

## SOME WHITE WOMEN'S RESPONSE TO MARCH 8th

Accepting the need to meet together a number of white women met as a group to discuss our role in the March 8th Coalition. This should have been done prior to the first evaluation. We discussed our expectations of the coalition, our expectations of doing anti-racist work, put forward individual self-criticisms and recommendations for future work. In this response we do not speak for all white women in the coalition, and those who met have many political differences among us. What we share is the recognition that we must increase our consciousness around racism and all its manifestations.

There was a discussion on whether to make one statement. Because we come from many political outlooks, and have differences among us, there was concern that it would be impossible to write a unitary statement which would be truly reflective of our differences. But because we felt that it was important to continue to develop a dialogue and complete the evaluation, most of us agreed to put forward the following response.

We understand that being white gives us a commonality, and that as white women we must deal with both the personal privilege and structures of racism in a heterosexist, racist, class society, and within the women's movement. We also have differences of class, sexuality, national origins, and experiences of oppression, which impact on our lives in different ways, and our political outlooks.

We recognize that the women's movement has not integrated an anti-racist perspective and we must be self-critical of that. We accept the criticism of southasian, native, black, Chinese and other women of colour that the movement hasn't been open to them. We feel it was historically and politically important to organize international women's day around the single theme of "No to Racism from Toronto to South Africa", and that it is the responsibility of white women and the women's movement to fight racism. We accept the need to educate ourselves on racism in order to take up this fight.

We strongly endorse the anti-racist politics that was developed with the leadership of women of colour in the March 8th leaflet. We also support the general perspective that was articulated in the coalition speech, particularly the need to build a new women's movement with the participation and leadership of South Asian, Native, Black, Chinese and other women of colour. The women's movement must be self-critical of its history in this regard.

The event was publically a political success, and we have all learned much through this process. Mistakes have been made, and we want to commit ourselves to self-critically working on the development of a truly anti-racist feminism. We support the role of caucuses in coalition, and put forward the following recommendations:

--at the start of a coalition the groups and individuals involved should contract with each other on the process of working together and our accountability to each other

--the coalition should clarify the role of caucuses and how political decisions are to be made

--the coalition should recognize the importance of political discussion and dialogue so that there is political learning and growth

--the coalition put more emphasis on anti-racist education

--the coalition familiarize new members with its history and process

--the evaluation be well planned and a follow-up process for the next coalition be agreed on

--that representation on the coordinating committee be given a high priority

We recognize that this is a minimal response and that individuals and groups within us will have much more to say both in terms of criticisms and recommendations.