TIGER LILY

JOURNAL BY WOMEN OF COLOUR

THE POLITICS OF MULTICULTURALISM

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THE POLITICS OF MULTICULTURALISM

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Journal by Women of Colour

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Will Multiculturalism Succeed?

In this issue of *Tiger Lily* we take an indepth look at the catch word of the 1990's: 'Multiculturalism'.

As a book publisher of 'multicultural' books I have seen a marked change in the attitudes of not only book buyers and educators but also readers as they try to grapple with this concept. But how new is it? The new world has been peopled by 'multicultural' groups, but it is only since the colour of the people has changed that there seems to be a sense of urgency to make the concept work. But will it?

No nation of people can continue to ignore members within its borders. Talent and creativity will surge despite the many setbacks—so we question the policy of multiculturalism, the attitudes of the people it seems to affect the most, and we question the reality of such a policy succeeding.

Tiger Lily has published five previous issues in magazine format. We have focussed on a variety of themes and have appreciated the work of guest editors. However, we have concluded that *Tiger Lily* would work better in a journal format, thus giving it a longer shelf life and a wider audience. With our sixth issue — the Multiculturalism issue — the magazine will be known as *Tiger Lily* — Journal by Women of Colour.

We look forward to your comments.

Ann Wallace

The Woman of Colour and the Politics of Multiculturalism

As a student of political science at Queen's University, I took a somewhat "ivory tower" approach to the subject. I was fascinated by ideas for their own sake. The dependency theories of Fernando Cardoso and Andre Gunder Frank, Lenin's concept of imperialism as the logical extension of capitalism, and my own research paper on the cultural imperialism inherent in the capitalist world's communications infrastructure, gave me hours of pleasure that a student princess might envy. The thought of relating these exciting intellectual constructs to the mundane realities of day-to-day life did not occur to me at all. Although I could identify intellectually with feminism, I was not yet a "politicized" feminist.

Later, during my efforts to re-enter professional life as a journalist after an extended maternity leave, I had a few unpleasant run-ins with a subtle, virtually invisible, but intuitively perceptible mixture of sexism and racism. These experiences cured me of any propensity to detach politics from "real life."

I began to realize more and more that women of colour, whether we realize it or not, do form an interest group, and although we may be powerless as individuals, we can use our votes and our political influence as a group, to effect changes in a society where we are not only obstructed by sexism, but racism as well.

Realizing that no society is perfect, and that Canadian society holds benefits or potential benefits for us, as well as problems, I am willing to work at changes that I think are necessary. This is why I considered it an opportunity, a challenge and an honour, when *Tiger Lily* publisher Ann Wallace invited me to serve as the Politics Editor of *Tiger Lily* and to guest edit this particular issue, with its major emphasis on multiculturalism. Multiculturalism is not only the official policy of our federal government

and of a number of provincial governments, but it has also acquired a somewhat superficial and misleading meaning in Canadian society which equates it with those exhibitionistic and commercialized displays of inter-racial camaraderie, the ultimate example of which is Caribana.

Last year, the Caribana Cultural Committee, which organizes Caribana estimated that 400,000 local and 1,000,000 foreign visitors would spend between $5 and $7 million in the week-long celebration of the "culture of the West Indies" as a tourist brochure described it. In my own community, Belleville, Ontario, a number of unemployed ethnic women, including a few "displaced" professionals (those who had to give up their former professions because of some highly protectionist policies that devalue their credentials) devote hours of unpaid time and labour to organize an annual "Folklorama", a mini-version of Toronto's Caravan.

If all these women of colour would stop to think and realize that song-and-dance multiculturalism only perpetuates an image of harmony that masks the reality of social and economic inequality, they would be taking a giant step towards political awareness. If they then would get together in groups to exchange ideas, opinions and experiences, they would be taking a second and crucially important step. From this, it would follow that they do not have to accept racism and unequal opportunity passively. They would realize that there are things they can do as a group, either by themselves, or in solidarity with other like-minded groups, to improve their position in society. Some of the energy they put into singing, dancing and cooking festivals could be rechannelled into organizations such as the National Coalition of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women which work for social change.

"The empowered seek consensus from the unempowered," said Assistant Deputy Minister Elaine Todres of the Ontario Women's Directorate at a "Women in Politics" conference organized by *Tiger Lily* last year. So we have a responsibility to make sure our messages reach the leaders of our own ethnic communities as well as our elected political leaders, who are in a position to influence and shape our public policies.

A medium for sending these messages is in your hands right now. As Politics Editor of *Tiger Lily*, I would like to introduce a new "Letters to the Editor" page, starting in our next issue. *Tiger Lily* is read by key policy-makers in provincial and federal government ministries where it is recognized as an "important publication that expresses the concerns of women of colour." So we invite you to take some time to collect your thoughts on any issue that concerns you — employment, housing, the spending of our multiculturalism allocations, or whatever. Write them down in the form of a letter to the Editors of *Tiger Lily*. Your letter will be published and your voice will be heard, in places where your vote counts.

Susan Korah

Multiculturalism and the Woman of Colour: Can We Bridge the Gap Between Rhetoric and Reality?

by Susan Korah

First, a few images from the tourist promotional and official-bureaucratic scrapbook of Canadian multiculturalism:

> Now Toronto is perceived as one of the most racially tolerant cities anywhere. Every June, Metro International Caravan celebrates the city's multiculturalism, when the various ethnic communities put on shows and present the cuisine of their homelands in church basements, school gymnasiums, and cultural clubs throughout downtown. Visitors are always impressed by this demonstration of racial harmony and go home wondering why the ethnic groups in their own communities can't get along as well.
>
> Key to Toronto, January, 1989

* Each year, thousands of Canadians attend ethnic celebrations, ranging from Caribana and Caravan in Toronto, Mosaic in Regina, Folklorama in Winnipeg, "Our Heritage" in Saskatoon, and a Greek Street Festival in Vancouver to a myriad of mosaics, folkloramas and festivals in smaller communities throughout the length and breadth of the country.
* A Berlitz travel guide to Toronto described that city's population as a

"rollicking ethnic cast" that includes Chinese, Hungarians and West Indians.

* Barbara Ward, the British economist dubbed Canada the "world's first international nation."

* Beaver-like activity in various government bureaucracies as well as committees and commissions has culminated in that jewel-in-crown of official multiculturalism — Bill C-93, now enshrined in the law of the land as the Canadian Multiculturalism Act which not only recognizes that "Multiculturalism reflects the cultural and racial diversity of Canadian society and acknowledges the freedom of all members of Canadian society to preserve, enhance and share their cultural heritage" but also promises to "promote the full and equitable participation of individuals and communities of all origins in the continuing evolution and shaping of all aspects of Canadian society and assist them in the elimination of any barrier to such participation."

What now? Should we female members of the "rollicking ethnic cast" dance one more routine to celebrate the inauguration of a brave new world of inter-racial harmony? Should we raise our voices in joyful chorus to sing "We've come a long way, baby?" Or should we step back emotionally from the hype of glossy tourist brochures and the gush of political rhetoric and ask some hard-edged questions of our own? Most importantly, would this proliferation of heritage language programmes, ethnic festivals (in which we are portrayed as happy-go-lucky singing and dancing deniziens of some exotic never-never land), and scholarly conferences solve the problem of economic and social inequality for us women of colour and other groups at the bottom of the power scale?

My own response as a journalist, a woman of colour and the political editor of *Tiger Lily* is to write this article, in which I will attempt to examine whether the rhetoric of policy corresponds with the myths of multiculturalism that are deeply entrenched in the dominant society, and also with the realities of life for Canadian women of colour.

Here let me strike a note of caution and make a firm disclaimer. It is not my intention to launch a mindless and cynical attack upon good intentions. The fact that Canada's ethnic minorities are officially recognized and our human rights are enshrined in a number of legal documents — such as the Canadian Human Rights Act of 1977, the Canadian Charter of Rights in the Constitution Act of 1982 and the Multiculturalism Act of 1988 — could serve as a morale booster and a confidence builder. The goal of the multiculturalism policy, which according to former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau's statement to the House of Commons on October 8, 1971 is to "break down discriminatory attitudes and cultural jealousies," is beyond reproach. Indeed any public posture which is so explicitly liberal and tolerant, and any policy which pays even a little more than lip service

to combatting racism are based on a principle which I personally endorse and in which all of us Canadians whether native-born or naturalized, "visible" or "invisible" have a direct stake.

Far from belittling the idea of promoting a horizontal cultural mosaic to replace the vertical one we have now, my purpose is to stimulate some thinking and discussion, among the widest possible community of women of colour, about an official policy and a set of legal structures which are all too often dismissed as having no real bearing on our day-to-day lives. Thus the starting point for discussion is not to question the pluralist values inherent in the policy of multiculturalism, but to ask if the interpretation and implementation of the policy, with its emphasis on song-and-dance- and "talk show" programmes (conferences) have eroded any damaging racist and sexist stereotypes, the basis of all racist and sexist attitudes and behaviour? Or are they, by and large, a sheer waste of public and private resources? Worse still, have the rhetoric of multiculturalism and the attendant merry-go-round of Caribanas and Caravans reinforced the dominant society's complacent perception of itself as a colour blind and equal opportunity society, and thus exacerbated the problem? If it is true that while "show and tell" multiculturalism goes on, economic and social inequality remains a frustrating fact of life for the majority of women of colour, what can we do about it? Does the struggle against negative stereotyping have to become a purely personal one, to be conducted on a one-to-one basis, with no hope of any tangible result within our lifetime? Or can we, as women of colour, influence the direction of policy? Should we not organize ourselves and ask Ottawa in firm, united voices whether at least some of the $192 million which Multiculturalism Minister Gerry Weiner announced will be available over the next five years to provide "new directions" for multicultural programmes, will be used to steer the programmes towards helping us attain full and equal participation in Canadian society?

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Before we attempt to answer my earlier questions and to formulate some plan of action, let us delve into an often-forgotten chapter of Canada's history — Anglo Canada's long tradition of racism, often combined with sexism, that strikes at the heart of the current assumption that the original sin of racism has never tainted the Canadian Garden of Eden. This historical flashback is not for the purpose of reopening old wounds or of beating our Anglo-Saxon friends over their collective head, but to gain some insight into the enormity of the task facing a few, recent pieces of legislation — notably the liberalized immigration laws of 1962 and 1967 and the Multiculturalism Act of 1988 — which is no less than to change some deeply entrenched attitudes and perceptions. It is necessary to remind ourselves that although at certain specific times, this country has

had reasonably generous and humane refugee policies — most recently the admission of hundreds of Tibetans and thousands of Ugandan Asians and Vietnamese — it has also had a long history of official and popular racism directed against Asians and other non-white immigrants.

In fact, from very early times, Canada's immigration policies had unabashedly racist and sexist overtones, at times more or less explicit and without the least hint of subtlety. We will now briefly examine the history of a few racial minorities in Canada, with an attempt to include whenever available, some information about the women of these groups.

IMMIGRATION AND THE SINGLE CHINESE MAN

The Chinese Immigration Act of 1923 cut off Chinese immigration completely. Although eventually, male Chinese were allowed to immigrate, they were not allowed to bring wives and children. This policy remained in effect until 1947.

WOMEN: A MINORITY WITHIN A MINORITY

There were very few Chinese women in Ontario prior to World War II. In 1911, about 30 years after the arrival of the first Chinese in Toronto, women were only 2.9 percent of the population. By 1921, the proportion of women had increased to 4.6 percent of the population, but not until the 1960s did the sex ratio begin to balance itself.

When the western section of the CPR was completed in the 1930s, the Chinese labourers who had been hired to work on it, suddenly found themselves out of work. Not having been able to accumulate enough savings to return to China, they found themselves in a double dilemma — unemployed and facing the brunt of racist feelings fuelled by the Great Depression. The Chinese in particular became the target of such sentiments and a series of laws and regulations aimed at limiting their economic, social and political participation in Canadian society, was implemented in B.C.

Naturally, many left the province, and many found their way to smaller communities in other parts of Canada. Many migrated to the urban centres of Ontario, which did not display the same intense xenophobia as the west coast.

It is not certain when the first Chinese women arrived in Ontario. Between 1901 and 1911, 79 Chinese women are featured in census records, along with 2,638 men. The greatest numbers were in Toronto. This scarcity of women has been attributed to several reasons. A major cause was the graduated head taxes that were levied — $50 in 1885, $100 in 1900, and finally, $500 in 1904 — that made it virtually impossible for Chinese labourers to bring their wives and families. By 1923, the tax was abolished

and replaced by the Chinese Immigration Exclusion Act, mentioned earlier, which made immigration all but impossible. Nevertheless, a few women managed to circumvent the restrictions, and not only settled in Canada, but also fulfilled their roles as mothers, wives and business partners in extremely trying circumstances.

