who lives upstairs, the handsome Tom-Cruise looking carpenter husband of the stewardess who lives on the main floor and I in the basement. "You're so young," says the stewardess. "go out with your friends; go out drinking!" He rescues me with a two-by-four later that night when I have gone out and the boyfriend arrives there alone. I cannot say I had no knowledge this would happen. When I come home, the boyfriend and his father are both there and my boyfriend's face is bleeding. They call the police. I sublet*



*We have the right; take back the night.*

Red lipstick. The dark haired woman with the thick European accent has it on her teeth. I am with the police. A night that is a lifetime. A ride along. I am sitting, silent. I am not supposed to speak. Just listen.

"I am pathetic," she says, softly, so as not to wake the children.

And she is crying.

"You are *not* pathetic," I shout to myself inside myself, and realize I have said the words out loud. "Look how far you have come. Look how much you have done. Your children are lucky. Keep fighting." I don't know which of the words are out loud, and which I don't say.

They take me back to the police station after that. Smoking, still. When they drop me off, there is banter. Maybe they are angry with me. Or glad. I am never sure.

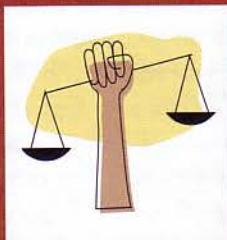
## Take Back the night:

Message:

"Women march to demand that the perpetrators of violence – batterers, rapists, murderers – be responsible for their actions and be made to change."

## Power

*Marching in the thickening dusk. Warm red wax dripping on my open hands.*



At 25 years of age, I am now a law graduate student at Queen's University, from where I also received my LL.B. I also have a B.A.(hon) from the University of Calgary. Throughout my education, I have been involved in feminist work, highlights of which include a performance in the "Vagina Monologues" and two years as a peer counselor at a pro-choice agency. My work now focuses predominantly on youth justice issues, which are also the topic of my master's thesis. My essays, poetry and art have been published in "Good Girl Magazine", Queen's "Feminist Review", "Culture Shock", the UC "Undergraduate Review" and an Arkansas magazine called "Reflections."





# My Life Story

By: Michelle

Hi my name is Michelle and here is my life story. I was born in The Pas, Manitoba. When I was about 4, my mom got married and we moved to Gods Lake Narrows. We only lived there for a short while. My step dad's best friend used to come into my room late at night and molest me but I never told anyone because he told me he would kill me if I did. About 1 year later, we moved to Winnipeg. My step dad used to beat me, my brother and my mom. One day, my mom's friend took me and my brother to the movies and when I went home he had my mom up against the wall. The cops came and took him to jail. When I was in the 2nd grade, I broke down in class and finally told my teacher what happened to me when I was 4. I did not press charges because I was afraid he was going to kill me. Soon after, we moved back to The Pas. I took things pretty rough. I started to hate school. I started to act up. I even threw fits at least 5 times a day. As the years went on, I kept getting worse. When I was in grade 5, I got put into a foster home. It was going all right until my mom

came to see me and I flipped out on her and I got the lickin' of my life. Charges were never pressed because Child and Family Services said he was just doing what he was supposed to do. I went back home and things were going all right. Halfway through grade 6, I started going downhill again. It was not until my second year in grade 7 that my mom did something about it. She called Child and Family Services again. I was put into another foster home. I knew the people where I was staying. There was something not right about him. He was creepy. I did not want to stay there but they made me. The first couple of days went all right because he was out of town. As soon as he came back, I took off and tried to go home and my mom phoned my social worker and told her that I was at her place. I hated her for it. I was sent to lock-up for a week and when I came back I was put right back where I did not want to be. I had people follow me around for two weeks. After I lost my night person, that's when I was raped by my foster dad. Right after, he went upstairs and told his wife what he did. My social worker

was called and I went home. I pressed charges and went to court. I did not go to school for a while and when I did go back everybody teased me about what happened. So I quit a year and a half later. When I still would not go back, me and my mom decided I would go to school in Thompson. That is where I am today a year and a half later. After my best friend killed herself, I decided to go back for her. And I did. Coming to this conference helped me to be able to talk about what I have been through.

Who can help?

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Type of Abuse: .....

Discuss options for resolving issue:

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Type of Abuse: .....

Discuss options for resolving issue:

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Type of Abuse: .....

Discuss options for resolving issue:

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Type of Abuse: .....

Discuss options for resolving issue:

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# ABUSE

Abuse is something that comes in many forms:

**Physical**

**Sexual**

**Emotional**

**Verbal**

**Psychological**

**Spiritual**

**Financial**

**Homophobic**

**Immigration**

**Destructive Acts**

Can you give some examples of each one of them?

**Domestic Violence:** Is an escalating pattern of abuse where one partner in an intimate relationship controls the other through force, intimidation, or threat of violence.

**Dedicated to all my less fortunate friends.**

**I'M KEEPING MY FAITH.**

I'm keeping my faith, that your trouble will fade  
I'm keeping my faith, that you'll escape your state  
I'm keeping my faith, that your problem will go away  
I'm keeping my faith, that you'll be okay.

In life man, I don't know where you're going, it's cold inside your house, 'cause outside it's snowing, you can't fix the heat 'cause its broken but when the caretaker, he's ODind, I'm seeing, a good person in a hella bad environment, no bus fare to get there but when you get bad grades, your dad rages in violence, I ask you what happened to your eye and you r denying it, your parents work all day to make dinner and you all end up eating in silence, you're looking your faith every day that you're not finding it, the sun's shinning in, your window, your house remains dark though, it's a locked box of suppressed thoughts in your home, when you're asked to stay home and baby-sit, it's 'cause your sister's sick, and your mom is, haunted, by wantin', to drink, ever stop to think and you try too hard to change things, I remember one time you got cut and blood was, seeping, out of you sleeve and it was leaking, you were putting out a fire that your parents had started, but they were sleeping, when they awoke you were beaten for getting blood on the couch, ouch.

That's why I'm keeping my faith, that your troubles will fade,  
I'm keeping my faith that you'll escape your state  
I'm keeping my faith that your problems will go away  
I'm keeping my faith that you'll be okay.

Through every line drawing, peak of anger and depression, you've kept your head held high with pride like you weren't affected, at school, you were neglected, 'cause you were dyslexic and manic depressive it was no lie that your mom's life was pathetic, no one in the world was feeling sympathetic, you found a girl, that was powerful had to steal some, flowers for affection, it was her birthday and you attempted to get her a present, pawned a gold cross only to be jacked for the cash on the corner in a second, applied for a job a week before you were accepted, you were gang banging and van ganking and you got caught as an accomplice of course your record was affected, and your parents rejected violently, I can believe this is actually, happening, I'm standing, over him, my best friend in a hospital bed.

That's why I'm keeping my faith, that your troubles will fade,  
I'm keeping my faith that you'll escape your state  
I'm keeping my faith that your problems will go away  
I'm keeping my faith that you'll be okay.



## My Outlook on Relationships

Charmaine Vianna, Vancouver



Cheat'n on Me! Love is blind!  
Happiness! Dream about you! Feel  
Your power! Shoulder to lean  
On! Everything you wanted! Teary  
Eyed! Get the one you  
want! Jealous! Passion! Do or  
Die! Meant to be! You and me! Speak  
Without  
Talking! Sex! Extreme! Ecstasy! Dreams  
Come True! Care For You! Explore My  
Mind! Trust! Open our  
Heart! Somebody For  
Everybody! Respect! Pain! Make'n  
Love! Deceive! The Right Time!  
Honesty! Romance is Needed! True  
Love! Unfaithful! Tears! Welcome  
Happiness! Broken Hearts! Faded  
Memories! Moments in Time! Sexual  
Feelings! Feeling Wanted and  
Needed! Lust! Devotion.



WITH YOU I FEEL...

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# You Might Have Been Down Had I Had Locks

This is not the poem I intended for you.  
I wanted to break down your stone walls  
de-activate your electric fence  
jump over your barbed wire gate  
walk through your mahogany doors  
and into your temple  
to lay my essence at your crowning altar  
I was on a mission.

I wished us beautiful  
the kind of beauty born of  
the elemental combinations  
of browns, cocoa and beige.  
I wished us like hot chocolate and cocoa pecan ice cream  
in coffee coloured waffle cones  
I had a jones  
I had a jones that you sniffed out, picked up  
cradled and put to sleep while I  
was ass facing sky over your gate  
and 50 metres away from your front doors  
Damn!  
I chose to abort mission before  
I got stuck somewhere in between you first  
wall and second fence

You liked my hair.  
Because it's got that kind of ambiguousness that's neither  
loose twirl or tight curl!  
it screams mixed race while remaining  
undecidedly mysterious about its  
rooted origins

You disliked my hair  
Because it's got that kind of ambiguousness that remains  
undecidedly mysterious  
You distrusted my mixed blood  
Because you misunderstood my rooted origins  
mistook them for something  
Other  
than your own  
I am rooted  
In your origins as you are in mine

Maybe you would have more trust in me  
if my hair was locked  
probably not.  
Maybe you would proclaim me African Queen  
and lay the legacy of our foremothers at my feet  
maybe you would find Yemeya in my eyes  
and Nefertiti in my speech  
I have my doubts.  
You do not recognize me  
and I have grown  
bored of my own militaristic imperatives to  
coax you into seeing me  
as you