IMMIGRATION FROM INDIA

Male immigrants from India had been coming to Canada since 1904. The majority of them were Sikhs (members of a religious sect founded in the 16th century) from the province of Punjab. At first, former Sikh members of the (British) Indian army from India and the Far East were encouraged to come to Canada by steamship companies and B.C. bun businessmen who needed a source of cheap labour when the $500 head tax sharply reduced the number of Chinese immigrants. Later Sikh arrivals were mainly peasants from rural Punjab. Their families were not allowed to immigrate with them.

Between 1905 and 1914, slightly more than 5000 East Indians entered Canada out of a total of 2.5 million immigrants. At the peak period of Indian immigration they formed less than five percent of the population of B.C. Yet British Columbia became alarmed at the perceived invasion of turban-clad "foreigners" and racist feelings were expressed in exclusionist policies in housing, employment, education, unions and government, especially in periods of high unemployment. Indians did not have the right to vote in B.C. until 1948.

In addition, the Canadian Knights of the Ku Klux Klan were a strong anti-Asiatic force during the early years of this century. In 1907, anti-Asiatic riots occurred in Vancouver. By 1908, the B.C. government forced Prime Minister Mackenzie King to go to the British government, which then ruled India, and try to stop immigration from that country. Even though the British government co-operated by discouraging emigration to Canada, it stopped short of passing legislation to prevent people from India coming to Canada. This was because the British had a principle of their own to maintain — Pax Brittanica — which was supposed to be honoured throughout the Empire.

By 1908, the government of B.C. had passed two laws to stem the tide of East Indian immigration. Each immigrant had to have $200 upon landing in Canada, and secondly, immigrants had to come by direct passage from the country of their birth. Even if some individual Indians were capable of raising $200, the second obstacle proved to be nearly insurmountable, because there were no direct shipping lines between India and Canada.

However, one group of about 400 Sikhs, determined to challenge the second restriction, chartered a Japanese ship, the Komagata Maru, to take

them directly from Bombay to Vancouver. Then followed the ugly racist incident in which the passengers of the Komagata Maru were refused Canadian landing rights, as well as food, water and medicine. One person died and several others suffered from malnutrition before the ship was forced to turn back under guard.

It was not until 1929 that the wives and children of legal Indian residents of Canada were allowed into Canada. Unlike other landed immigrants, Indo-Canadians could not freely sponsor parents, grandparents, fiances or unmarried children. Only in the 1960s were the discriminatory laws revoked.

BLACKS IN THE GREAT WHITE NORTH

Even before the formalization of immigration policy, there was ample evidence to demonstrate the racist underpinnings of Canadian society. Slavery was prevalent in Canada and by 1750, there were well over 4000 Black slaves in New France. It was not until 1834, when all slaves in the British Empire were freed, through the passing of the Emancipation Act, that slavery was abolished in Canada. While formal slavery was at an end, this did not mean that attitudes and behaviour took on a more favourable disposition.

By the 20th century, a once-vague mythology about what Blacks could and could not do had taken a more specific form. Generations of Canadians had been told — through language, literature, history and even "science" — about Black peoples' inability to adapt to the north, of their innate laziness and unreliability and as well as about the Black man's voracious sexual appetite. Implicit in all of this was the notion that if Canadians did not wish to repeat their American cousins' unfortunate experience with Blacks, they would be well advised to block the problem at its source: the border.

During the 1850s, concerned Canadians had warned the country against the dangers posed by destitute runaway slaves who were presumably pounding at the doors of Canada. By 1890, they worried that non-British and non-western European people would not have the prerequisites for success as epitomized by Samuel Smiles and Horatio Alger. But until the 20th century, the majority of political leaders were silent on the issue of Black immigration. Between 1900 and 1929, Canadian racial awareness was at its height. A combination of circumstances conspired at this time to bring American Blacks to Canada's gates and they caught some of the wrath directed at Asians. Black urbanization, begun during the American Civil War, had been accelerating rapidly. A search for better job opportunities, the desire to escape from the increasingly rigid social structure of the southern states, and pressures exerted by industry in World War I promoted mass migration to the cities and to the north.

In the western states, agricultural conditions were growing poor, and showed little prospect of improvement. Land prices and rents were rising sky-high, and mechanization was throwing labourers out of work. Land in Dakota cost $50 an acre, in 1900, while comparable land across the border in Saskatchewan was selling for $2. The Canadian government began an intensive campaign to attract American farmers. Clifford Sifton, federal minister of the Interior stressed the healthy climate of western Canada and promised to welcome all who came. Six-hundred-thousand Americans responded. Since Sifton had mentioned no racial restrictions, American Blacks assumed that they all were included in the invitation. They were not.

As Blacks began to emigrate to western Canada in 1911, first accounts of the influx and impact of these people came from the mass media. They alerted Canadians to the fact that a wave of (300) Blacks were entering the country. This provoked a debate in the House of Commons which culminated in giving immigration officers the right to bar Blacks from entering Canada on the grounds that they could not adapt to the rigours of the climate. Canadian immigration officials pressed forward in their attempts to block Black settlers. A Canadian immigration agent hurried to Oklahoma to talk to parties of prospective Black immigrants, describing the harshness of the winters and the general prejudice which they were likely to encounter here. At the same time, other Canadian agents were describing the attractions of the north to white Americans. In March 1912, the Superintendent of Immigration W. D. Scott publicly asked Black Americans not to come to western Canada, since opportunities for them were better in a warmer climate. These activities effectively stopped further large scale Black immigration into Canada. The situation remained unchanged until the outbreak of World War I.

NON-WHITES NEED NOT APPLY

Racism in Canada began with British-Indian relations and has continued into the present. The restrictive and exclusive immigration policies briefly outlined above, have been directed mainly against non-whites, although occasionally they have been used against other groups such as Jews, Hutterites and Slavs. Between 1900 and the end of World War II, Canadian immigration was virtually a closed door for non-whites. A Green Paper written in the early years of this century pointedly stated that "non-whites are not welcome." Policy changes in the 1950s did not alter the basic colour scheme of the Canadian mosaic. In fact, immigration regulations that emerged at this time actually graded people from acceptable to unacceptable. People from Great Britain were the preferred immigrants while the least desirable were those from India and Pakistan.

AFTER 1931: FOREIGN POLICY REQUIRES A BENIGN IMAGE FOR CANADA

In 1931, when the Statute of Westminster conferred Dominion status on Canada, she faced a special problem with regard to the immigration of non-whites. Since Canada was a senior member of the Commonwealth of Nations, Canadian policy-makers thought of their country as the First Dominion and the pace setter in the process of evolutionary self-government. After World War II, with the independence of India, Pakistan, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) and other former British colonies, the nationals of these countries demanded to know what the Commonwealth relationship meant if they were virtually barred from emigrating to the First Dominion.

Canadians countered that the Statute of Westminster, which made the Commonwealth a reality, explicitly stated that each member nation was "sovereign and equal" and therefore Canada had every right to refuse immigrant status to the citizens of other Commonwealth countries, just as they had a right to bar Canadians. As William Lyon Mackenzie King stated in the House of Commons in 1947, "Canada is perfectly within her rights in selecting the persons whom we regard as desirable future citizens." He asserted that the people of Canada did not wish, as a result of mass immigration "to make a fundamental alteration in the character of our population." From 1947 until 1957, immigration policy adhered to this guideline.

Virtually all commentators in newspapers, from the pulpit, and within the universities agreed that Canadians did not want large-scale Oriental or African migrations to the Dominion. In a democracy, ministers had an obligation to give the people what they wanted, and a Gallup poll taken in Canada in 1956 showed that nearly 60 percent of the respondents felt that immigration policy should make entry more difficult for some people than for others.

But many other conflicting pressures were also at work on Canadian ministers of citizenship and immigration, and herein lay the dilemma. Canada was beginning to carve a niche for herself as a moderate, middle power nation in the polarized world of the Cold War era and ministers were expected to maintain Canadian sovereignty as interpreted by Mackenzie King, and at the same time, to show Canada to be a democratic, humanitarian nation, willing to help the distressed. They must also do nothing that would cost their party defeat at the polls. By the 1950s, employers wanted more immigrants, and some, especially in Quebec, were quick to use them as strike breakers. The Canadian Labour Congress tended to oppose immigration, because it feared that wages would go down. Fundamentalist Protestant clergymen disliked Italians, and Hungarians because they were likely to be Roman Catholics. Many French

Canadians insisted that the Catholic balance in the population must be preserved. Professional groups such as medical associations were highly sceptical of the qualifications of professional people among the new arrivals. Highly technical industries wanted immigrants with specialized skills, university degrees, and immediate competence in English or French. Employers in the building trades, in construction work and in heavy industry preferred labourers with more muscle power than education.

Meanwhile, high ranking bureaucrats and political leaders — the movers and shakers of Canadian immigration policy, including ministers of citizenship and immigration — saw things from the vantage point of ringside seats at the United Nations and other international discussion groups. They were alert to the winds of change sweeping through the UN, across Africa and Asia, and even blowing northwards from the U.S. They recognized that on balance, Canada's discriminatory immigration policy was harmful in international relations and would do incalculable damage to the new image they wished to project. They calculated that in the long run, economics and not race, would determine the movement of peoples. As the Dominion played an increasing role in world affairs in the 1960s, they became more and more conscious of a basic fact of modern life: that in an increasingly international world, non-whites far outnumber whites, and that Asian and African nations could soon outvote Europe and North America in the UN.

THE ABOUT-FACE OF THE 1960s

While the nation, by and large, recognized the need for immigrants, it fragmented itself into a multiplicity of interest groups when the moot question was raised — what kind of immigrants? In general, the policy-makers and ministers of citizenship and immigration moved ahead of the people, rather than with or behind them.

Thus Canadian policy underwent further change in 1962, the year of Great Britain's restrictive Commonwealth Immigration Act. Mrs. Ellen Fairclough, the second Conservative minister of citizenship and immigration under Prime Minister Diefenbaker and the first woman cabinet minister in Canada, brought in new regulations which put the emphasis on education and skills. Each immigrant would be considered "entirely on his own merit, without regard to race, colour, national original or country from which he comes." As the *Toronto Daily Star*, which had campaigned for many of the changes noted when the new regulations of 1962 came into effect, Canada had removed a major obstacle to improved standing in the Commonwealth, in the United Nations and the world.

The new shift in policy eliminated the old racial bias and made is possible for significant numbers of non-whites from the "Third World", especially Hong Kong, India, Pakistan and the West Indies to enter Canada.

In 1967, the points system was introduced as a fair way of evaluating the merits of each prospective immigrant to Canada. The points system is based on the philosophy that certain attributes possessed by individuals will enable them to adapt successfully to Canadian society. Nine factors were considered important in predicting successful adaptation, as well as in ensuring that the immigrant would not require assistance from the government. Five of these criteria — education, training, personal qualities and occupational demand in Canada — are considered long term factors, while the remaining four — arranged employment, knowledge of English or French, presence of a relative in Canada and general employment opportunities in the area of destination — are considered short term factors that indicate an applicant's change of establishing an early foothold in Canada.

The nine factors have a combined potential value of 100 points. When applicants are judged to have at least 50 points, their success in Canada is predicted. Scoring less than that would usually result in a negative prediction and refusal of admission.

Yet another Immigration Act became effective in 1978. For the first time in the history of Canadian law, the Act states the basic principles underlying Canada's new immigration policy — non-discrimination on the basis of race, family reunion, humanitarian concern for refugees and the promotion of national goals. The laws had indeed come along way since the days of Sifton and even Mackenzie King.

THE BIRTH OF MULTICULTURALISM AS OFFICIAL POLICY

Multiculturalism as an idea, a movement and a government policy developed during the 1960s and early 1970s in response to the same economic, political and intellectual currents that had virtually revolutionized Canadian immigration laws. It is important to remember that like its twin sister, the new non-racist immigration policy, multiculturalism came into being, not in response to pressure from the majority of white Canadians, but because of initiatives developed by a few high level bureaucrats and politicians with a global vision of the world.

Book IV of a report filed by the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism dealt with "the contribution made by other groups to the cultural enrichment of Canada and the measures that should be taken to safeguard that contribution."

A set of 16 recommendations was made to the federal government in October 1969. In October 1971, the response of the government was announced in the form of an official policy of multiculturalism. Described as a "policy of multiculturalism within a bilingual framework," it sought to encourage the retention of characteristic cultural features by those

groups which desired to do so, and to encourage the sharing of these cultural features with other members of the larger Canadian society. The policy is based on the assumption that if an individual is to become open and tolerant in her attitudes to other ethnocultural groups, she must have confidence in and respect for her own cultural roots. The policy was designed to "break down discriminatory attitudes and cultural jealousies" and to "assist members of all cultural groups to overcome barriers to full participation in Canadian society." In 1972, a Minister of State for Multiculturalism was appointed, and in 1973, the Department of the Secretary of State began to operate a Multicultural Grants Program.

But how far has this state-imposed multiculturalism succeeded in breaking down discriminatory attitudes and promoting the full participation of all ethnic people in Canadian society? Since government-initiated legislation by itself cannot break down the vertical mosaic and "full participation" by the unempowered cannot occur without a change in majority attitudes, let us briefly examine some majority attitudes towards multiculturalism and ethnic diversity.

MULTICULTURALISM AND THE RELUCTANT MAJORITY

Considering the fact that most "ordinary" Canadians were unaware of and unaffected by the political and intellectual currents that were sweeping the international scene in the 1960s, and considering that Anglo-Canada has had such a long tradition of discrimination in its relations with other races, it is not surprising that multiculturalism, as dreamed up by "B and B" commissioners and Prime Minister Trudeau, has not met with universal acceptance.

A sociological survey conducted in the summer of 1974 by Berry, Kalin and Taylor for the Department of the Secretary of State found a somewhat limited support for multiculturalism among Anglo Canadians. The study found that unlike in the past, there was no widespread fear that multiculturalism would destroy "our Canadian way of life", and there was a positive feeling that multiculturalism would make Canada "richer in culture."

One of the discouraging findings of the Berry study confirmed a number of previous studies that found an "ethnic pecking order" or vertical mosaic mentality in the majority of Anglo Canadians. Many evaluated themselves as being more "important", "clean", "likeable" and "interesting" than other ethnic groups. They also had more favourable attitudes towards northern Europeans than towards southern Europeans and non-whites.

Nearly 15 years later, a study of nation-wide attitudes conducted by

a group of four social scientists revealed some distinctly negative attitudes to "other" races. About 30 percent of a random sampling of Canadians took the view that all races are not equal "when it comes to things that count most." The survey, financed by the Social Science and Humanities Research Council, also showed that while Canadian society appears equitable on the surface, it is marred by simmering tensions underneath. Seventy percent of those questioned said that immigrants bring discrimination on themselves. One in three said that laws guaranteeing equal job opportunities for minorities had gone too far.

Yet Trudeau's original policy statement had envisioned the "preservation of human rights", as well as the retention of cultural diversity. According to a 1987 Background Paper, Secretary of State David Crombie had predicted optimistically that "Substantial social economic and cultural benefits will flow from a strengthened commitment to multiculturalism."

WOMEN OF COLOUR IN THE MULTICULTURAL MOSAIC

Have any of Crombie's "substantial social, economic and cultural benefits" flowed towards women of colour? A few facts will speak for themselves.

"... Women belonging to minority groups ... faced multiple obstacles in their efforts to achieve full participation in Canadian society," said the same Background Paper in which Crombie had expressed his great hope for the future. "Such women often had to overcome linguistic, cultural, racial and sexual barriers to their aspirations."

BLACK WOMEN

Late in 1955, the Canadian government agreed to admit 100 female domestics each year from Jamaica and Barbados. By 1960, the government increased the number to nearly 300. Under the regulations, some were able to bring their fiances and close relatives, and the domestics could take out citizenship after five years. Although this regulation served the needs of an affluent elite in Canadian society, and supplied upper-class homes in Montreal, Toronto and Ottawa with badly-needed household help, it could well have been detrimental to race relations in the long run. It brought into Canada a class of women who served to reinforce notions of white superiority, since West Indian women were mainly found in menial jobs, (although a few of the domestics were relatively well-educated young women who chose this method of gaining entry into Canada.)

In 1981, a study of ethnic inequality and segregation in Toronto showed that West Indian women were the biggest under-earners averaging $6000 a year less than Anglo-Saxon women and $3000 a year less than Portuguese women.

SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN

Women of South Asian origin fall into two distinct categories, although both face some common problems. South Asian female workers in blue-collar job ghettoes form a segment of the labour force that remains hidden, and seldom mentioned in official employment statistics. There is very little data available on the employment of non-professional South Asian women, but judging from a few I have interviewed personally, the indications are that they bear a multiple burden in Canadian society — racism and sexism in the workplace, combined with a particularly rigid, patriarchal family system that often imposes on them the ordeal of adjusting to Canadian life as wives and dependants of men they barely knew before their arranged marriages. Like all blue-collar working women, black or white, they are often trapped in the lowest strata of the job market, with long hours, low pay, and lack of any real possibility of upward mobility. Their difficulties at work are compounded by lack of social and communications skills including fluency in English and assertive behaviour patterns.

The educated Indian woman who came to Canada as a result of the liberalized immigration laws of the 1960s, is in a somewhat different position. A survey of East Indian women's education and career aspirations in Toronto in 1977 found that 54 percent of the respondents had received some university education. A large number of women who had obtained a Master's degree from outside Canada chose to continue their education in Canada, particularly if they had lived here for more than seven years. The educational level of the women however, does not reflect their actual positions in Canada, because degrees earned outside Canada are devalued and because of discrimination in hiring practices.

Foreign-trained doctors for example, have to complete an internship before they are licensed to practise in Canada, and opportunities for internships are few and far between for medical graduates from overseas universities. "The frustration and lack of hope is too much," Dr. Saira Ansari, a female physician from India said in 1986. "Being a medical graduate from abroad is like having a curse on you," added another woman doctor, a refugee from her native country. According to "Equality Now!", the 1984 report of a House of Commons Task Force on Visible Minorities, "Low evaluation of foreign credentials works against visible minority immigrants. Some Canadian universities use a 1969 study by the Association of Universities and Colleges to assist them in evaluating degrees from Indian universities."

LATIN AMERICAN WOMEN

Every study done on the Latin American community clearly shows the

disadvantaged position that Latin American women and immigrant women in general, occupy in Canadian society. When Latin American women arrive in Canada, they find themselves in a female ghetto within a labour force that places immigrant women and women of colour at the bottom of the heap. Latin American women are found cleaning buildings at night, waiting at tables in restaurants and working as domestics or textile labourers. They earn the minimum wage, sometimes even less, especially when they have to do piece-work in the textile industry.

Their disadvantaged position is due to three main causes — their "sponsored" status at the time of immigration, their place in the workforce and their subordinate position within the family structure. Because most are "sponsored" or "family class" immigrants, they do not receive subsidies for English or French language classes. They are often expected to learn English after putting in a double shift at home and in the factory. As sponsored immigrants they are not entitled to welfare, nor are they eligible for subsidized housing.

CHINESE WOMEN

Although a few Chinese women have attained high profile professional and business positions, many others, particularly immigrant women, face enormous obstacles. They work under sweatshop conditions in factories, or put in long, gruelling hours at restaurants and other family-operated businesses. Confined to non-unionized work ghettoes where they have little or no contact with spoken English, they have virtually no chance of advancing to better jobs, or of learning about their rights under labour laws.

A FEW BEAT THE ODDS

Nevertheless, a few women of colour do beat all the odds. Having battled the combined forces of sexism, and a shadowy, wraithlike racism, they have reached the upper echelons of their chosen fields.

*Among South Asian women there are some who are practising physicians, university professors, high-school teachers and several successful writers.

*Out of about 50 Filipino-Canadian doctors in the Toronto area, about 20 percent are women. The chief librarian at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education is a Filipino woman.

*A number of Black women, both immigrant and Canadian-born are highly successful in many areas of endeavour — Rosemary Brown, politi-

cian; Anne Cools, Senator; Zanana Akande and Jean Augustine, educators — are a few who spring to mind.

*Several Chinese-Canadian women have distinguished themselves in highly competitive fields — Susan Eng (Law), Adrienne Clarkson (communications), and Olivia Chow (School Board politics) — are three fairly well-known names in the Metropolitan Toronto area.

SOCIOECONOMIC INTEGRATION OR CULTURAL PRESERVATION?

In conclusion, multiculturalism is an official policy that envisions two potentially conflicting goals — social integration for all Canadians and cultural preservation for "ethnic" minorities. As such, it divides the multicultural community into two different camps whose interests do not necessarily coincide. The policy, formulated at the federal level in the early 1970s, under the influence and direction of established ethnic groups of European origin, was designed to meet their goals of language and cultural maintenance.

As women of colour, we could argue that the policy needs a shift in emphasis, to keep pace with the changing patterns of immigration, and the necessity to bolster the human rights of visible minorities, particularly in the job market. From the brief review given above, of the current situation of most women of colour in Canadian society, it should be obvious that multiculturalism should address far more urgent needs than folkdancing and the eating of ethnic foods. Cultural pluralism manifested in these travelogue-type displays, is clearly not the solution to economic and social inequalities. Yet, out of the $49 million spent each year by the Secretary of State on multiculturalism programmes, some $33 million dollars are earmarked for programmes that "preserve and enhance" dozens of heritage cultures.

Any realistic multiculturalism policy for Canada must be serious about combatting racism and discrimination. A 1981 conference on immigrant women sponsored by the Multiculturalism Directorate, pointed out that visible minority women have not been actively encouraged to participate in the planning of community services, nor are they participating in major women's organizations.

It is my conviction that as individuals and as a group, we should not wait for "active encouragement" from outside. The key to improving economic prospects lies in social involvement. Those of us who possess the communication skills could become actively involved at the leadership level, in organizations that devote their resources to pursuing justice and human rights issues, rather than to serving ethnic suppers in church basements.

If the concept of a pluralist, equal opportunity society is to make any

headway in Canada, we have to take some initiative to try and change the attitude of the majority.

Finally, we can influence our own "ethnic" organizations and our own leaders to cool their enthusiasm for those song-and-dance-and gastronomic festivals which often run on the free labour of women within those organizations. While these annual extravaganzas might serve the needs of tourism and of our foreign policy pundits for publicity snapshots, they also create dangerous myths about the "preservation and enhancement" of our human rights.

The myth says "We've come a long way, baby!" But the reality is that we still have a long way to go, baby!

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Reflections of a Black Antigone: Cross-Cultural Encounters are Frightening to Some People

by Rita Shelton Deverell

BLACK PRIDE BLOSSOMS IN A CULTURAL WASTELAND

I was Negro in Houston. I was born in Houston Negro Hospital (now Riverside General), August 1, 1945. My mother, after staying at home with me for a couple of years, worked for the Houston Negro Child Centre. My father was president of the Houston chapter of the National Alliance of Negro Postal Employees.

So we knew exactly who we were. We were Negroes. Now this is the important part — for a long time I did not know there was anyone else. There were vague rumours during my childhood that somewhere on the rim of Fifth Ward were White People. But the only one I actually remember meeting — for the longest time — was the White Lady who worked behind the snack counter (where nobody sat down) at Weingarten's.

In my Negro world, the Julia C. Hester House was the centre of arts, culture, and recreation. When I was somewhere between six and eight years old I saw a production of "Antigone" at Hester House. Antigone holds out against the fates and forces of society to do what she believes is right. She is very strong while being weak. She is right while possibly being wrong. She has the Gods on her side, if it is possible to know their

will.

The play was performed, I think, in a gymnasium/auditorium/multi-purpose linoleum room. The curtain drawn across the shallow stage sagged in the middle.

The play was beautiful and brilliant and strong and true. The lovely cadences of Euripides washed over me and I wanted to become an actress from that very moment — to stand in that place between Truth and the People's Understanding and let the Truth shine through. I wanted to be like Vernell Lilly, the forceful deep-throated actress who played Antigone.

You've probably never heard of Vernell Lilly? The entire cast of "Antigone" was black — Negro then. Antigone herself was black. This was not unusual. Everybody in Fifth Ward was black. The cast — as it happens in all theatre everywhere — was chosen from the people of the dominant community.

Mrs. Lilly was, you might say, ahead of her time. She never performed at Stratford, Connecticut. No television sitcoms were designed for her. She was — and for all I know still is — a great actress. She had the power to communicate to me that acting was worth doing.

Because I was completely isolated in the bosom of the Negro community of Fifth Ward, I did not know that in the real world of the theatre it is very difficult for black people to impersonate Greeks. It is much easier (though no less strange) for white people to impersonate Greeks. Because the production of "Antigone" was such an easily accessible part of my early life, I did not know that the culture of Europe, Asia, Africa, South America, and the Northern United States did not easily sneak into Houston.

Because I did not find out about either the race-barrier or the idea-barrier of 1950s Houston until I was old enough to oppose both, I am able to fight both barriers. One of the remarkable things about growing up in the bigoted isolation of Houston is that it sharpens the mind. Some who grew up in that isolation were determined to keep it that way. And some — some black, some white, and some Mexican — saw very clearly why ghettoism was not a good thing. The Houstonian who decides to fight the isolation of race and ideas is typically a strong person.