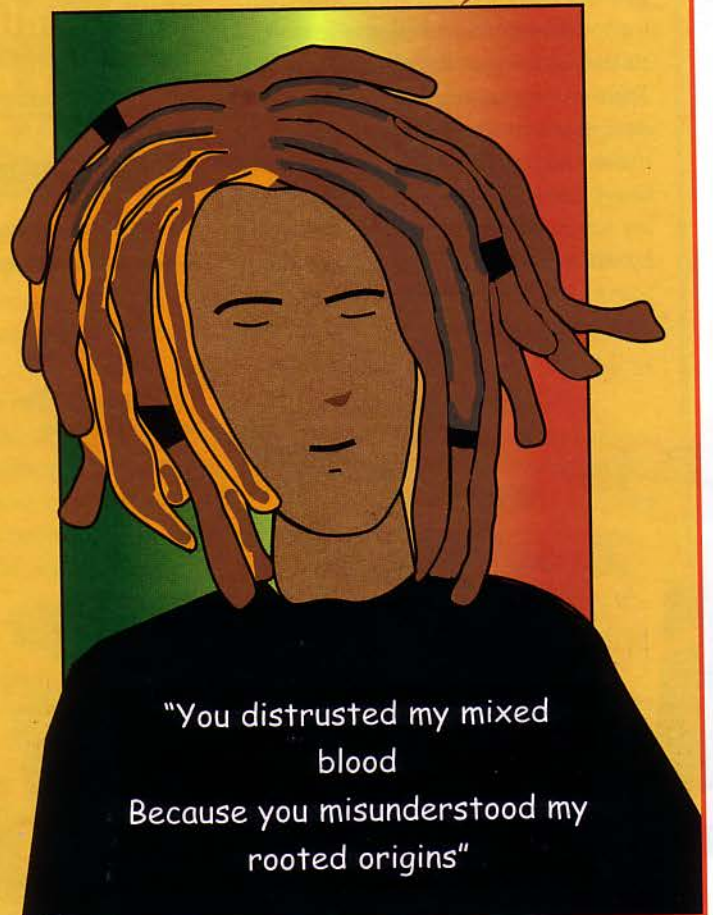
I feel you feel I am not black enough  
You feel I feel you  
incomprehensibly ignorant. Negligently counterproductive  
dangerously regressive  
we've come to a standstill  
You are suggesting the revolution requires corn rows  
I am suggesting the revolution requires soldiers

Our pan-Africanist courtship finds itself  
at a crossroads and we part ideologies  
your cultural nationalism seemingly watered down  
and incomplete  
my black socialist thought and guerilla tactics extreme to you  
my grooming mind tells me my political  
physical and spiritual allegiance must manifest  
as revolutionary change in lifestyle  
and you imply the problem is my hairstyle

You might have been down had I had locks...

-Maki Motapanyane (2001)

Write  
your own poem  
about your background.



# Falafel, Taboulli and

## Racism in a woman's life

My childhood was a mix of falafel and toboulli, Virgin Mary devotional candles, visits to mosques, baseball games and Crackerjacks.

**W**hen I stayed with my mother throughout the school year my world was All-American, in a sense. As a child, I flitted through conversations that addressed concepts of feminism, and acceptance of homosexuality. My liberal family was open to new ideas and embraced the world with a positive, retro-hippie type of attitude.

Weekends at my father's house were completely opposite. His family consisted of fundamental Muslims who lived in Iran, who were determined to have me brought up as a good Muslim girl. Our family discussions ranged from the importance of mathematics to the wearing of the chador, or veil. Trips to restaurants and the store designated me as the translator for those who could not decipher the heavy Iranian accent that characterized my father. These outings were coupled by visits to Middle Eastern households.

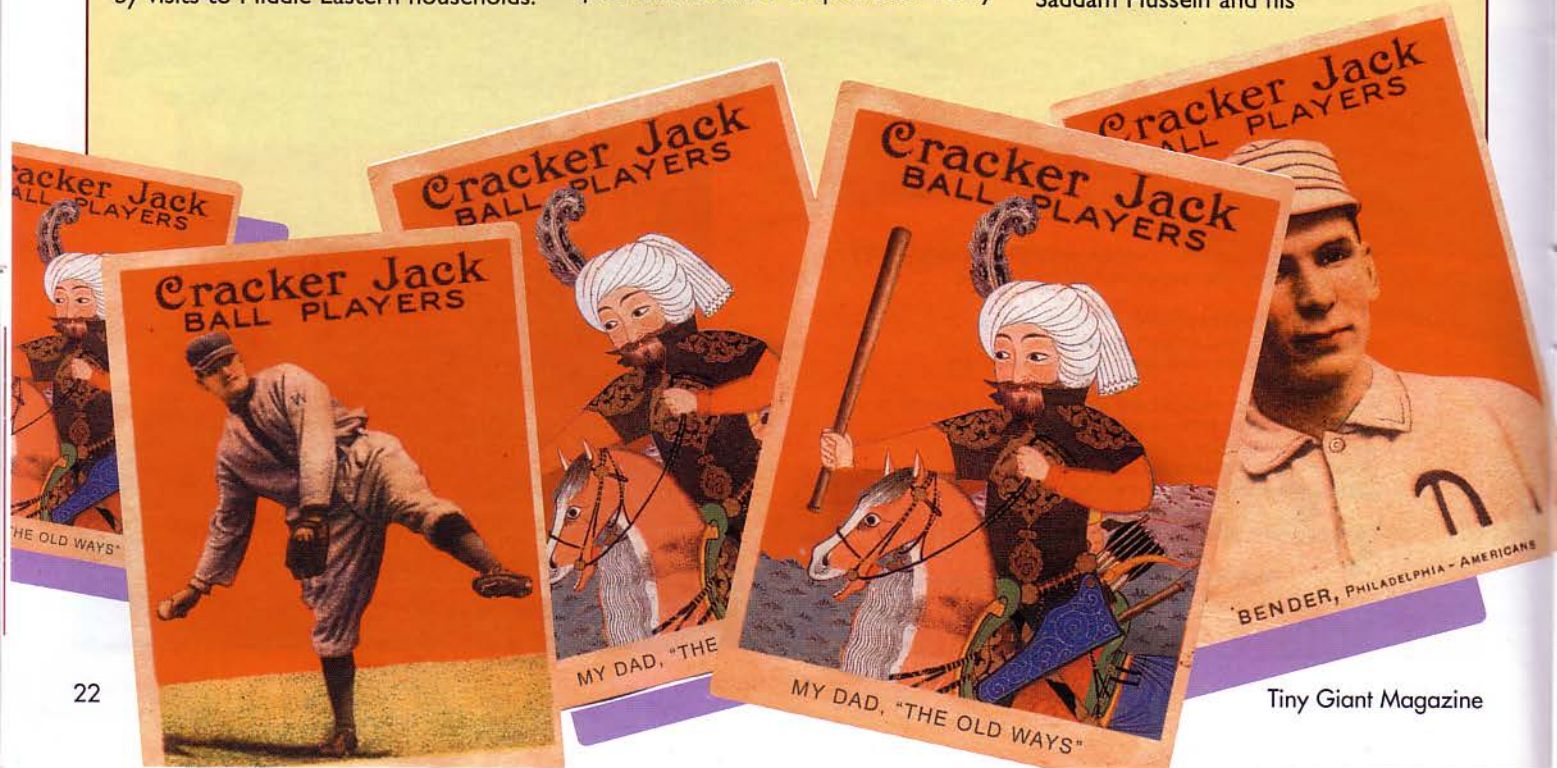
These houses were filled with love and Persian carpets, and the gatherings epitomized a tight knit Iranian community. Most of the Iranians had left to gain personal rights revoked in their country. These Muslims were ecstatic to be able to listen to whichever type of music pleased them and to wear any type of clothing they

found freedom. They adorned their modesty with dark material covering their faces.

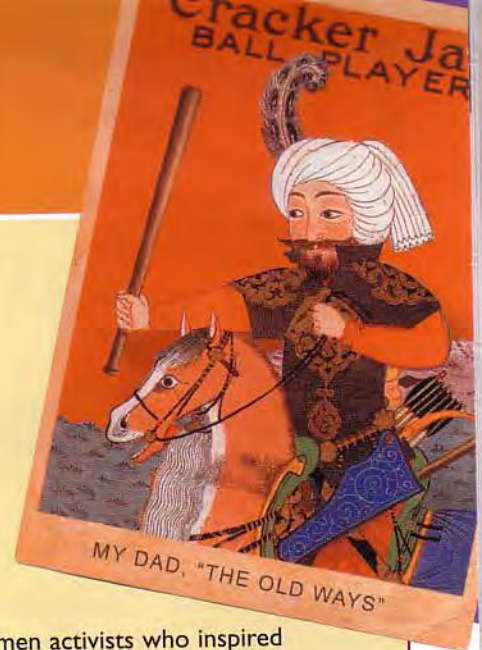
My innocent childhood resulted in oblivion to my cross of two radically different cultures. My parents, although divorced, worked together to support me in all my endeavors but failed at promoting understanding of my ethnicity. Insecurities and doubts eventually became synonymous with my life. My innocence was gradually lifted in my pre-teen years. At the lunch table, surrounded by ham sandwiches and corn dogs, I would have to justify why I didn't eat pork, and why I wore long sleeved shirts in the late spring. The daily conversations at lunch eventually evolved from misunderstanding to blatant disrespect. The beginning of the Gulf War gave cause to unprecedented racism against me because of bogus association with Saddam Hussein and his

**"...surrounded by ham sandwiches and corn dogs, I would have to justify why I didn't eat pork..."**

wanted. The women, however, were quiet and reserved despite their newly



# Crackerjacks



## WHAT'S YOUR IDENTITY?

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crusade. "You're anti-American!" But I am American, I protested many times. A slew of slurs was now commonplace at the cafeteria table. Terrorist, sand nigger, cab driver, religious zealot, and the list goes on. Although these harsh words were not manifested physically, they bore deep wounds that would later affect me during my rites of passage into self-identity.