By 1955 we lived in Third Ward. The old Fifth Ward neighbourhood, with its close families and sense of protection, had been displaced by a freeway where Lyons Avenue and Lockwood Drive used to be. In any case, my sense of a protected small world would have been lost as I grew up.

The idea that I would be an actress took hold early and definitely. Shortly after the Hester House episode — maybe when I was about ten — I started to attend, with my parents, plays at the Alley Theatre.

The old fan factory at 709 Berry Avenue had been turned into an exciting, highly professional, frequently "socially relevant" arena theatre.

One night during the run of each play the house was sold to black people. Tickets were sold through a black social organization call The Links. This form of segregation may appear peculiar now, as indeed it was. But the important thing was that we (I) saw the plays.

The Alley! The Alley was, of course, the pinnacle of the theatrical art in Houston; it was where I wanted to be. The Alley offered drama classes for children and this seemed the route out of a lifetime of Hester House dramas. One Saturday morning, when registration was announced for the Alley Theatre Academy, I turned up. The registrar — clearly astonished that I should even attempt to register — told me that the classes were *"for white children."*

On that day, when I was about 14, I had no strength to fight. The strength came the day the students from the Alley Academy performed at my high school, Jack Yates Senior High.

I was angry. I wrote to Nina Vance, founding and beloved Artistic Director of the Alley, and asked her why students from the Academy could come to my school and I couldn't go to theirs? Mrs. Vance replied promptly. She said, in part:

> We respect your problem and we give every practical consideration we can, but I must point out that it is not our place to be a social institution or a crusading one.
>
> With the integration of Negroes in the schools, we feel confident that private establishments such as ours will follow, but this will take time. Mr. Wylie tells me of your fine abilities, and I know that you would have no cause to feel that your reception would be anything but cordial should you wish to work with our young group backstage in this theatre. I think you should speak to Mr. Wylie again with this idea in mind.

I took Mrs. Vance up on her offer. Every evening and every weekend of 1961-62, and the summer following graduation from Yates, was spent at the Alley. Most of the time was spent backstage (totally appropriate for someone of my limited experience). Some of the time was spent on the stage playing maids' parts (not so appropriate). John Wylie, then Artistic Director, coached me for an acting scholarship to an Eastern university. I got the scholarship. The backstage reception at the Alley had been cordial.

The isolation of Race and Ideas had been broken — for the moment. The energy to achieve that was derived from my anger and Nina Vance's uniquely-Houston solution to the problem of segregation. She could integrate the theatre but not the theatre's school.

In 1961, Houston's schools were not integrated. The Supreme Court decision recognizing that segregated schools did not provide equal education — *Brown vs. the Topeka Board of Education* — was decided in 1954, as you'll recall. There was some delay in Houston. To attend a racially segregated school in Houston, and be conscious, is to develop a permanent passion for the world of ideas for freedom of thought, and for freedom of expression.

One of the most popular television shows in Houston of the '50s was the School Board meetings. Televised on the University of Houston station, the meetings were certainly educational. Often, the subject of those meetings was what we should *not* learn. We should not learn World History. We should learn very little American History, and that late in our school lives. We should learn a great deal of Texas History. And we should never learn about the United Nations.

I watched the televised battles because one of the stars — shining forth with the credibility of honesty and truth — was Mrs. Charles E. (Hattie Mae) White, the first black person elected to the Houston School Board.

The 1958 election of Mrs. White was to me a personal triumph. Our family had a vested interest in Mrs. White, although I suspect this was true for all black families. My mother worked hundreds of volunteer hours as Mrs. White's campaign organizer. My father nurtured me and the house while Mother engaged in political activity.

And Hattie Mae White won! I could see her right there on television defending the right of "all Houston's children" to know *more* instead of less. Mrs. White did not succeed in this goal; neither did Verna Rogers, a white trustee of the same era. But what was important — to me growing up black in Houston — was how hard they tried. Mrs. White — and Mrs. Rogers — represented those hundreds, perhaps thousands, of Houstonians who knew that the isolation of races and ideas and civilizations grew intellectual pygmies. They also represented those hundreds, perhaps thousands, who were learning that the fight for social justice is continual and worth fighting. One legacy of living in the Dark Ages is that you recognize the Renaissance.

At least I did. One such Renaissance was a summer in a camp in upstate New York. I was 13 years old. It was 1959 — five years after Linda Brown defeated the Topeka Board of Education — one year after Hattie Mae White was elected to the Houston School Board.

PERSONAL RENAISSANCE

That summer was a personal Renaissance. Never had I been exposed to so many people my own age who had enjoyed such an unfettered romp through the world of ideas. We read everything. We sang everything. We discussed everything. Nothing was banned except cigarettes. Never before

had my own talents been so wildly appreciated. I played Dolly Levi in the camp production of "The Matchmaker" (thereby beating Pearl by several years). The drama teacher thought I was the best actress in the camp, regardless of race. For a while that summer I sensed that I was free from the barriers of race and ideas.

One warm day, I stood outside the camp canteen collecting my mail, as did 150 other teens of various colours. The summer was coming to a close. A clipping from the *Houston Post* fell from the letter from my parents. The banner headline read something like, "Houston Ordered to Desegregate Schools."

My fellow campers said, "Hey, isn't that great! Nice new school for you, eh?" This was all said in that naive way that northern liberals have. I told them I didn't think the desegregation would happen in time for the fall term.

It did not. In 1962 I graduated from a segregated school system. The point is that through being deprived of ideas I had developed an almost insatiable hunger for them. A hunger for both sides — or the several sides — of issues. A hunger for *history of many perspectives*. A hunger for books on any and all and every subject. A hunger for people *from many backgrounds*. And an understanding that the protection of these freedoms requires a perpetual fight.

A summer job in 1966 put me in walking distance of that dreaded United Nations building in New York. There, I ate lunch sometimes. And wondered how all the bureaucrats in pin-stripes and saris and sarapes and dashikis could have been evil incarnate in Houston in the '50s. Now, I think I understand. Though the United Nations has never — and may never — achieve its august goal, it carries the threat of all folk *not* only getting along with each other, but exchanging ideas and world views. Frightening indeed!

The Dark Ages, remember, are not a particular time we live through, but times we live through periodically. And, it is our knowledge that there is a Renaissance — for those born Negro in Houston — that is the hard-won good news. It is that knowledge that keeps up going.

I now live where it is almost totally white. North of North Dakota, not only are most of the people white, but snow covers the ground five months of the year. On our lone prairie stretches in winter we have "White-Outs" — the snow, the sky, and the road all become indistinguishable and blind the driver with their glaring whiteness.

And I still love — and sometimes make a living — performing. In the fall of 1984 I went to audition for a television drama to be produced by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC). The casting call sent out through the actors' union advised me that two 40-year-old women were required by the script.

Being 39 and a woman and an actress, I booked an audition. In

the studio the following dialogue took place between me and the producer/director:

DIRECTOR: I'm so glad you've come, and I would have you read these parts, but these people are white.

Me: Are you sure?

DIRECTOR: Yes — and so is the writer.

The writer was not in the studio. Later I telephoned her and learned that nothing in her script dictated that the 40-year-old farm women had to be white. The director has since explained that the characters have to be white because he has a "picture" of their being white — in his mind. He had made the prejudgement that the characters are white.

So, we have come full circle with my story. Had I not grown up Negro in Houston I might not understand this incident for the simple racism that it is. It has nothing to do with creative freedom; it has everything to do with racism. Without the lessons of Houston, it would be harder to know *how threatened human beings are when we try to change their picture of who is real and when they think aliens are invading their territory*. Through Houston I, and many others, have learned to bristle and bridle at the suggestion that there is only one interpretation of reality. The security of living in an all-black world, in an isolated society, provides the strength to fight through to another Renaissance, and the knowledge that in intellectual isolation the soul and the mind die.

Rita Shelton Deverell is an actress and the anchor of the Toronto-based Vision TV.

Not Vanishing

by Chrystos

I WALK IN THE HISTORY OF MY PEOPLE

There are women locked in my joints
for refusing to speak to the police
My red blood full of those
arrested in flight shot
My tendons stretched brittle with anger
do not look like white roots of peace
In my marrow are hungry faces
who live on land the whites don't want
In my marrow women who walk 5 miles every day for water
In my marrow the swollen hands of my people who are not allowed
to hunt
to move
to be
In the scars of my knees you can see
children torn from their families
bludgeoned into government schools
You can see through the pins in my bones
that we are prisoners of a long war
My knee is so badly wounded no one will look at it
The pus of the past oozes from every pore
This infection has gone on for at least 300 years
Our sacred beliefs have been made into pencils
names of cities gas stations
My knee is wounded so badly that I limp constantly

Anger is my crutch I hold myself upright with it
My knee is wounded
see

How I Am Still Walking

DOCTOR'S FAVORITE COLOR

Her office blue enough to break you accusations in her indigo
velvet throw pillows her coarse royal blue hopsacking couch
her teal tweed carpeting where hours of my mind unreeled without
catching anything She bought paintings of misty
flowers which evaporated in a delicate smoke of wounds Wouldn't
hang mine which leaned ashamed in her coat closet Innocent
robin's egg blue walls condensed at a slate blue metal
desk containing alphabetical files of our nightmares her extra
nylon stockings & fastidious letterhead Crane's best rag
pale blue kid finish with navy engraving Those windows watched
the bay where we'd waited for my father on rough docks
when he left left again left
Somewhere else we waved a white tablecloth to him over sharp
bridge railings his dark ant body far below on deck passing
under us the wind beat my coat through my knees blue with cold
I stared out her mirrors my father floated in every ship
as he listened to the complaints of officers in white duckskin
gold braid snakes She wanted me to re-enact what I couldn't
feel handed me Fisher Price toy dolls to show her what it
was like when my uncle took off my flannel pajamas to make
me a real woman at 12 I explained my mother hours
of her voice repeated in mine while the baby blue
telephone silently blinked for help Doctor A told me being
Indian didn't matter Said I had Character Psychosis
Doctor A she had her nose carved down changed her last name
joined the Unity Church wore blue contact lenses dyed
her hair blonde as can be carefully denied her Jewish father
My visions she assured me were part of my sickness
a tunnel my eyes couldn't light So busy being not
who she was born how could she see me as her desperately
thalo blue curtains kept their stiff folds She listened bent
forward on her Prussian blue velvet chair to eat with her eyes
the rose I saw glistening in multi-colored radiance on her exit
door Cheeks cold with confusion I touched nothing
The state sent her forms in triplicate white pink & blue
which cured me at their expense She said I lived as though

I had no skin my heart hemophiliac waited when she was late
with the tear-streaked patient ahead of me Shivered
her door opened she leaned with a smile *Come On In*
Blue birds of happiness wheeled in her teeth my stomach
empty her voice cooed *How Are We Today*
inferring a relationship I didn't swallow Her sympathy
like cheap perfume in a crowded elevator I had no room
for her explanations of my overdoses Drugs she ordered
that boiled me in passivity Her thin unwatered
philodendron whose brown strangling roots revoked my life
laid me out in double solitaire with a taste of antiseptic
Moans through her black leather padded door Scuttle
of metal instruments in the sterilizer of the office down
the hall My breath held itself against time clicking
her turquoise clock in random mockery I didn't tell her
the trouble was I wouldn't live
if I was a chronic undifferentiated schizophrenic thing
my skin apostasy Her room aborted Her voice pulled
me through azure walls I was open to stars & coyote howls
She suggested I go to the day care center
where we danced in a circle with scarves
trying to be planets rotating around the sun
or strung wooden beads with dull awls or accepted
paper cups of yellow & blue pills at the end
of long silent lines She committed
me times when I didn't make sense to her
dangerous mystery I was so quiet & so loud Cadet blue
she had no smell dry as anesthesia my throat couldn't swallow
her face I was acid-etched in a red sky She was nowhere
in sight as she spoke said she wanted
to help me

in honor of Sheila Gilhooly

SAILING

in a boat of brambles our lips ripe
Our purple tongues signal the full moon
in hot metaphors
Your long fingers slip
the sweetest berries into my mouth
I drink your juiciness
Rowing with soft strokes we
bring one another home
Plant a future out of season
I promise pies
You promise plenty of fruit

for Pat

THERE IS A MAN WITHOUT FINGERPRINTS

who tortures rapes murders
Three of us have grown cold under him in six months
The police are testing his semen scraped out
of our dead vaginas They have no clues
He attacks with a nylon stocking right inside the door
Those keys dangling from our locks don't speak his name
in the morning He uses our kitchen knives wearing gloves
to keep his hands clean
He tortured one of us for eight hours before her death
The coroner knows these things with the precision of our terror
We shows signs of defending ourselves
cut palms bruised knuckles He thinks the barrio
is his territory All of the women lived alone
I live alone holding a knife of murder in my stomach ready for him
I watch the street as I come home with razor eyes ready for him
I kick open my door ready for him
He attacks between 8 and 10 at night Knew the habits
of the women he's killed Watching us
from coffee shop windows in cool sips
The police who don't like to be called pigs
are keeping him under wraps They say
they don't want us to panic
I only know about him because a woman police dispatcher
announced him in my History Of Women class