In the meantime, I dealt with issues of sexism on my father's side. I could not understand simple things, like why my father had unconsciously ended his marriage by loving my mother through beatings and oppression. Could these ugly stereotypes echoed by my peers be true? Was my father a religious fundamentalist who had beaten his wife, who once drove a taxicab? This began my search for self-identity amidst a world I couldn't understand. Why was my culture so repressive to

women? Why did my father become so enraged when he saw me with nail polish on, and wearing lipstick and blush? Sleeveless shirts were forbidden on daddy's weekends. I gradually learned that culture premeditates people's actions and outlooks on life. While my father's perception of the ideal woman was a subservient female who was obedient and modest, my mother raised me to demand equality paralleled with respect and independence. Attempting to comprehend my bizarre upbringings led to frustration, which later led to rejection of my overall cultural background.

I began to block out anything associated with my upbringing; the beginning of self-revelation detached from the culture I did not identify with. This lasted until my last years of high school. I began to be exposed to

women activists who inspired me to change my social conditions. Angela Davis, Yuri Kochiyama, Suheir Hammed, my mother. Instead of blocking out the ills committed by my male Persian ancestors, and instead of dwelling on repression that my father once instigated, I began to institute personal transformation. I was now self-loving and embraced my culture. My dreams changed from becoming a chemical engineer to a human rights activist in support of Middle Eastern women. After the terrorist attacks on the United States, I began to actively educate people in my community about Islam and my heritage. My father, no longer angry and his deep-rooted contempt of Westernized life eradicated, set up political education courses. He finally learned to embrace and recognize women as total equals.

Although I cannot right the wrongs of society, or remedy the sins of my father, I can prevent racism and sexism in my own life. I envision myself one day walking with my father in Iran and the men will not view me as second class because of my gender. I will be able to look any way I please, and it will not disappoint my father. I will be able to see both my families join together oblivious of their differences. A life without bias or prejudice, just understanding.

# IDENTITY



## Being a young Black person

By Denise Andrea Campbell

Ask me the question, what does it mean to be a young Black person growing up in Canada? A string of words and phrases quickly comes to mind: invisibility, compromise, a sense of shame and sadness, a feeling of less, a missing piece of myself, anger and frustration, trying to fit in.... so many things. I can't claim to know the whole experience of every Black youth growing up in Canada... but I can speak for myself.

In Canada, my white peers may not consciously know their particular history, like the details of what being Irish really means, but there are enough symbols, stories, human history to tell them that they matter and to build a sense of self. In the process of creating Young Women Connect, I sat with other



youth of color and talked about how and why we are not easily identified as 'Canadian' because the dominant story of who and what Canada is has deliberately left us out. There is not a patch on the flag that speaks honestly and openly about slaves in Canada, for example, (instead, we only boast about the Underground Railway) or about Africville. What about the hundreds of Chinese who died building the national railway and the 25 years the Canadian government spent after that shutting our border to Chinese immigrants? What

about the question that has been asked to all of us with non-white skin in Canada, whether born here or not - "where are you from?" What about the fact that when people think 'Canadian', the image that immediately comes to mind is not of us? And so our list of 'what about's' went...

The more I listened to the Canadian government talk about our inclusivity and our successes as an multicultural society in Canada during the process for the World Conference Against Racism (WCAR), the more glaring it

Shaka, the great Zulu king



3 black Popes



Alexander the Great





# growing up in Canada?

was that they were not fully describing my reality as a Black person living here. I remember once being asked to give a speech during Black history month about the contributions of Blacks to education. I was shocked when I realized that I knew very little, if anything at all, about the contributions of Blacks in Canada... and it wasn't because people who looked like me never contributed anything. It was because I grew up in a country that kept such contributions out of our textbooks, lectures, television shows, politics, news, stories and practices. "Hey, go back to where you come from."

Randall Robinson, an African American activist and author of a new and highly recommended book: *The Debt - What America Owes Blacks*, said at a conference that I

attended in July in prep for WCAR, that the worst thing you can do to a person is to rob them of the stories about themselves. I took full notice when he made this comment and was fully hit by it and its implications for me in my life as a Black young person with slavery as my only story of my people... South Africa reaffirmed for me an incredible hole that I have carried around all my life about the color of my skin, and what that means today and where that means I come from (and mind you, I am an activist who has spent many years on antiracism so this is not about politics or academic discourse... it is visceral)...

So, being in Africa, a continent with such history, regality, natural beauty and blackness, was so fulfilling for me. Those who know me well, know that I have never



been one of those 'into Africa' Black people - hyper aware of my roots, connecting to Africa as my past, feeling part of a Diaspora and claiming it as mine. But being in a place where my people (people with skin like mine) have a history that is centuries and centuries old, were royal, regal, numerous and proud, a land of kingdoms, scholars, rulers, warriors, activists, heroes - it felt very different to be Black. I never realized the full weight of what growing up Black in a white country like Canada, educated in a white system that never told the full story, has done to

someone like me. I have always known that growing up this way, especially without parents and a community that could counter this mass erasure for me, had consequences. I have known that my whole life, and I have increasingly begun to understand the gravity of that in the WCAR process as I began to be surrounded with more and more Black people – now calling themselves African descendents as a nuance political move as we marched forward to make demands on states for slavery and the legacy of slavery. When Mr. Robinson spoke, I knew that the story I had of

Blacks began with them as slaves, property, lesser than and that everything I have thought, believed, learned, tried to unlearn, stemmed from that story. What does that do to a people to have the only story you know be the one where you were less, owned, dominated, inferior...? I look to Aboriginal young people and know what that does to you... I look to young Black men, to the internalized racism and self-hatred so deep within many Black youth that we see it as normal... to know what this limited story has done.

In Africa, I began to see that my people have another story – our real story began long before we were owned and broken. Yes, my people have a history before we were slaves... and knowing that, seeing it and believing it at the most visceral level was the most healing and affirming thing I have ever experienced. When I watched Zulu dancers perform a tribute to the Great King Shaka, and then someone mentioned that many Jamaicans were of Zulu origin, something inside me leapt thirstily to claim these people, this history as my own. When Senegalese after Senegalese delegate at the conference told me that I looked like one of them, the same thirst for origin and greatness welled up in me. Three Popes had been Africans... Moses had a Black Ethiopian wife... my people came from somewhere other than shame.

But there is so much I do not know, have never experienced and need to

learn. The little glimpse I had that once we were great began like water to a well after years of drought, filling me in spaces I never, really, really knew I had, or knew were so deep. It was the fill of healing, the beginnings of feeling whole, of feeling pride, of making real and true my intellectual and political work to unlearn my own internal racism and self-doubt about people and places that are dark as me. Oh, how much I wanted this for my little brothers, for other Black youth, for Black people. The best thing you can do to people is to tell them the story of themselves. Pat Bradshaw illustrated, in that surprising story about the hospital, that stories need to be told by leaders, in advertisement, in pictures, in budgets, in monuments, in mood and humour, in legends and prayers, in practices and symbols....

I would love to spend a year in Africa... that much I came away firm with... as nothing short of really spending some time among Blackness will help complete my education and my becoming as a person. Now, I understand with new meaning, why Joan Grant Cummings felt it was important to take her young son back to live in Jamaica at this time in his life. It is strange to think that in this very different world that we all woke up to only a short while ago, a time of pain and death, disaster and fear, that one could feel so much life, and that is what my short \*blink\* of Africa helped awaken in me.

### CELEBRATE IDENTITY

I come from...

I carry with me...

I can share...

# THE DARKER THE SKIN

“**T**he darker your skin here, the dirtier you are considered,” an old Shanghainese woman said to me in hushed tones at Pudong airport last week. I had read the same statement in travel books and from experts who had returned from China yet, somehow, hearing it from a local just upon arriving in foreign lands was disheartening. I am the object of stares, glares, and everything in between. I search for a sparkle in the eyes of children riding on the back of their parents' rickshaws and receive looks of bewilderment and curiosity. To some, I am a unique creature

with brown skin and curly, black hair, unlike their own. To others, I represent India, another backwards country set apart from the West which they admire. My desire to be inconspicuous and merely shadow my way through busy streets and alleys is impossible as I am the epitome of foreigner here. China is an ethnically diverse nation, however anonymity in this nation does not come with the physical appearance which is me: Indian, young, female. I work for a magazine and a radio program here, in which my talents are used but my background

withheld. In a way I feel as if I have hushed my own tones at times when I have wanted to sing and bob around the city with headphones on. I have dressed moderately and put my wild hair under a hat as conformity protects my solo ventures more than originality could. I will be traveling through rural China for one month with my partner, a half-Swedish, half-Cree male of 6'3 stature. A myriad pair; one of olive-brown skin and shaved head, and myself of brown bark with curly locks. Our travels will certainly bring about a kind of culture shock for locals to receive.

## Just Think About it!

Racism is a belief attitude or behavior that one group, because of race, ethnic background or colour, is superior to, or more important than others.

•  
Have you ever been a witness or a victim of racism?

•  
If so, how did you deal with the situation?