Her words a morgue
This is not a poem it's a newspaper a warning written quickly
Always be on guard ready to kill to survive
He has no face He could be any man
watching you

FOR SHAROL GRAVES

Deep breath Inhale the drums Feet begin
We sway in fringed shawls
sparkling beadwork deerskin leggings
to the voice of the South Drum singing
gently tin cones tingle Whispers of women
as we wheel around the sun
wearing jewel-colored velvet skirts
moccasins only for dancing
holding eagle feather fans family blankets
Beyond us the men leap & prance shaking bells
their roaches bob
We're a circle apart
within
First time you and I have danced together
In the distance
big silver cans steam with stew
drunks reel
children eat fry bread dripping with honey & butter
Our feet pass over the earth with soft thuds
Your otter fur braids swish
You've worked all year
on the Thunderbird belt & ribbonwork skirt
for this day
Your beauty echoes
beyond drums
Holds me
here now in my kitchen as I remember
dancing with you washed in light
Our spirits whirl
Step into
the still center
of a friendship drum

Chrystos is a Native American poet, activist, and artist. She lives on Bainbridge Island in the Pacific Northwest.
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The Development and Democratization of Education and Social Opportunity Structures for Children of Visible Ethnic Minorities

by Thelma Wallen

Most of the '70s multiculturalism programs at both the federal and provincial levels emphasized cultural retention and inter-group activities of a folkloric and artistic nature. But in the latter part of the decade, the need was recognized for a vigorous parallel thrust to advance the second of the basis aims of multiculturalism — removing the social and culture barriers that separate the ethnic minority from the majority groups in Canadian society. It is therefore believed that, far from being perceived as a cultural policy for minority groups, Multiculturalism becomes a working definition for a society based on equal enjoyment of social and cultural rights for all.

NATIONAL PROGRAM TO COMBAT RACISM

The new focus of the Multiculturalism Program coincides with a period of serious difficulties for race relations in Canada. Economic recession since the "Oil Crisis" has sharpened social anxieties. In large cities across

Canada, immigration has significantly altered the composition of the population. As a result, extremist groups have emerged to promote racist ideas not only in the workplace, but also in domestic circles and in the school system. There has been an increase in incidents of racial discrimination and racially motivated harassment and violence, particularly in large urban centres, aimed at visible ethnic minority individuals or groups.

Racism, both overt and institutionalized, has reared its ugly head as a major obstacle to the full participation in Canadian life of visible ethnic minority groups. Up until the 1950s, racism was not as prevalent in Canada as in Britain and the United States. In Canada today, there is significant evidence of racial prejudice, and the discrimination and harassment proliferating in other countries is increasing here at a fast pace. A survey by the Gallup Omnibus study commissioned by the Multiculturalism Directorate in 1981 showed that "thirty-one percent of the respondents would support organizations that worked toward an all-white Canada and the findings reflect a tendency to repress overt expression of racist attitudes."[55]

The Minister cited numerous examples of racial incidents occurring across Canada, occurrences that tend to make headlines in our national and local newspapers. More insidious and less attention-getting is the "institutionalized racism" which, as the minister stated, "is built into society through its norms, telling people how they should feel and act: who should be hired, promoted or housed, who should be educated and groomed for leadership."[56]

Study after study by Royal Commissions, Task Forces and private organizations have consistently demonstrated and documented that visible ethnic minority groups do not have equality of access to Canadian institutions. Much blame is laid on lack of jobs and decent housing, but beneath this is the ugly fact of racial discrimination, reminiscent of the United States especially in Miami in 1981, where social tension erupted in a rampage that added fifteen deaths, three hundred injuries, and nearly two hundred million dollars in damage to the appalling cost of racism over the years in that country. Today, in the United States, extremist groups are proliferating. These included, for example, the Committee of the Ten Million, the National States Rights Party, the National Socialist White People's Party, and the para-military Christian Patriots Defense League. In both Canada, the United States, and Britain, some racist groups are masquerading as new rightwing political organizations. At a conference in Canada in 1980, Joseph Lowery, a student of the late Doctor Martin Luther King, and now the president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, told the Canada Council of Churches that he has "never seen racism as vicious as it is today" in North America.

Likewise, more and more experts in race relations are saying it is becoming unbearable in Canada. John McAlpine, author of the report on which

British Columbia's new antiracist legislation was based, wrote: "racism is widespread ... with a potentiality to wreak havoc on our society."[57] But no one takes heed in Canada. At a recent Fourth Canadian Conference on Multiculturalism in October, 1981, Jocelyn Barrow, a director of the British Broadcasting Corporation told the Canadian participants:

> We in Great Britain watched the disturbances in the United States and said it wouldn't happen to us. We'd stop it. Then we did nothing. Canada, she said, "had done much to foster a climate of equality, but more must be done if you want to avoid an explosion of racial tensions."[58]

Jocelyn Barrow knew exactly what she was recounting. In Britain, indiscriminate beatings of non-whites are common, and young thugs are flocking to neo-Nazi organizations like the National Front. In the London district of Brixton, large scale disturbances by white youths against visible minorities have gone on unchecked since the early 1970s.

In Canada, the situation has been equally devastating in recent years. Since 1979, racist incidents have been multiplying. There have been attacks on the homes, cars or persons of East Indians and Pakistanis in the Vancouver area, in Edmonton, Lethbridge, Winnipeg, Toronto, and Montreal. There has been an increase in Anti-Semitism, for example, the desecration of a Montreal synagogue, graffiti in Toronto's Robarts library, two Jewish youths coming home from a Winnipeg synagogue insulted and beaten. A teacher in Alberta distributed hate literature to students, and denounced the holocaust. There have been attacks on native Indian youngsters on Vancouver Island, as well as white/Indian confrontations near Dauphin and The Pas, and at Buffalo Narrows. There has also been complaints of harassment by Winnipeg's Filipino community. Blacks have been refused entry into discos in Montreal. Notwithstanding that, most minor incidents go unreported. It is obvious that this excessive increase in racism in Canada coincides with an upsurge abroad. In France, last spring, the graves of eighty Jews were desecrated. In West Germany, a poll conducted by a newspaper in March 1981 showed that "thirteen percent of voters held extreme rightwing views and that almost half of these approved of violence."

But is Canada any different? According to Professor Francis Henry, a York University anthropologist who has studied racism, "Torontonians share the same psychological profile as Americans: about eighteen percent intensely dislike Blacks, Orientals and East Indians; about fifteen percent rarely accept people of all races and the rest are somewhere in between."[59] Professor Henry's conclusions tend to reinforce a 1982 Gallup Omnibus study which measures the potential degree of support which

exists among Canadians for the negative sentiments promoted by extremist groups such as the Ku Klux Klan. The results gave the Minister of State for Multiculturalism some concern. "Sixty-seven percent agreed that non-white immigration has made Canada a richer country, but there was a twenty-one percent component of disagreement. The pool also suggested that nineteen percent felt that riots and violence increase when non-whites are let into the country."[60]

But whatever the proof or doubts inherent in attitudinal studies in the classroom or in public institutions, there is undoubtedly a serious problem in the framework of our multiculturalism. For example, in schooling, a seven-month study by psychiatrist Jerry Cooper found a high level of violence among black youths in schools in the city of North York in Metropolitan Toronto, and serious problems involving vandalism, drugs and race relations. The study found that schools with as many as forty percent black students had no black teachers. Other studies confirm that some white teachers ignore black students, or blatantly criticize them more and praise them less, which can be devastating to black community leaders and parents alike.[61]

The claim of racial discrimination in jobs by Toronto's race relations commissioner is supported by a recent planning council survey. It showed that, "the unemployment rate for West Indians and Pakistanis is double the average rate in Metro Toronto." Proof? In 1981, some members of the Canadian Civil Liberties Association posed as employers looking only for whites to hire. They contacted ten Toronto employment agencies. Nine agreed to screen out non-whites. That clearly demonstrates that there is absolutely no equal opportunity for non-white visible minority prospective job seekers.

Consider the vital area of non-white police relations. A *Toronto Star* poll in April 1981 reported a sharp rise over eighteen months in the number of people who think the police are prejudiced against non-whites, though interestingly, the increase is less among non-whites than whites.[62] In both Vancouver and Winnipeg, the police have been accused of not investigating racist incidents. And in Montreal, the situation is even more critical. According to the director of "Secours Haitian," a social service organization, there are "daily misunderstandings between the police and the Haitian community." Also, the Quebec Human Rights Commission in March, 1984, found some taxi-owners guilty of racism. The reason for wanting to lay-off one hundred black taxi-drivers was that some customers wanted only white taxi-drivers and they threatened to stop hiring those taxis which are driven by black drivers. The response from the government was discouraging to those victims of racial discrimination. It promised the taxi-owner some MUCTC (Montreal Urban Community Transport Commission) contracts instead of charging the perpetrators for violating the Quebec Charter of Human Rights.

Most leaders of our visible ethnic minority groups are moderate, reasonable people who respect the law. But if some should feel, rightly or wrongly, that justice is being denied them, frustration might quickly rise to the "boiling point".

Thelma Wallen is a nutritionist and counsellor who lives in Montreal. This is an excerpt from a forthcoming book on Multiculturalism in Montreal to be published in 1990.

FOOTNOTES:

Much of the analysis here is an excerpt from a study done by Professors Joti Bhatnager and Arpi Hamalian, "Educational Opportunity for Minority Group Children in Canada," In J. Meggany, S. Nisbet and E. Hoyle (eds.), *World Yearbook of Education, 1981: Education of Minorities*, N.Y. (Nichols), 1981, pp. 226-239.

[55] An address by the Honorable Ian Fleming, Minister of State for Multiculturalism: "Racial Violence: Could it Happen Here," April 22, 1982.

[56] Ibid.

[57] John McAlpine, *Racism in British Columbia*, Vancouver, B.C. 1981.

[58] Report on the Fourth Canadian Conference on Multiculturalism, October, 1981, Ottawa, Canada.

[59] Francis Henry, *Does Racism Exist in Canada*, Toronto: York University Press, 1979.

[60] Ian Fleming, op. cit.

[61] Ibid.

[62] The Toronto Star, April, 1981.

How Are You?

by Marilú Mallet

translated by Alan Brown

We're both refugees. Neither of us has a passport. Our coats were both rescued from the garbage. We're trying to adapt. Casimir was sponsored by a Jewish group looking for a tax write-off. I, by a committee of former priests who had lived in Latin America. He was given a TV set and a black suit. I got a mattress complete with bedbugs. He talks about synagogues, I talk about the priests and their committee. We have something in common. Something that oozes out of our pores: a touch of scepticism, a vestige of bitterness.

We met at language class. An inadvertent glance and some words about the weather. Seven months of snow. The freezing, cutting wind.

"And the people here, they're so simple-minded, they're interested in nothing and nobody, they just don't want their lives complicated..."

He is tall, blond and blue-eyed, with an aquiline nose — the face of a movie actor. But there's something more about it, a certain interesting hardness. I'm short, thin and pale, with black, curly hair. Seen together, we're nothing but contrasts.

Our subway car was late. I asked Casimir:

"What's the matter?"

A man in a beige raincoat answered with the indifference so common here:

"They're cleaning up the blood."

Perhaps it all happened because we realized at the same time, from that chilling remark, that in the next station there had been another suicide.

"That's February for you," said Casimir.

We got off at Berri and took the Longueuil subway line. There we changed to a bus full of Greeks, Pakistanis, Arabs, Portuguese and I don't know what else, all blue as mulberries from the cold. They pay us forty-five dollars a week for going to these courses and learning English. He said he came from Lodz. I'm from Valparaiso. He left Poland because he is a Jew. I told him about the military putsch.

The learning system is simple but effective. The teacher says, "How are you?" and we repeat it after him, taking turns, just like real schoolchildren but grown tall or bearded or fat or depressed. The first day he said "How are you" about a hundred times until I was dizzy. Not counting how often I heard it from our side. Casimir winked at me and tapped his temple with a finger. He was going crazy too. I smiled at him across the room. Twenty weeks of this just to get money for the rent.

There's a half-hour break for lunch. No more How-are-you's for a while. But we hear the deafening noise of coca cola and soup machines in the large cafeteria. Casimir and I sit down with the five thousand other immigrant pupils in this language school. Each one has his little packed lunch, "ethnic" lunches, rice or shishkebab, goulash or meat pie, pasta or marzipan. Wrapped in aluminum foil or plastic bags. Neither of us had ever tried soup from a machine before, or coffee that tasted like gasoline.

"I think I have a fever," I told him.

"It's the language course," he said. "It's as if they erased your power of reason, the way you wipe out a tape when you record on top of the message."

It's funny how a clever remark, coming from an attractive person, seems even more convincing. And when the conversation is in a new language, you feel as if you're rediscovering words. In that moment we looked at each other as if we belonged. Two lonely people who have found someone at last, to their surprise. He asked me if I had any family. One sister and my father, I replied. He was an only son, and his widowed mother was still in Poland.

A strident bell put an end to the break, and the cafeteria emptied. The garbage containers were stuffed with papers and wrappers. Crumbs and overflowing ashtrays littered the tables. The afternoon was the same as the morning, with its How-are-you's.

We went back together in the subway. He lives on St. Lawrence Boulevard, near Waldman's, half a block from the Portuguese store where they pluck the chickens live before the customer's eyes. That's where he buys the chicken feet and necks to make his Jewish barley soup. He's also just a stone's throw from Four Brothers and Warshaw's supermarkets, and cheese stores and all those little ethnic shops that sell unusual products at cheap prices.

I live on Van Horne near the post office, the supermarket, the drug store, the bank and the bus-stop. I keep telling myself it's not such a bad

neighbourhood.

Casimir rents a room above a delicatessen that sells bagels and cream cheese and smoked-meat sandwiches. I, oddly enough, live above a pizzeria. That explains why my building is infested with cockroaches. Sometimes at night when I go in the bathroom I see them running in the tub or the wash-basin. These cockroaches are pale, long and yellowish, not like the Chilean ones which are black and round.

"Are Polish cockroaches different?" I asked him.

"Perhaps," he replied.

He says that there are lots of them in his kitchen. They are actually frightening at times. The exterminator who came there two weeks ago told him each cockroach lays eighty eggs, and the eggs take twenty-eight days to turn into active creatures with legs. His landlord is stingy and saves oil by turning down the heat. Like Casimir, he is a Polish Jew, one of the community. I'm lucky by comparison. I can't say that my house is freezing. On the contrary, I almost suffocate in the stifling heat. I live on the fourth floor, and there's an elevator. That gives a little class to the building. The elevator locks, and there's a different key for each floor. The landlady, a Greek dressmaker with a blond wig, lives across from me. At times I pay her an angry visit, trying with gestures to make her understand that somebody forgot to shut the inside grill of the lift and I've had to climb the hundred and twenty-two steps, exhausted. Another small but mysterious detail about this elevator: every Monday some unidentified tenant with idle hands draws a gigantic male sex in coloured chalk on its wall. The Greek woman's son comes home drunk and discovers the drawing, and never fails to hammer on every door in a vain attempt to find the guilty artist.

"Not easy to get to sleep, Casimir!"

Every day the trip from Berri to Longueuil, from Longueuil to La Prairie. One class after the other, with Casimir. We get to know other students. A Bulgarian ballet dancer who escaped from a plane during its landing in Ghent; Mahmala, a Lebanese industrialist who despises the rest of us; three Haitians, refugees from Duvalier; a Greek worker; a quiet Portuguese girl who works nights; Alberto, a Colombian schoolteacher; and the professor, a Hindu, a coffee-coloured ringer for an upper-class Englishman. Altogether there are twelve human beings in this overheated room where we can see snow through the window and the distant white horizon. We sit very close to each other, Casimir and I. Sometimes I look at him, sometimes he looks my way. He often sighs deeply and rolls his eyes toward the ceiling, showing his impatience.

On Mondays we usually start the class with the sentence, "What did you do during the weekend?" We hear Mahmala recount in broken English how his wife bathed him on Saturday night. Lakis, the Greek, is a night watchman for Canadian National Railways. The Portuguese girl's

name is Ilda, she lives with her mother and seven sisters. The Colombian arrived in Canada with his whole family and the maid and is trying to scrape together the money for a house. I don't talk much. Casimir says he's the only Jew who eats herring seven days a week. Oh yes, I forgot to mention Félix, a Spaniard and formerly a priest. He was a late starter in the course. He's trying desperately to make up for his years of abstinence. He makes his approach to the girls in the class on the slimmest pretext — apparently without success. After each failed attempt he laughs to himself, glassy-eyed and happy, his mind filled with what might have been.

During breaks we talk to each other. Almost always it's about some bad news from one of our countries. Murders, military coups, sometimes wars, new economic crises or exotic disasters like floods, earthquakes, hurricanes or unexpected droughts.

At noon Casimir and I go for walks. He says Siberia isn't as cold as Montreal. I had never seen snow, and I can't get used to the stalactites hanging from the moustaches of people with colds. He's used to the cold in Poland. He shows me how to wear my scarf and toque and gloves, and explains how I mustn't press my nose against store windows. It might stick and I'd go away with open nostrils like a skull. Casimir says the cold acts as a local anesthetic. You feel nothing, but your cartilage is solidifying, your ears can fall off and silently sink into the snow. For me so many things are new: being careful on the slippery sidewalks, with my heavy coat and big boots. Here everything is provided for, he says. If you slip and break a bone you can sue the city for not clearing the way in time. That's nice to know. Some people get pensions. The ones who unthinkingly and involuntarily were hurt this way and can't work. Night and day the snow removal goes on, with blowers that from time to time suck in a pedestrian.

"People have to be very careful about their children," Casimir explained.

The other students don't attract much of our attention. They are shy and introverted and monotonously repeat anything they are told. Their weekend activities are also not very exciting. Shopping, washing clothes, cooking, watching TV (for those who have one). We listen to detailed descriptions of their apartments, the nearby park, the stores where they shop, and the buses they take to come to the school.

We eat together, and very quickly. It's always an egg sandwich that we've made at home. In the few minutes left we go skating. We've bought used skates for fifty cents, from a Jewish shoemaker Casimir knew about, on St. Lawrence. Casimir was a champion skater on the frozen rivers of Poland. I can barely stay on my feet. He helps by taking my arm. From time to time he lets me go and turns to look at me, his frosted breath steaming out of his mouth. We don't talk during these times. The silence is com-

fortable, almost intimate. Sometimes he re-arranges my scarf, and I let him do it. I wait for these small, familiar gestures, observing his handsome face, saying nothing, as if something secret had made a delicate landing between us.

After class we take the subway together. We go for a coffee at a restaurant in one of the stations. He has all kinds of strategies for living cheaply. He buys leftover fish and greens, and old cheese. He checks out the garbage cans of food stores. He steals his electricity from the hydro line in the street with a special device he made himself. He even has a stove that was donated by his Jewish association. When we go our separate ways we kiss each other on both cheeks. He gives me a hug, and holds me a second or two longer than necessary. Just imperceptibly: I notice it but no one else would.

Perhaps it was our previous education that brought us closer. That's what I think now when I try to find what lay behind our relationship. He had studied economics, and I was in social sciences. We feel that we're the educated ones in the class. We're the ones that speak English best. The language of success, of work, of the opportunity everyone came here in search of. Many of the other pupils hang around us to improve or practise the little they have mastered. This gives us a certain feeling of power in the school for immigrants. Sometimes the texts we have to repeat start with phrases like "Try me!" or "Give me a chance!" I suppose it's to stimulate our ambition. And we also make up written dialogues. We're divided up in groups according to our level, and Casimir and I always end up together. We write stories as if they were for a real play. He is a Strindberg fan, I like Ibsen. He talks about Grotowski, I about Polanski. He's a bit like Polanski. Something about his manner... Not long ago we did a parody of Romeo and Juliet. We rehearsed it in a café, and when we parted he kissed me on the lips. I tried to avoid it, I was afraid, I had a sense of foreboding. He seemed surprised at himself. Later he called me up and tried to explain. I went to sleep unconcerned, thinking of his nice-boy face.

Class after class, break after break, glance after glance, the weeks went past. The course was coming to an end. The teacher, always enthusiastic about life in Canada, showed us films like "The Story of a Lumberman," "The Life of a Tractor Driver," or "The Weekend of a Worker on the Snow Removal Team." All the films were optimistic, and dealt with the joys of productive labour. He taught us songs like "Jingle Bells" which we sang off key in a smiling chorus, each with his indigenous accent. Above all, he taught us to fill out forms and make phone calls in our search for work. Work? Had it come to that! Work. The word provoked anxious frowns and long faces.

"Marcia, let's leave together," Casimir said during the break.

So we took the bus together to Longueuil station, with its shops and

lottery stand. I was going to pay my fare, but he said:

"No, no, I'm paying."

But we didn't move. We stood waiting in front of the turnstile as the crowd went by. Suddenly he exclaimed:

"Did you see that?"

The machines had rejected two subway tickets.

"I always have to wait, but I eventually get through free."

Penny-pinching, saving a bit here, a bit there — I hated it. He was Jewish through and through. In the subway he said:

"I've been wanting to invite you for so long. I've got some really good soup, wait till you see. Leftovers — that's my specialty!"

I thought it over for a moment, then started laughing. Was I going to refuse my first invitation in this town?

His apartment was small. One room, with a distinct atmosphere. He shared a bathroom and toilet with the owner. We ate some smoked herring and soup. Leftovers or not, it wasn't too bad. We had some wine and felt a little tipsy. The place was empty, with no decorations on its white walls. There were no chairs, and we had to sit on the edge of the bed. He asked me about the military putsch. He couldn't get into his head that such a thing had happened. Such an exemplary country, so unique. I explained the usual things about multi-nationals and imperialism. A small, poor country hasn't the right to make its own decisions. He told me about Poland. For centuries it had been divided, dismembered, invaded. For a time it had been wiped right off the map. He became aggressive, saying that socialism wasn't worth the trouble, it led to a paranoid daily life and the new ruling class of bureaucrats. I was sick of the whole discussion. But he went on:

"The multi-nationals are one thing, but on the other hand you simply copied our mistakes."

He stopped and came near me, kissed my right hand.

I drew back a little, thinking of other things.

"It's been months and months since I had anybody near me. Come and lie down beside me for a minute."

"No!" I said, apprehensive.

"Why should we deny ourselves a few moments of tenderness?"

His eyes were like crystal.

He cuddled close to my shoulder.

"It's snowing," he said.

He held my face and said very slowly:

"You're beautiful!"

I said nothing. I floated in the moment, imagining the snow and the freezing wind outside, thinking about the two of us there on the edge of the bed, refugees for opposite reasons. I wanted to run away, but we kissed interminably, mingling our despairs and solitudes. I was trembling.

"What's the matter?" Casimir asked, stroking my hair.

I was weeping softly. He repeated,

"Come, please?"

I almost gave in, but I was overcome by a terrible sadness. I gathered my courage and whispered:

"I can't."

He put out the light. We undressed, little by little. Awkwardly, we embraced. Suddenly I pulled back and, in spite of myself, told him how I had been arrested.

"I was in a police station," I said. "Two policemen beat me..."

He switched on the lamp again. Through my tears I saw Casimir, naked, and realized that he had great scars on one shoulder and arm. And he discovered the marks on my breast and back.

"This too?" he asked, pointing to the burn mark on my breast.

I nodded and closed my eyes for a moment. I didn't want to talk, I didn't want to remember. Then I opened them, and saw his grave face. His blond hair was tousled. His expression was hard and tragic. "I'll tell you a secret," he said softly, playing with my fingers. Was he afraid someone would hear him?

"I'm not Jewish."

He paused for a second, then went on in the same hushed voice:

"I had to learn Yiddish and go to the synagogue. I got these marks trying to escape from prison." He showed me his arm. "For years I tried to get out of Poland. At last I discovered an organization that helped Jews leave the country. I spent seven years telling lies, appearing before one tribunal after another. I swore my mother had a Jewish lover during the time of the Nazis. I went around with a cyanide pill in my pocket, just in case they..."

We were both melancholy now. He was frowning, his eyes half-closed. Nervously, he took my hand. He ran a finger over my face, shyly, barely touching. He kissed me on the cheek. We held each other tight, searching for more marks of pain and violence on the other's body.

He turned off the light again, and the darkness drove us under the covers. We kissed in silence, side by side, together and alone, two prisoners in a single trap.

The next day was Saturday. We woke early. Casimir made coffee, and said in his usual tone:

"What are you going to do next week when the course ends? How will you pay the rent?"

"I don't know. Work in a factory. Or a restaurant."