Challenge the realities of

# Racism



**D**uring the summer of 1999 a young South Asian Prairie girl from Edmonton, Alberta decided to leave her nest and venture to Toronto. Two years later I, Soni Dasmohapatra, have embraced Toronto to be the platform where chapters of my story can be written, narrated and continue to unfold.

When I first came, Toronto appeared to be one of the most diverse and cosmopolitan cities in Canada. A city in which Canada's ideals of multiculturalism and diversity are evident in day-to-day life, whether you ride on the subway, walk through a mall or sit in a park. What a change and shock to actually experience this dream that Pierre Trudeau had of Canadian diversity first hand.

In my opinion Toronto is a very different scene than what constitutes the Canadian reality. You will

find people here from all walks of life. They can be open and free to self-expression, not constricted and limited to certain conservative ideals as are prevalent in other Canadian cities or towns.

I did not know what I was getting myself into by embracing this city of Toronto. I had no idea that I could create a voice and space for myself to be open and challenge the status quo about the realities of racism prevalent and evident in every thread of Canadian existence. Now I can question how that reality affects myself, my community and Canadian society at large. Who would have thought?

Toronto's networks and climate have given me a newfound strength to articulate these realities. I am currently utilizing my position as youth coordinator at the Council of Agencies Serving South Asians - Toronto (CASSA) to advocate and indulge in anti-racism work. My only hope is that through this process at least one person will be inspired to experience another perspective, another reality that they themselves have never encountered. And drawing from this I wish that they

would be able to incorporate a thread of my existence into their lives to be strong and speak up for what they feel is profound for them.

In today's world change is quick and often brutal, yet somehow all of us continue to survive and move forward despite the disparities that exist and the chaos that has unfolded. Especially after September 11th, the past couple of months have been shaky for many individuals and groups. Current events and reactions to that have led to questions and reflections about different realities, lifestyles and existences.

What shape will our future take? How many people are asking this question? Is it up to us to take up a pen or raise our voices? Are we "the youth of this era" going to write or narrate a piece of this story that will be humanity? You tell me...

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# Mestizo Poem

mestizo  
mixed  
mixed up  
mixed where

i look like everyone  
i look like no one

meludgeon  
melange  
melle  
pelle-melle  
a big mixup  
a mistake

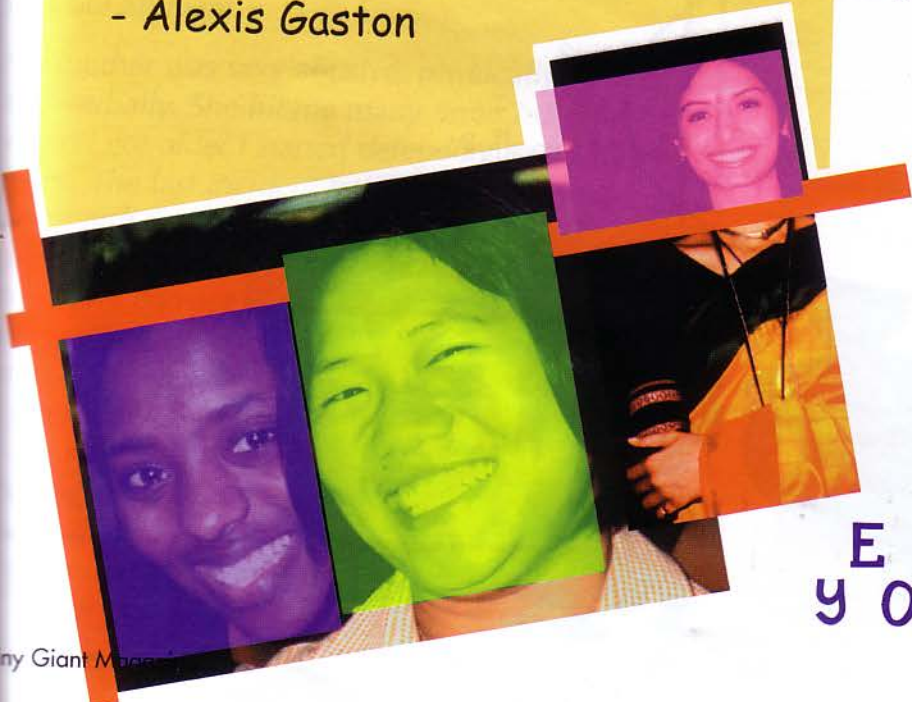
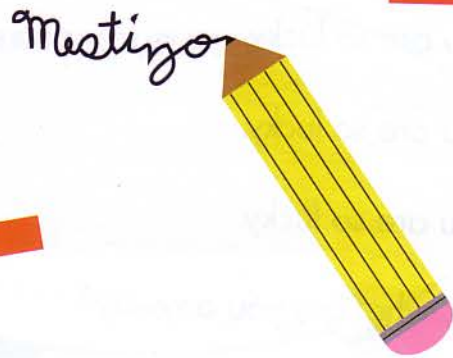
i am not a mixup  
i am not a mistake

i know who i am  
can you say the same  
for yourself

- Alexis Gaston

## WRITE YOUR OWN POEM HERE

Handwriting practice lines for writing a poem.



# EXPRESS YOURSELF

## Questions

So, what are you anyway?

Really? You look....

Are you're sure you're not....?

Has anyone ever told you that you look like....?

- a) Veronica Webb
- b) the transvestite from The Crying Game
- c) insert the name of any other dark, curly-haired person

So, you're sure you're not....

I thought that from your name you might be....

You are so lucky to be so tan all the time.

You are so lucky.

You are so lucky.

You are so lucky.

So, what are you anyway?

## Answers

Do I know you?

Yes, really.

Pretty sure.

Yes. I don't think I look like her/him. And by the way,

comparing me to a man is not a compliment.

Who are you?

Nope.

Would you want to be so tan all the time?

Am I?

Am I really?

- Alexis Gaston

# Past

Learn from the

By Meaghan

*I want to tell you a little bit about my life and experience with poverty. I am 16 years old and have been in a foster home for a year and a half. I went in a home the day before my birthday, February 22, 1999. I had been in contact with Children's Aid for a few months before about abuse in my home. I felt very bad because I was going behind my mother's back telling them all the bad stuff that she did to me and my two siblings.*

*My mother was and still is a single parent living on welfare. She is also an alcoholic. A lot of her time during the day was spent sitting at the TV drinking. She would even drink in the morning. Though we had food and some money, we never had a connection, a real family connection. A lot of the time, my mother would go out drinking at night and leave me to watch my brother and sister sometimes until early morning. All I received for this were lectures for not doing chores around the house while she was out all night.*

*My mother was very abusive; physically and verbally. She hit me many times but when I got older I started defending myself more. The last incident between us was the worst and that night was when I left home and went to a foster family. I did not have any contact with my mother for ten months. It was very hard but I am now having visits with the whole family and my*

# The Future is now!

*mother has really changed. She does not drink as much and she is getting help. My brother and sister still live with her and want me back home but I have decided that it is for the best that I stay in foster care. I am doing better. I went through a thing where I was very depressed and I wanted to die, but I went to the hospital and they helped me.*

*I think being here has showed me that I am not alone. I know some may not think that what I went through was about poverty but it has helped me to write this down and let others know what I went through. So thank you for taking time to read my story. It means a lot.*

SHARE YOUR STORY...

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# Thrift Don't Come Easy

Revolution? Who thinks it's gotta be huge — an overhaul?

Revolution to me is my ap-bah showing love and respect to my mother —  
Revolution is my father rethinking man, woman and power  
Not punching not slapping not yelling not saying anymore  
Shut up you're worthless, you're shit, you're foolish, you're shameful

What it meant for him not to fit:

A yellow man, chinky china man  
desperate weak immigrant no English stupid fool  
be grateful motherfucker that you work here  
not a man

beggar factory worker taxi driver turned convenience store owner (petty, cheap, crafty tax evader?)

At home:

the feared man —  
Feared and despised father,  
controlling husband  
spurned lover

Riot Grrrls in high school are white and white feminists tell me to hate my Koreanness

Oh you poor thing how terrible that Korean men are like that

Mom to me is passive and weak — ohm-mah, why don't you stand up for yourself? I ask and blame her

Women's studies

Here I get props for being a Woman of Colour — I am the expert on Orientalism  
on the trials and tribulations of Asian women (we're all the same)

We are exoticized

We are stereotyped as meek, passive, subservient

Geisha girl, dragon lady, Suzy Wong — blah blah blah

Do I fit? Do I perform? Do I resist?

Fuck I'm tired of trying to avoid playing the stereotypes

Revolution is me not having to care about who places me in what box

What about dancing to and desiring Lil' Kim? What about those passionate conversations with my  
Indian girlfriend on street corners (interrupted by young Whitey assholes yelling "hey bok choy"  
out of their 8-cylinder engine SUV)

feeling righteous, talking

Talking and writing about that — pretending that I am over it — I "get" oppression — I don't  
fucking get it

And yet I still want to be thin and beautiful = white???? 'cuz that matters?

Girlfriends are starving, purging and hating our bodies and ourselves — is this about looks? She's  
a flake, she loves men, she's weak, she's privileged...

we talk and talk with our critical analysis and inside we're still scared shitless and judging and  
blaming...each other and ourselves



I write a thesis on the injustices of sweatshop practices and multinational corporations exploiting women workers because of global capitalism

But I will sit and drink a soy latte from Starbucks, wear the bargain-priced clothes that mothers/sisters (solidarity my ass) sewed on Spadina Ave. for \$4.50 an hour

This doesn't feel like a revolution — I feel like a traitor

identity politics fucking categories and labels and I don't know who to trust and love and who and what are we fighting for?

Theory = exclusion fun obnoxious big words like "agency," "individualism," "essentialism," "assimilation," "cultural relativism" and who speaks for whom?

They once told me that we were speaking with a colonized voice

Mom wears Gucci now

Dad golfs but still

Splits his toothpicks and McDonalds napkins in two — saving for the future

Piano lessons for me, a violin, Taekwondo and Kumon Math school

A BMW for my mom

a big house with furniture wrapped in plastic but

no air conditioning in July

no heat in December

Turn the lights off! Don't use the stove! (an environmentalist at heart?)

a façade of wealth and affluence

Middle class lifestyle

Poor Korean country-boy mentality

We eat fast food, shop thrifty and drive fancy cars and pretend pretend

We 're one of them

- Ruthann Lee

# WHAT ARE WE FIGHTING FOR?

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# AN AWAKENING



**Hello! I am an 18-year-old Metis woman from Calgary, Alberta. I have grown up in a single parent home my whole life and although my mom and I often experience some financial difficulties, I can honestly say that I have never had to do without.**

**In Calgary,** I am employed as a youth support worker at an organization called "Metis Calgary Family Services". The youth I work with come from all different family situations, from single parent homes to low income two parent homes, middle class homes and even some foster children.

Even though I work with youth in these types of situations some of my views on both poverty and youth are still blurred. When I was invited to come to a conference in Ottawa I was stuck in a very narrow and ignorant mind set. I had convinced myself that I was not going to enjoy it and that everyone coming was going to be a "geek" who came to whine about their problems.

When I arrived however, I found the complete opposite. I realized that to participate in an event like Sharing Resources 2000 is not only a privilege but also requires an open mind and heart. There are so many unique people here (mostly younger than I am) but I have noticed if I take the time to listen, understand and

truly hear what they are trying to say... it makes it a whole lot easier to respect them.

A guy from Montreal that I talked with today really touched my heart. He is not the kind of guy I would usually talk to. But when I sat down and listened to his words he has such a kind genuine heart.

**A girl from Calgary was talking about how she wanted to start a "get away" home for kids in care.**

Like a teen center where youth can go to develop ideas or to take a break from stressful situations or escape from abusive foster homes.

The girl who was describing this idea is herself in care and has been her whole life. She has dealt with poverty first hand. She is not your typical "A" crowd teen. You know who she is. We all do. The girl who always sits alone in school. The one who gets picked on, the outcast.

I was moved by the way in which the French guy attentively listened and really tried to understand where she was coming from. He looked into her eyes and told her she looked Norwegian because her eyes were as blue as the sea of Norway.

I don't even know if there is a sea of Norway. But his sincerity and true positive energy was enormous. As he complimented her, I thought of the horror stories she had shared with us about her life and how wonderful it was that he could still see the beauty within her.

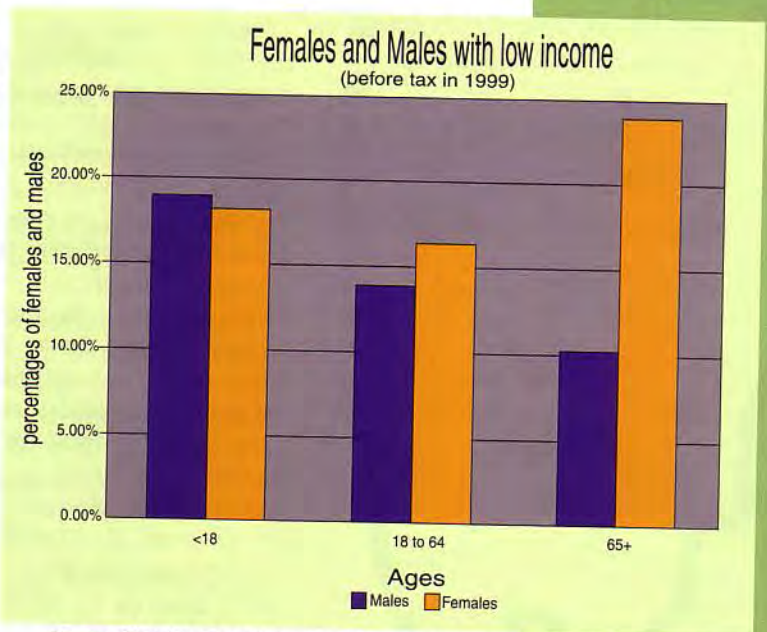
I thought of how good he must have made her feel and how a few little words spoken can really and truly lift a persons spirit and self-confidence. As she went on with her story, he stared still attentively listening to her. I think she seemed almost shocked that someone was listening. So she became flustered and said "oh well, they're probably stupid ideas any way. I am just not a strong enough person to go through with them".

He looked at her and in his innocent broken English said, "hold onto your dreams and never say you're not strong enough. Ideas like that don't come from weak people."

I just about cried.

## DID YOU KNOW?

18% of both females and males that are under the age of 18 have a low income before tax. But the percentage of males that are 65 years of age and older drops to 10%, while females that are 65+ shoots up to 23.5%.  
What's up with that?



Source: Statistic's Canada Internet site, [www.statscan.ca/english/Pgdb/People/Families/famil41a.htm](http://www.statscan.ca/english/Pgdb/People/Families/famil41a.htm), March 21, 2002.

## A MYTH ABOUT POVERTY

All lone-parent mothers are on welfare.

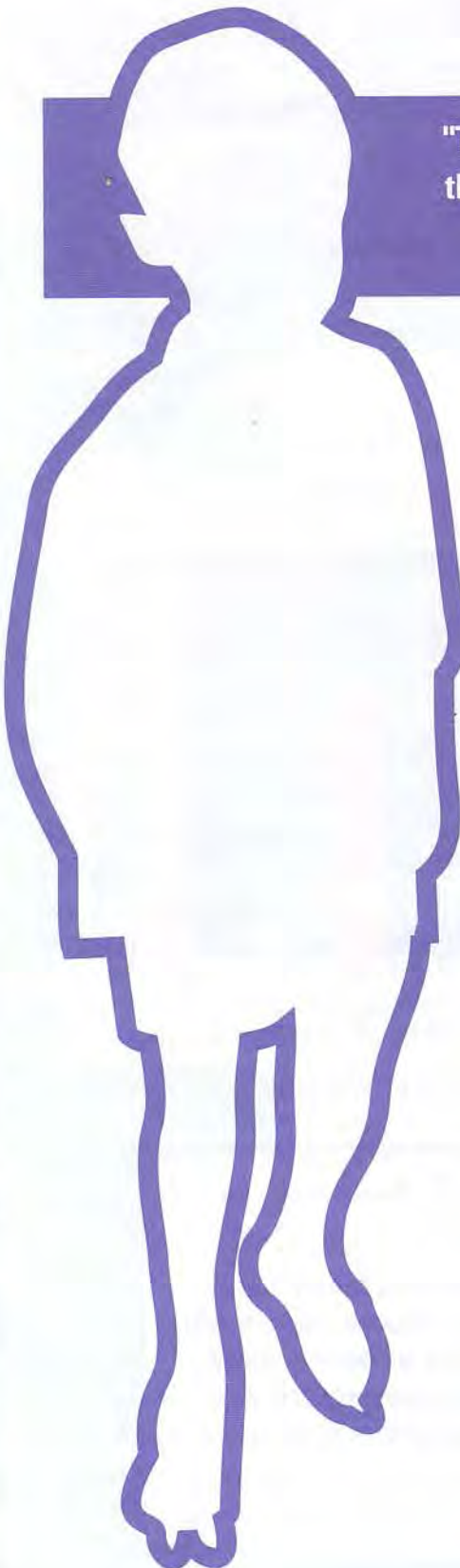
Over half the children under 18 years of age who lived in a lone-parent family had a parent in the labour force: 46% lived with a full-time job holder and another 15% lived with a part-time job holder. However, lone parents with young children do rely more heavily on income support programs. More than half the children under age 12 who lived in lone-parent families had a parent who was not in the labour force.

Source: National Anti-Poverty Organizatio

Source: Canadian Council on Social Development

# It's Just The Way

By CarrieJane



"This is Freeman with the big brown eyes. He lives in the third world... in a land of death and destruction. Freeman survives on a bowl of rice a day. If he's lucky."

Well Freeman break my heart, so lately I've been on a quest. A quest to save the world.

\*with a hair toss\* Now that my peer counselling team and I have been nationally recognized due to our fight against racism, I'm still concentrating on abolishing poverty. After all, my dad said I'm now allowed to turn our house into a refugee camp. A lot of people tell me that, in order to save the world, I have to go live in a hut with African bushmen. Contrary to popular opinion, no, I do not. One needn't look as far as the slums of Rwanda or the homeless ridden streets of Montreal to find people who need saving. If people just opened their eyes, they'd realize that poverty exists all around us.

Pop quiz! Which of the following kids is poor?

Damien lives in the suburbs with his abusive parents. He's usually clothed in designer apparel such as Fubu and Tommy Hilfiger. Damien often says, "I wish my parents didn't hate me."



Shelina lives in a one-room apartment with her parents and baby brother. She dreams of Barbie dolls and piano lessons, but she knows that even though her parents can't afford it, they still love her and try to provide for her as best they can.

If you've answered "Both Damien AND Shelina suffer from poverty!", ding ding! You're right!

You see, the word poverty has a broad definition. It's not just about lack of financial income. It's about lack of resources, missed opportunities, loneliness...anything that creates an unfair chance at succeeding in life.