"You're young, you're pretty, forget about building socialism, I know some businessmen in their fifties, they'd be delighted to marry you. The Town of Mount Royal is a good neighbourhood, people with money and Cadillacs and big houses. Maybe money doesn't make you happy, but it

helps. I'll introduce you to some of them."

I laughed, but it must have looked more like a grimace.

"Are you crazy?"

"Crazy? I'm just fed up with being a candidate for living, I'm fed up being poor. Hanging around with people that are run-of-the-mill mediocrities. I want dough. Whatever I have to do for it."

I looked at him attentively. He was excited.

"I'm going to Toronto," he added. "There's nothing doing here. The political situation is too unstable. Quebec's going to be a big problem."

He went over to his bed and took out a shoe-box from beneath it. He removed the lid and showed me what was inside: the photo of a very ugly woman. He paused for a moment to see my reaction, then exclaimed:

"I'm going to marry her!"

After a second he went on:

"Her father owns a factory."

I was aghast.

"You never told me!"

"It was through the synagogue," he said.

And he offered me a second cup of coffee, saying:

"So there's an end to romance. I'd like to believe in it, but..."

I didn't want coffee. I put on my overcoat, my boots, my scarf and my toque.

"Hey, we're going skating Monday, aren't we?"

I nodded. As I crossed the threshold I saw some enormous cockroaches, yellowish like mine. The only thing we have in common, I thought. The exhaust from the buses soiled the snow, turned it beige or even coffee-coloured. People bent over forward to escape the bitter wind.

That Monday Casimir didn't come to the course. I phoned him at home but there was no answer. Then the course was over.

A month later I got a card from him. From Toronto. It said, "Married and manager." Then came a few details of his plans: "When I get my citizenship I'm changing my name again. Casimir Davis or better Henry Davis. There's a lot of prejudice against Jews here. I'll be able to visit Poland and see my mother. And some day I'll be a wheel on Wall Street." Below, in capitals, he added:

HOW ARE YOU?

I re-read the card with care. No, there was no return address.

Marilú Mallet is a Chilean writer who lives in Montreal. This is an excerpt from her book Voyage to the Other Extreme *and printed with the permission of Vehicule Press.*

The Poor Cousin

by Tecia Werbowski

When Susan came from Budapest to Montreal in 1970, she seemed unimpressed with "the Western glitter". In fact, she thought that she should never have left Hungary. She felt that way at first and maybe she was justified to think so, since initially life here was not what she had expected it to be.

One would not believe that Susan would go through such adaptation pains. After all, claimed her Hungarian compatriots, "She had everything going for her." Susan was young, she was only 25 years old, and she had not wasted her quarter of a century suffering or being unhappy.

She had lived with her parents in a nice apartment in Buda. They had been lucky to have this comfortable flat with their old furniture (some of them beautiful antiques) and they adored Susan. Susan was an only child and the centre of her parents' universe. The couple had been wanting a child desperately for years but not daring to adopt one. Finally, at 41, Mrs. K. had become pregnant.

Both parents had been overjoyed. Mr. K. was 48 at the time and walked proud as a peacock, not letting his wife do anything strenuous in fear of spontaneous abortion or some other complication. In fact, he insisted that his wife, a teacher like himself, ask for a leave of absence from her teaching duties. When she insisted that she felt fine, he asked his old friend, a physician, to give her a lecture about the possible hazards of pregnancy at her age. She resigned herself to staying home, reading, cooking and being a full-time wife, a luxury she could hardly have afforded in the past. Mr. and Mrs. K. had their second honeymoon and they could hardly wait for the child to be born.

When Susan came into this world, a healthy and alert baby, they were

ecstatic. They tried not to spoil her but it was difficult, because she was charming and intelligent, and, even if she hadn't been, they would have adored and cherished her anyway.

The K. family was a loving, happy threesome. Susan was a good student, made friends easily, and loved her neighbourhood. She had one special friend, Kathy, the daughter of their janitor who spent a lot of time with the K. family, doing her homework there, since her own house was crowded with four older siblings.

On Saturdays, Susan enjoyed outings with her mother and father. They would take her out for ice cream to a café on Vatcy street and sometimes bought her a nice sweater or a skirt. Some of the pretty things came from Italy or West Germany and they were so easy to wash and looked so elegant! The salesladies were also beautiful and polite, Susan thought, and Mama explained to her that they were so nice and obliging because the store belonged to them.

In the summer, the family would go to Balaton Lake and sometimes they went out to eat and to listen to gypsy music. They usually had a fish soup and, if Susan behaved well, she would get a "crèpe flambée" with chocolate, and one of the violinists would play a "csardos", only for her, and Papa would tip him generously. Susan still remembered the taste of the "Balaton melon" and the peaches full of sun. When the K. family returned to town, Susan could not wait to see Kathy so that they could all go to the theatre or opera together. These performances opened a whole new world for her.

When Susan was praised for her intelligence, she always had a ready-made answer. "It is because my parents were old and wise." Her father died of a heart attack the year Susan graduated from high school.

After this tragedy, her mother told her about her uncle in Canada, her father's only brother. It was her mother's way of consoling her daughter in her grief. She wanted to give Susan the feeling of having an extended family. Susan was very glad to hear that she had two older cousins in Montreal, her uncle's daughters. Not having any family in Hungary, she was very curious about her relatives overseas. She kept only one picture in her purse and that was her uncle and father. The uncle was supposed to be as generous and good-hearted as her father, although, in her own mind, nobody could match her father's kindness.

Six years after her father's death, when she was 24 years old and a university graduate, her mother passed away as well and Susan realized that she was now an orphan. Through a contact in Vienna, she received a letter from her Uncle John saying that he would be glad to sponsor her if she wanted to come to Canada. At the same time, the local rental committee put pressure on Susan to move out of her Budapest apartment because, for a single person, the apartment was considered too big. There was a young couple with a baby anxiously awaiting to take over.

Susan sold all her family belongings and kept only some of her porcelain, tablecloths, and silverware. She went to live with Kathy's parents, who had invited her to stay with them. Although the premises were crowded, they surrounded her with warmth and friendship.

After a few months, a lot of interviews, and filling out of many forms, she was allowed to leave for Canada. Susan flew directly to Montreal. Since it was the month of May and in Budapest everything was already in bloom, she wore only her skirt and a jacket and hoped that she looked smart enough to meet her family.

She was too excited and nervous to feel sad about leaving her hometown and tried not to think about her parents' graves. Kathy promised to visit the graves from time to time and plant some flowers there. At the airport, Susan embraced Kathy warmly and tried to hide her eyes full of tears. She was afraid to turn around because she knew that Kathy was crying too and, while she could cope with her own tears, she did not know how to comfort her friend.

When she arrived in Montreal, a gentleman holding a note with her name was waiting at the gate. Was it her uncle?

Susan's heart began to race and she wanted to run towards him, embrace him warmly. She approached the gentleman ready to stretch out her arms, hungry for affection. He spoke and, as he uttered her name, she froze. "Miss Kovacs?" he said. "I am Jim Moore, your uncle's assistant. He could not come himself — he has an important meeting — but I am going to take you home. Did you have a nice trip?" "You must be tired," continued Mr. Moore in a polite manner. "Would you like a cup of coffee or do you want me to drive you directly to your uncle's home?" "I think I'd like to go to my uncle's now." "You speak English very well," Mr. Moore complimented her. Instead of saying thank you, she nodded shyly. When they arrived "home", she was surprised to see that it was a beautiful mansion.

"This is Albion Road in Hampstead," said Mr. Moore, "It is a very nice area." Susan agreed that everything was "nice" indeed and she told him that he was a nice man too. He blushed and thanked her. Everything seemed rather strange. She felt like Alice in Wonderland. She was ready for strange things to happen. She was taken into the attic room and she went to bed immediately. The next day, she was awakened by her aunt who seemed also quite formal but who hugged her in a clumsy manner.

It was Saturday and the family gathered for lunch. She was led by her aunt into a big dining room and her uncle was waiting there. He got up, shook her hand and said in a very solemn voice, "Welcome to Canada." Her two cousins were sitting with their husbands and children, so she went from one person to the other and shook hands with everyone. One of her cousins, Iris, looked very much like her, Susan thought.

"Did you have a nice trip?" asked Iris.

"Very nice."

"You look very much like Iris," her aunt said, "only I think you should pluck your eyebrows a little. Iris, would you take Susan on Tuesday at Vera Fodor and have her eyebrows shaped, and she needs a little make-up too, I think."

Susan did not want to "have her eyebrows shaped" and she began to suspect that her whole destiny would be shaped by these people. Yes, by these people. She did not have the feeling for them that she had expected.

She was mesmerized by her "double", her cousin Iris, and since she did not convey any warmth, somehow it did not feel good to have Iris as a mirror of her own image. Iris resembled Susan but she was more beautiful, more refined, more elegant. Iris had eyes like almonds, curly chestnut hair, clean skin, magnificently shaped bones, good teeth, impeccably shaped lips. She was much taller and thinner than Susan and moved and walked like a swan. She was a real princess, an Icelandic princess, so perfect, so smooth. Susan did not feel envious of her cousin's perfection. To her, she looked like an old photograph of Vivian Leigh or a figure from the Wax Museum.

Yes, her uncle's house was a Wax Museum. The silence of this luncheon and Susan's thoughts were interrupted by the little boy's question. Iris' son said, "Are you a communist?" Susan tried to answer but instead she felt tears coming into her eyes and she excused herself from the table. She went to her room and cried and cried until she fell asleep. Nobody disturbed her.

On Sunday morning, her uncle came into her room at 10 a.m. and, without referring to the incident, invited her to come to his room. "We have to talk a little, you and I, young lady. I promised your father to look after you and I am an honourable man who always keeps his word. I have thought a lot about your future here and I will do anything to help you."

"Do you like people?" he asked.

"Yes, of course, I do."

"Would you like to work in an area where you can help people who are poor, sometimes in distress?"

"I am not sure, I mean, I think, yes."

"Well then, you should study social work. Your degree in drama and English literature is not very practical here. You still have a strong Hungarian accent. You need to have a profession. You will get a good job if you become a social worker. You should take a couple of courses during the summer and then a full programme at Dawson College."

"But Uncle John, I...I wonder if I could study acting here."

"My dear young lady, acting is not a profession, it is a hobby as far as I am concerned. Your courses start in June, you have a couple of weeks

to get to know the city. Our housekeeper, Erica, will show you around. Your cousins Iris and Clara live in this house but they are busy with their husbands and children. Clara's husband is a lawyer and Iris' husband is in business with me. We are all very busy people. You will soon find out that if you want to achieve anything in this country, you will have to work hard. Here is some pocket money for you."

Susan felt humiliated accepting this generous sum of money but then she thought that she was to be practical. She went up to her attic room and unpacked her precious belongings. She looked at the beautiful tablecloths she wanted to give to her family. The portrait of her two cousins was hanging over the writing desk, "two beauties from a fairy tale". She was a poor cousin. She was nobody. She knew no one here. She was alone. She looked through the window at the beautiful magnolia tree and thought that beauty and luxury are not always in harmony with a sense of fulfilment or happiness.

Susan was invited to a few parties by her uncle's friends and she heard people whisper, "This is the young Kovacs girl from Budapest. She looks very much like Iris but not as sophisticated." From now on, she was labelled as a cousin. "You are John Kovacs' niece, Iris and Clara's cousin. So nice to meet you. How do you like Canada?"

Susan started going to school and met some teachers and students who were quite friendly. She wanted to succeed in school, find a part-time job in the autumn. She found work as a waitress in the Coffee Mill Restaurant, on Mountain Street, and worked there in the evenings.

In the meantime, her presence in the attic went unnoticed. When she was a waitress at the Coffee Mill, many customers spoke Hungarian with her and again she heard some people referring to her as Iris' cousin. The contact with her relatives was practically nil. She was sometimes invited to the weddings and funerals of their friends in order to keep up the appearances of a united family. She even began to enjoy the quiet elegance of Hampstead, which reminded her of walks on Margaret's Island in Budapest. The following year, she moved out of her Hampstead haven and rented a small room from an elderly French couple on St. Joseph Boulevard.

By then, the relationship with her uncle was rather strained. Once or twice, when the family went south, they asked her to live in their mansion and walk their dogs. Since she liked the housekeeper, Erica, and the dogs, she had agreed to stay there for a while. When she graduated as a social worker, she was invited for supper by Erica and Kathy sent her a volume of recent Hungarian plays.

When Susan was hired by the social service agency, she was very nervous about her first job. Luckily, her supervisor was understanding. She was assigned to work with recent immigrants to Canada. At first, she

thought it was like the blind leading the blind, but when she began to meet people more lost, confused, and frightened of the unknown than she was herself, she found a strength and patience that amazed her. Somehow, she found the way to give them the courage and support she wished she had had upon her arrival in Canada.