But in order to have a better understanding of this issue we must forget the myths and learn the truths. In 1989 the Canadian House of Commons set up a resolution to eliminate child poverty in our country by the year 2000. Well HATS OFF TO THE GOVERNMENT! They did a GREAT job, because now there are only 402,000 poor children in addition to what there was in '89! Recently, they finally decided to act on it.

Statistics show that 1 in 5 Canadian children is poor. A lot



of people believe that the system is being abused and families are taking advantage of welfare rates to get loads of money. Welfare rates are still well below the poverty line. Some as bad as 75% below with the highest being 20% below the poverty line. Those are frightening numbers.

Now that I've set a foundation for you all, I'm ready to tell you about this quest of mine. Last year at the career fair I stumbled across the Students Commission booth. It's a national organization which concentrates on giving youth a voice. I found an application for some conference on child poverty. It seemed interesting enough, so I applied. The series of conferences was called Sharing Resources 2000. It's goal was to involve 2000 youth in 2000 projects by the year 2000, which is 0.007% of the population making a change. Shortly after, I got a call saying I was accepted and "See you at MUN on May 13th!"

I got there...and I was a little scared. Some man named Gus hugged me and the crowd inside quickly recognized me as "That girl we met at Subway last week!" I met everyone from a girl who lives on Degrassi Street to a guy who could pick up a chair with his nipple rings and I was just happy I could speak French! The ability to break down language barriers is a great skill to have. As it turned out, my roommate didn't speak a word of English. After we got settled, I was

impressed. Here were 200 young people who actually wanted to save the world with me! After hearing personal stories of poverty, drug addictions, and overcoming lives of lost hope, I realized how good I actually have it. I learned a lot about child poverty that week and how I could design projects to help youth in my own community. I also made friends for life.

In October, another conference was held in Jouvence, Quebec where I returned as a youth facilitator. Once again, another amazing experience where I was taught so much more to aid me on my quest! People like the Chief Moon family who taught me pride and the value of cultural appreciation. Young people like Myron Strikes with a Gun who showed me that youth can soar to great heights if we're only given a chance. From all the leaders, I learned how to become a leader myself.

I'd like to end off by sharing the smile campaign. It was a youth action plan designed by my team at SR2000 in Quebec which shows that, all it takes is something as simple as a smile to make a difference in the world. It goes, "Smile! Have you ever smiled at someone...and wondered if it made a difference in their life? Maybe they felt they were a part of a community. Maybe they felt loved.

Maybe they felt like someone cared. Maybe that someone smiled at someone else. Maybe they changed another life. Do

your part, change the world one smile at a time."

And in the words of Helen Keller, "I am only one. But still I am one; I cannot do everything, but still I can do something."

## FORMS OF POVERTY

Poverty comes in many forms. Think about the different ways youth experience poverty.

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# Out of the Shadows and Into Life

Growing up, I just survived – I never lived. I never had the chance to have hopes and dreams. My mom moved me from place to place, gambling and drinking all of our money away. I didn't know that life wasn't supposed to be this way. I never saw a "normal" family.

I never had the chance to have long-lasting friendships because I moved so often. By the time I was ten, I realized that life was not what it was supposed to be.

We moved to Edmonton, and into a basement suite. While my mother would take off for weeks at a time, I went to school in shabby and unwashed clothes. I would tell my teachers and the school counsellor what was going on, but they would end up calling my mother and I would get in more trouble. She was always mad at me for something.

One night, my mom decided to do a midnight move. She wanted to move in with a man named Animal. At this point, I knew I had no other choice. I was tired of her putting my safety at risk. That night, I ran away. The next day I went into school, and I told my teachers what had happened. I told them that if they made me see her or talk to her, that that would be the last time they ever saw me again. Within the hour I was apprehended by child welfare.

I had no idea what child welfare was, and I was not informed of my rights while in care. I thought that I had to leave behind everyone I cared about and that I had to change my life completely. I had one bad foster home experience after another. I spent most of my time on A.W.O.L (absent without leave), and no one understood, or even tried to understand, why. I was so alone.

Family members tried to take me in, but only made promises that they



couldn't keep. Things never worked out and I was slowly starting to lose hope. My drug use started to become an escape. When I was using, I didn't have to think about what was going on in my life at the time.

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My social worker informed me of a SIL (Semi-Independent Living) program called Turning Points. For the first six months in this program, I broke every rule they had – and more. They never

gave up. With their support and encouragement, I realized that there was a lot more to living than just surviving. Life was fun.

In the months to follow, I was receiving honors in school, and held a part time job. I have now been living in my own apartment for eight months. I have just been accepted into an Aboriginal Academy. They have only accepted 320 students, and I am very proud to be one of them.

I sit on the board of Directors for the Youth In Care Network. I also sit on a committee called Project Change with facilitators from The Children's Advocate. I am also creating a project with young foster kids called The Foster Home Mentor Program.

I have so much to live for. I don't know where I would be without the Turning Points staff and the support they provided for me. They are like family. Every child and/or youth deserves a chance.

# Workshops

(The basics)



**A workshop is a group activity that allows communication, interaction and discussion among people on a certain topic.**

When you are putting together a workshop remember the formula: **W W W H W W**

## TIPS FOR PREPARING YOUR WORKSHOP

- Confirm the time, place and number of participants with the group/organization you'll present the workshop to.
- Make your plan for the workshop: include the purpose, materials needed, the workshop outline, and the amount of time it will take. It is also helpful to know the source of the information you use so those who want to learn more have a place to start.
- Make a check list with all the materials that you are going to use. Don't assume that the school, organization or group will supply pens, paper, projectors etc. Try to keep your requirements simple.
- As you gather all the materials you will need to run your workshop, check them off your list.
- If you want to use handouts, print them and photocopy them the night before you need them. Bring a couple of extra handouts just to be safe. Being prepared in advance will help you avoid last minute running around.
- Know the key points you want the group to take away from the workshop so you will be aware of them while you facilitate the group. (See What Makes a Good Facilitator.)
- Be organized and know what you are doing. That way the workshop will go smoothly and your participants will have a good experience.
- Make an evaluation form. It is always good to know how you did on the workshop, what was positive, or not too positive about the workshop, what needs to be improved etc.
- Bring along the "Release and Licence - No Fee" forms and get each participant to sign one once they are comfortable with what's going on. Workshops provide us with diverse youth perspectives on issues of importance to them and as such their comments are vital to what we do. At The Students Commission we try to ensure that young people's opinions are heard and that we respect everyone's right to be informed about how their contributions will be used. So be sure to bring a copy for each participant and get them to sign.

## W

What issues are you going to be talking about?...

## W

Why are you doing the workshop? Objectives, Goals...

## W

Who is the workshop meant for? How many people do you expect?

## H

How are you going to present the workshop: what activities are you going to do, what material are you going to need?

## W

Where will the workshop be held?

## W

When is your workshop scheduled and how long will it take?

# Young Women Connect Workshop

Our workshop is divided into 2 parts. (2 hours)

## Part I: (45 minutes)

Get to know the participants and define and discuss the issues that YWC deals with (poverty, racism, violence)



### TIPS FOR RUNNING THE WORKSHOP

- It helps to hold the workshop in a comfortable space.
- Groups of 5-10 people work best.
- Have participants sit in a circle... it's more friendly.
- Workshops are about getting people involved so, as facilitator, try to ensure that everyone has a chance to speak.
- If people get bored, distracted or too stressed, just play another icebreaker.
- You may want to have a break between Part 1 and Part 2.
- Food is always a good idea, whether it's snacks or drinks or whatever.

### Getting To Know Each other - Introductions, Icebreakers, etc. (15 minutes)

Because the topics of violence, racism and poverty can be sensitive, the group has got to feel comfortable together. So if they all don't already know each other, the way that you do Introductions and Icebreakers is especially important.

So make the Introductions fun by doing something like asking people to give their name, where they're from and what the funniest thing they've ever done is. Or, you could try anything! Just give 'em a chance to share something personal (but not too personal) about themselves.

There's a ton of Icebreakers that you can do. Icebreakers are meant to get people feeling comfortable with the group and to get them into the topic. So use one that you've tried and has made you feel comfortable.

In case you can't remember how to do Introductions and Icebreakers, we've included some that we recommend at the back of this package. Check 'em out. See what you think.

### Introduce the Project:

Many times at workshops and conferences, not everyone has a clear idea of why they're there. This is a good time to explain that to them. Whether you're working on your own project or just doing a Young Women Connect workshop with a group of girls, you should explain the purpose to them.

You could tell them: *Young Women Connect is a project that was started by a youth organization called The Students Commission. It's a national network of young women who gather together to talk about and deal with the issues that affect their lives and the lives of their friends. The three main issues that YWC group focuses on are violence, poverty and racism, as these are three topics that effect many of us daily.* Or you can tell them whatever you want. The stuff written in italics, above, is just the description that we sometimes use to explain Young Women Connect. In the explanation that you decide to use, you might want to include, how you got involved and why you are facilitating the workshop. If you've ever participated in anything like this you know that it's nice to know who you are listening to and why.





### Discussion: (30 minutes)

The discussion about racism, poverty, violence and other issues should flow easily once you've explained what the purpose of the workshop is. Here are some questions that you might want to use to get the conversation going. If the group is too big you can divide it into small teams and each team can define one issue.

- What is poverty, violence & racism? How would you define these terms?
  - How does it affect young women?
  - Do these topics interest you as an individual?
  - What are some other things that impact your life as a young woman?
- You can ask each group to present their comments in a creative way (posters, a tableau, skits are some suggestions)
- What do you think about the magazine and video?

## Part 2: (45 minutes)

Now, discuss violence, racism and poverty in more depth using the stories from the magazine as a starting point.

### Activity (30 minutes)

Each participant or group will choose an article from the magazine. After reading the article a group discussion can begin. Here are some questions that you may want to use to get the conversation going.

- What was the article about? (explain briefly)
- How did it make you feel? What did you like the most?
- If you were given the chance to change or help the writer deal with the issue she is facing, what would you do?
- What images, pictures or thoughts came to your mind after reading this article?

### Wrap-Up (15 minutes)

When you're wrapping up the discussion, it's a good time to get feedback from the participants. Ask them how they feel about the workshop and what they think about the YWC initiative. Explain that the YWC project is ongoing and find out if anyone would be interested in contributing further to the project, or any other project that you're working on. Perhaps they have an idea for their project. Here are some more questions that you might want to use in your wrap-up.

- From what you know about YWC, what do you think of it?
- Is there anything you'd like to see happen with YWC that isn't?
- What would you like to do?
- Where do we go from here?

\*\* These questions can bring both positive and negative feedback, so try to be prepared and open for either one. In most cases people attending your workshop have given of their time so it is likely that their criticism is meant to be constructive.

Thank everyone for coming out and contributing.

## MUTUAL RESPECT

• Suggest that anything said in the workshops will stay in the group. If you intend on sharing what the group learned with others ask people to sign the "Release and Licence" form included with this magazine.

• If you plan to shoot video, ask if it is okay with the group. If people are not comfortable with the idea, don't shoot.



# Icebreakers

Some activities work better than others for large groups. Select the ones you think are most appropriate for your group.



## “Can It”

**Materials:** strips of pink and white paper, a jar, candy & pens

This activity is good for use in classrooms. As an introduction to this activity it can be explained that we all have a ton of things going on in our lives. Each person is invited to take a pink and white piece of paper and write down something that they need to let go of for the next hour or so in order for them to more fully participate in the group (this could be a happy thought or something they are struggling with). The white papers will be burned and the pink ones the facilitator will read (Not aloud). All participants write on both pieces of paper so no one is singled out. Participants are welcome to sign their name to the pink sheet. This way the facilitator can connect them with an appropriate resource if necessary. The participants are invited to take a candy out of the jar when they put their slips into the jar.

## “Weather Check”

Before beginning a group/session participants are asked to check in – this can be done in a variety of ways.

- Where are you at/what’s bugging you? What do you need to leave behind – what did you leave behind? etc.

- have a weather thermometer drawn on paper and have participants rate where they are at and explain briefly why

## “Dice Game”

**Materials:** dice (one per table), pen (one per table), paper (one per person)

This game is good for groups of 4-6 around a table.

This activity begins by one person at the table rolling the dice. Once this person rolls a 6, they grab the pen and start writing down numbers on their paper as fast as they can. In the meantime, the person to their left has grabbed the dice and is trying to roll a 6 as soon as they can. Once that person has rolled a 6, they grab the pen from the person to their right and begin writing numbers as fast as they can on their own paper. The person to their left tries to roll a 6 and it continues around the circle like this until someone reaches 100 (or whatever).

## “Balloons”

**Materials:** balloons, markers

This activity is good for groups of up to 12 and helps facilitate the discussion of issues.

Have the group stand in a circle. Ask what issues they are facing, what

responsibilities they have etc (i.e. school, boyfriend, music lessons). As the issues are identified they are written on the balloons and tossed into the group. The group then has to keep the balloons in the air. As more and more balloons are added, it becomes evident how difficult it can be to keep on top of all the things going on in our lives.

Another version – juggling different sized balls (each representing something different).

## “Cooperative Juggling Game”

**Materials:** bean bags or cush balls

This activity is good for large numbers of people.

Have participants stand in a circle. Start a pattern of throwing (always throw to and receive from the same person). Add more balls and continue the same pattern of throwing.

This activity can be used with unique metaphors (have participants throw while hopping on one foot or with one hand behind their back to represent, for example, cultural and language barriers). Or, before throwing, have people call the name of the person they’re throwing too to help people remember each other’s names.

## “Pencil”

Put an imaginary pencil in your belly button and write your name.

Note: caution around use as some people may have body issues and not be comfortable with this activity.

## “Conviction”

This activity can be introduced by saying that this activity involves a word that you have to add to your vocabulary and a word that you have to take out.

Have the participant stand up and put one of their arms out to the side. Ask them to think of something they would like to do. Have them say the statement in the following way...

1) I will try to... (i.e. go for a walk everyday, be a better violinist or some other resolution)

After they make the statement the facilitator tries to push down their arm. Next ask the participant to say the following...

2) I will absolutely... (i.e. go for a walk everyday, be a better violinist or some other resolution)

After they make this statement the facilitator tries to push their arm down again.

The point of this activity is that there is no conviction in the word try and that our own personal messages have a huge impact on what we are able to do.

Note: in this activity the participant “should” find it easier to hold their arm out in spite of the pressure after the 2nd statement.

## “Untangle the Knot”

Participants stand in a circle. Each person crosses their arms and takes the hand of two others in the circle. The task of the group is to untangle the knot they have created. Illustrates cooperation and what can be done by working together.

Note: use caution and sensitivity with this exercise as it involves touching and some may not be comfortable with this. Variation: One person stands outside of the circle and the participants in the circle have their eyes closed. The one person then tries to help the group untangle by giving instructions. After doing it this way, have the group do it again this time with everyone involved with their eyes open.

## “Introductions”

Have participants break up into pairs. Get them to learn a bit about the other person by asking a few questions.

- 3 unique things about the person
- something you are looking forward to
- what you wanted to be when you grew up etc.

Have the partners introduce each other and share what they learned.

## “Icebreaker”

**Materials:**-name tags with different characters on them (each should have a corresponding name/partner) i.e. Kermit and Miss Piggy, Mary Kate and Ashley Olsen, Abbott and Costello etc.

Each participant has a name attached to their back and they must determine who they are and then find their partner by asking yes/no questions to other participants i.e.) am I on T.V, am I male. A version of 20 questions.

Once they determine who they are they can place their name tag on their front and wait for their partner to determine who they are. These partners can be used later for small group activities.

## KEY CONCEPTS FOR INTERACTION

- Be positive
- Allow the other person to talk uninterrupted
- Think before you speak
- Give everyone the benefit of the doubt
- Speak for yourself - own what you say
- Always be calm
- Talk about one issue at a time
- Offer solutions and compromise
- Respect the other person's feeling and thoughts
- Support people
- Always show your appreciation
- Enjoy yourself
- Set out to learn something
- At all times treat others as you would want to be treated

# Release and Licence - No Fee

to use for educational purposes the material you contribute to the workshop



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# Facilitator's Guide

**Facilitate:** make easy, promote, help forward

**Facilitator:** responsible for assisting a process to success

## What is a Students Commission Facilitator?

A Students Commission facilitator is a guide on an incredible experience. You will assist participants through the process that is a Workshop. You will help them listen, understand, learn, contribute, lead and grow. You will be a role model, an information source, a helping hand, and a friend. Sound like a lot?? Well it is, but nothing you can't handle! The key to success as a facilitator is caring about the people around you and being a positive force for them.

## What is the role of a Facilitator?

- to impart the philosophy of the Students Commission at all times through conversation, action, and leadership;
- The Students Commission is a community and certain things, like respect, honour, and responsibility, can be expected in a community. Leading by example is the best way to develop it.
- to create a full experience for workshop participants;
- Assist people in getting settled in, answer questions and point out the activities or projects they can participate in outside the discussion group.
- to facilitate the group's discussion;
- Guide the participants through the process of dialogue, provoke thought, encourage participation, and focus ideas into concrete action.
- to be a friend;
- Listen, interact, make participants feel included and valuable. You can reinforce their discoveries, build their self confidence, and encourage their skill development.

**RESPECT**  
**LISTEN**  
**UNDERSTAND**  
**COMMUNICATE**

These are our four pillars, the foundation of all Students Commission programs and events.

They are pretty simple, but referring to them gives us all a touchstone for our behaviour when we are together.

When we truly respect another person, we can really listen to what they are saying; by listening, we can understand who they are and what they mean; by understanding each other we open the door for real communication, learning and growth. Leading by example is the best way to develop it.

## Letting Others Lead

In each workshop group there will be one facilitator (that's you). However, you will probably find in your group, a young person who has experienced a Students Commission conference before, or someone who has the skills and confidence to assume a position of co-facilitator. Sometimes, several people in your group each perform some aspect of this role. We encourage you to support and encourage young people assuming the role of co-facilitator in your group.



### Experienced Facilitator (You)

- resource and support person
- mentor for the inexperienced facilitator
- participates through active listening and asking thought provoking questions
- operates as a discipline source if necessary on request of young facilitator or group

### Inexperienced Facilitator

- inspires and maintains discussion
- maintains the group focus
- participates by active listening
- develops the break out group as a community, and reminds them of what that means

# Communication Skills



We all like to think we can communicate, you know..... talk and listen..... right?

Well, there are a lot of skills involved in communicating and sometimes we need to brush up on them. A workshop is all about communication. Through communication we learn, build relationships and help others. This can be an intense experience so here are some pointers to make it easier. Above all else remember that being a successful part of something requires you to be sensitive to those around you.

## WHAT AFFECTS COMMUNICATION?

### BARRIERS

time pressure  
language  
mistrust  
emotional state  
misperception  
stereo-types  
information overload  
lack of information  
peer pressure  
hostility

### AIDS

mutual respect  
listening  
honesty  
self-esteem  
clarification  
non-judgmental  
facilitation  
knowledge  
freedom of expression  
interaction

**What are the things that encourage the aids?**

Attending Behaviour  
Active Listening  
Body Language  
Empathy

## Attending Behaviour

This means "be here now" and it indicates that you are physically and emotionally present and builds rapport.

### Nonverbal Cues

- make eye contact
- your face is a source of feedback so smile, frown, show expressions.
- use your body posture. If you relax others around you will relax. Be aware of yourself. Are you sitting toward the group, leaning forward, indicating interest? Are you distanced from everyone? Are you talking when someone else is talking?

### Verbal Cues

- it's okay to be quiet, to use that time to think, absorb, prepare. Always count at least three seconds before you speak or respond.
- "yeah", "uh-huh", "really", "right", "oh" are all ways to express interest and concern without interrupting
- summarizing what the speaker has said indicates that you were listening, you are interested, and you validate their efforts.

### Active Listening

Listening is a difficult job and one we all have trouble with at different times. However, this is a key skill for communication because it involves a lot more than just hearing. There are three parts to active listening:

- listening to and understanding



words

- listening to and understanding the person
- listening to and understanding body language

### Body Language

It means posture, facial expressions, tone of voice, mannerisms, and level of excitement. Be aware of the people around you and how they are acting or reacting.

### Empathy

Empathy is the act of understanding by putting yourself in someone else's shoes! Remember that people are complex! If you don't know them extremely well you don't know them or their experiences. Try to see things from their perspective without losing yours. Ask questions! Strive to learn about everyone around you! This builds understanding.



**Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement**  
**Le Centre d'excellence pour l'engagement des jeunes**

**You know how you're always wishing adults would take youth seriously?**

**WELL, SOMEBODY FINALLY IS.**

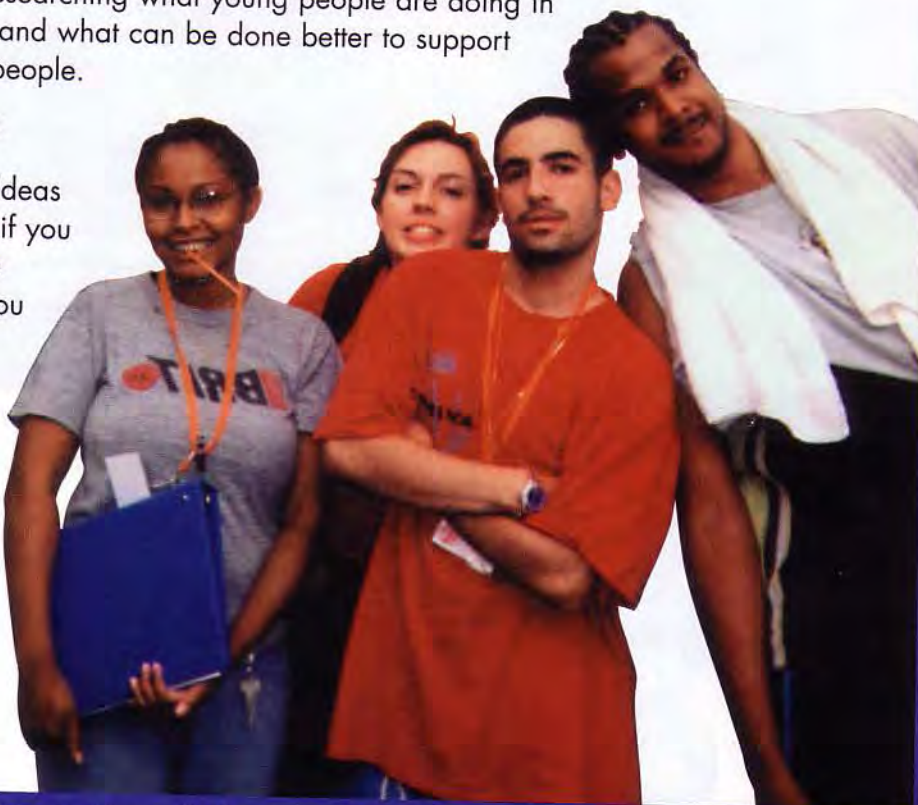
The Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement is a Canada-wide project designed to connect youth with professional researchers. Involving 22 youth organizations, it is funded by Health Canada and led by The Students Commission.

Together, youth and adults are researching what young people are doing in their communities and schools – and what can be done better to support effective participation of young people.

So, what does this mean to you?

Our purpose is to legitimize the ideas and power of young people. So if you have an idea and need to create some research to support it, or you want to change your world but aren't sure how to start, it's our goal to help.

Get involved or get more information at: [www.tgmag.ca](http://www.tgmag.ca) or [tgmag@tgmag.ca](mailto:tgmag@tgmag.ca)  
 The Students Commission  
 23 Isabella Street  
 Toronto ON M4Y 1M7

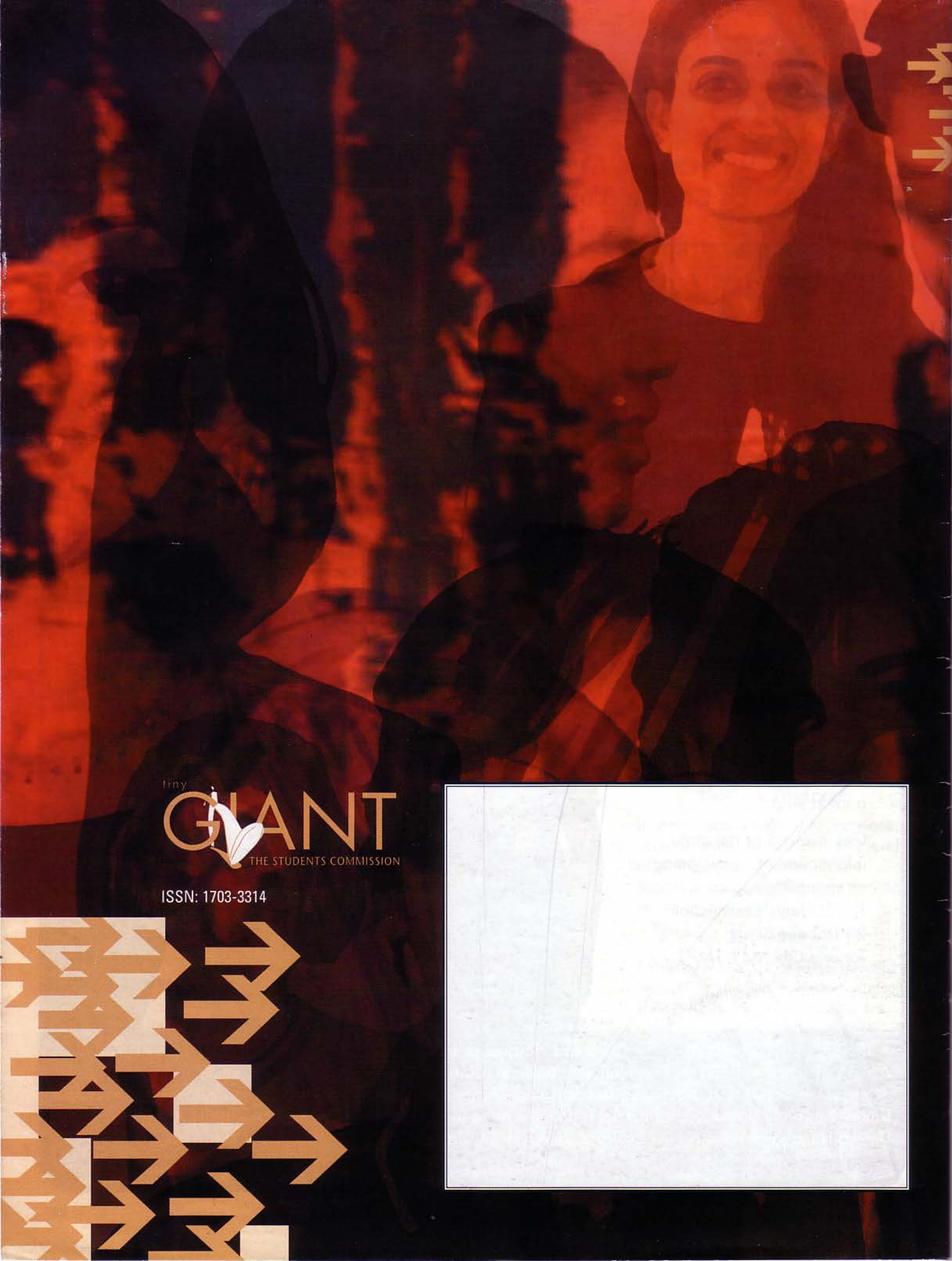


- The Students Commission • The Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (Ottawa, ON) • Environmental Youth Alliance (Vancouver, BC) • The National Youth in Care Network • Heartwood Institute (Bridgewater, NS)
- Integrated School-Linked Services/The Saskatoon Action Circle on Youth Sexuality (Saskatoon, SK) • Wilfrid Laurier University (Waterloo, ON) • La Fédération de la jeunesse canadienne-française (FJCF) • The Community University Research Alliance, led by Brock University (St. Catharines, ON) • YouthNet (Ottawa, ON)



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