She went to the Coffee Mill, as a client now, to have lunch or espresso, or to chat with the staff. It was there, while drinking coffee, that she met Alexander. He asked if the seat next to her was free and when she nodded yes, they started to talk. Alexander asked her something and she answered something, and she felt right away that this meeting would be important in her life.

He asked her to audition for him! No, he did not mind her accent. In fact, he found her accent quite attractive. She was just the type of character actress he was looking for. He wanted to see how she moved on stage and how competent she was in interpreting roles.

Susan was to meet Alexander in the theatre. It was all for real! The night before the audition, Susan could not fall asleep. She dreamt about swimming in Balaton Lake with huge waves and every time a wave threatened to swallow her, she had to run fast to the beach but on the beach, she was met by a woman with the polite and expressionless face of Iris.

It was the evening of the first performance of the "Seagull". The audience was applauding vigorously. Susan bowed again and again, holding hands with the rest of the cast. All of the social workers from the Agency were present. They were clapping enthusiastically. One of them said, "So you are a star."

Her uncle was sitting in the second row. Someone from the press chatted with him. Iris was there too, as elegant and icy as ever. She was a littled flushed that night. Susan overheard someone talking to Iris. She thought that she heard the voice saying, "Are you Susan's cousin?"

It was 1975 and May in Montreal. In May, 1977, Susan was nominated for the best actress award. It was the audience who was her family now. Warm, responsive, loving.

Tecia Werbowski, originally from Poland, lives in Montreal. This is an excerpt from her book of short stories, Bitter Sweet Taste of Maple.

Heads and Bodies

by Yesim Ternar

My first contact with the animal world centres around my parents' dining room set. In hopes of future magnificence, Agop had ordered the carpenter Giovanni to build a dining room set that would befit a Roman senator.

The man who was chosen for this task carved his craft into the second year of my parents' marriage as my mother Milena, pregnant with her second child, complained bitterly about the meals they ate on a cardboard suitcase on the floor.

To which house or apartment the dark tinted walnut set arrived, I am not quite sure. For its double-headed eagles, its snarling lions with their menacing canines, and the snaky columns of the display case, all set against the embossed vines which engulfed the corners of the furniture in a spirit of lush Edenic opulence reach back into my earliest memories of the world when sounds, colours, and textures blend into flashes or delightful sensation.

I learned to crawl among these lions whose heads protruded from the doors of the cabinet. Unable to comprehend that they were only carved beasts who dutifully watched over our legs when we ate at the table, I would try to find out where they hid their bodies in the heavy mass of wood; by what unimaginable contortion they made their bodies vanish into the recesses of the cabinet behind the fragile chinaware in whose centres dandies proclaimed their ardor to bashful French ladies.

Those lion heads were the only pets I had as I crawled on the large Persian rug within whose confines an ancient Oriental world of arabesque order and repetition was occasionally relieved by an anarchic splash of colour the weaver had chosen to hide in a scotoma. At first sight, the mark

of the artist could not be perceived as anything apart from an unidentifiable disturbance of vision.

I crawled toward the lions and offered my index fingers for their nostrils to sniff. Unmoved by my friendly gesture, they snarled with paralyzed lips. Feeling bolder, I stuck my finger into the mouth of the lion closest to me and waited. Nothing happened. Feeling even bolder, I tested the sharpness of his teeth and found out that what had looked razor sharp from a distance was a harmless tip the carver had rounded in a masterly finish.

Thus early on in life, I learned not to fear heads. Heads of things could be reckoned with. It was the indiscernible bodies, invisible and threatening that I learned to fear.

Later, in ancient Alexanderetta where I was taken for convalescence after a lengthy childhood illness, I discovered large bodies of stone for the lions whose silent heads protruded from the cabinet doors of our dining room buffet.

As Agop snapped a photograph of me shivering in front of these furious lions, with my small child's head cowed and my hands clasped in front, trying desperately to contain my fear, I learned the artifice that bodies are capable of. Notwithstanding their fearful opposition and contrast, bodies, I realized, are capable of a stubborn will to survive, however temporally, in the physical order of the universe.

Yesim Ternar is a Montreal writer.

Susan Eng:

Lawyer, Activist, and Toronto's Newest Police Commissioner

by Adrienne Shadd

Susan Eng is refreshing. Involved in community and race relations for over a decade, Ms. Eng is not one to spout platitudes or hackneyed clichés when it comes to the issues. In fact, her statements can be rather blunt and to the point. What she says, and sometimes what she doesn't say, can embroil her in controversy.

A recent case in point was the near hysteria that erupted (in some quarters) when Eng, a tax lawyer and partner with the firm Blaney, McMurtry and Stapells, was sworn in as the newly-appointed Metro Toronto police commissioner. In taking the oath of office Ms. Eng promised to do her job faithfully, but she omitted the phrase "to serve and protect the persons and properties of Her Majesty's subjects." She was accused of hyprocrisy, disloyalty, disrespect, insulting her fellow Canadians and snubbing the Queen. But if anything, her omission of the reference to the Queen's subjects represented a conscious and carefully thought-out decision.

Eng argued that the declaration as it stood "legally excludes visitors, landed immigrants and people on student or work visas, who are just as entitled to police protection." But there was also a broader issue. "(O)ne of the problems we have been having is a public perception that there are people who don't feel that they have equal access to police services...I felt that it was important for me to state the (oath of) duty as I saw it, which was to make sure that I was serving Canada first, and...that our service extended to everybody."

The symbolic significance of Eng's omission could not be underestimated. Since August 1988, relations between the police force and Toronto's racial minorities, particularly the Black community, had reached an all-time low. The shooting deaths — under questionable circumstances — of Lester Donaldson, a Black man, by Metro officers last August and Wade Lawson, a Black Mississauga teenager by Peel Regional police in December, led to the rapid deterioration of already tense police-community relations. In the context of the recent crisis, here was someone who had given careful thought to the meaning of her duties and responsibilities as a new police commissioner. She was making a clear statement to the police force that it was in existence to serve *all* Canadians, and not just some, in racially-diverse Toronto.

Eng, who "never expected the depth and breadth of the controversy" that followed her taking of the oath, was initially very concerned that she had offended people with deeply-held beliefs about Canada and its relationship to the British monarchy. Upon reflection, however, she realized that her initial response to the oath had been a correct one. "I think that these same people are not so quick to recognize that they quite often — inadvertently I hope — offend a lot of beliefs that I have, that other people of Colour have, that people from other ethnic and cultural origins have, and they do it very blithely. For example, Thanksgiving Day is something we think is universal. Well, it isn't for Native Indians. It's a day of humiliation for them... People seem to take the position that their personal beliefs are a universal theme that we should all adopt or resign (as some suggested Eng do) for not adopting. It's an interesting display of insisting on a norm that no longer exists."

It was this vision, and her outspokenness, that thrust Eng into involvement in community and race relations issues. Dr. Wilson Head, Board member and past-President of the Urban Alliance on Race Relations, remembers meeting her at a conference on the media about ten years ago. "She was a very vocal and articulate young woman, and it seemed unusual for a Chinese lady to be so outspoken. So we got her involved on the media committee and within a year elected her to the Board of Directors (of the Urban Alliance)."

The Alliance was formed in the mid-seventies and its primary objective is to expose and dismantle racism and discrimination, particularly at the level of the major institutions of Canadian society. Eng, who was eventually elected Vice-President from 1986 to 1988, was a hard worker on the media committee. "It was formed to look at the lack of visible minorities in employment and at the level of portrayal," explains Head. When a separate Ad Hoc Committee on the Media was formed, Susan, along with Head, got involved on that committee as well. One of the initiatives undertaken by this second committee was to organize a series of

meetings in the early eighties with ad agencies, and with the companies that buy the ads, like the Bay and Eaton's. "Ten of us met with ten of them," Head recalls. "Susan made some strong speeches at these meetings."

Although some progress was made, Head acknowledges that things appear to have slipped back since the special committee was dropped. "The pressure of tradition is very strong." In terms of employment, he feels that more headway has been made. Institutions like the Toronto Star, the Globe and Mail, and the CBC — particularly in Toronto — have begun to hire more Blacks, Chinese, etc. However, most studies continue to indicate that visible minorities are woefully under-represented in media workplaces.

Eng has also been very active in the Chinese community. In 1979, *W5*, a national public affairs television program, aired an overtly racist segment which erroneously claimed that Oriental students were filling Canadian universities and that Canadians (meaning Whites) couldn't get in. Susan, who was then a member of the Federation of Chinese-Canadian Professionals, became involved along with a number of other community groups in mobilizing the Chinese community in a series of protests around the country. The threat of a national protest rally forced the president of the CTV network to apologize, and organizers used the opportunity to establish the Chinese Canadian National Council (CCNC).

"I think we surprised ourselves," Susan remarks of the protest movement. It was the first time in recent memory that the Chinese-Canadian community had engaged in that kind of broad-based civil rights action. When the CCNC was formed of a federation of local chapters across the country with a national executive, its principal mandate was to focus on the issue of equality. Eng explains that "...compared to many other national or ethnic organizations it maintains a far stronger unity than some of the others. Its national focus was built around an issue, and the working relationships that developed in a crisis are now serving people very well in the longer view of things."

Eng served as Vice-President on the National Executive for three years. Dr. Joseph Wong, one of the key organizers of the "W5 movement" met Susan near the end of the protest when the CCNC was just getting off the ground. "She contributed a lot during the three to four years that she was involved in the organization. She was instrumental in the organizing of the structure of the (Council), and also in the discussions of our submissions...to the federal government in 1981-82 during the repatriation of the Constitution and the enshrining of the Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms. Susan offered not only her legal expertise, but also her common sense, her knowledge of the community, and her vision of the larger society." Dr. Wong, a physician and staunch community activist,

has recently been elected Vice-Chairman of the Board of Directors of the United Way. He admits that he had many heated exchanges with Eng during these years over their approaches on various issues, but still managed to remain friends. "Susan and I have strikingly similar goals and principles. We always came to a compromise."

* * *

Susan Eng was born in Toronto of parents from mainland China. Along with sister Rose and younger brothers Henry and Hubert, the family was raised in an apartment above the New Dainty Grill, a Chinese restaurant her late father ran for thirty years near Yonge and Wellesley Streets. "The neighbourhood in which I grew up was working class, blunt, and the racism was clear. You didn't have to look very far to find it," Eng says.

Later, in school, fellow students and teachers were more polite, but she always felt a sense of being excluded. "I was excluded because I didn't know stuff. Our family did not have all the social plusses... we had no contacts, we didn't go to theatre, we didn't go to movies, we didn't have a car, we didn't travel. We were simply outside of the same experience that other kids had."

For Susan, this feeling of exclusion was never a major problem for her, a fact she attributes to strong family values and a sense of identity instilled by her parents. However, she remembers that some Chinese girls denied their heritage to the point where they would "dress up" the same as the White girls did and avoid the "immigrant clothes" which she and her sister wore. "They painted their faces and coloured their hair — which is utterly idiotic — and they felt they had to do that in order to be part of the wider community."

Ironically, her Chinese upbringing was a strong influence on Eng in an altogether different sense as well. According to sister Rose Eng Wong, Susan decided very early on to fight the stereotype of the quiet, passive (read submissive) Chinese female. Moreover, there was a resentment of what she perceived to be their inferior status. Rose explains: "In Chinese families sons are valued over daughters, and Susan always had a sense that our father would have preferred her to be a son. At the age of five, she saw all the attention our brother (the first-born son) got, and decided to rebel against that." But her sister acknowledges that Eng always had a very strong personality in any case. When their father died in their early teens, "(I)t was my sister who picked up the pieces and took over the management of the household. She became the head of the family," Rose declares.

Eng graduated from Jarvis Collegiate in 1970 with a 97.5 average, but was not awarded a scholarship. In fact, her guidance counsellor advised Eng to become a librarian because an aptitude test had revealed she liked to

file things. (Career options for women in those days were limited to a few choices: secretary, librarian, nurse, teacher or waitress.) Wisely ignoring this advice, Eng chose to study commerce and finance at the University of Toronto and ended up taking the LSAT (law school admittance test) because some friends happened to be taking it. Rose recalls that her sister went back to visit a high school Math teacher with whom she had been particularly close and informed him of her decision to study law. The teacher flatly informed her she would never make it because she was Chinese and a woman. After successfully completing law school, Eng again returned to Jarvis Collegiate to prove that she had indeed "made it". She received her law degree from Osgoode Hall in 1975 and was called to the Ontario Bar in 1977.

* * *

In view of her own achievements, have things changed much for women of Colour? Have we begun to move out from under the double and often triple burden of racism, sexism, and class oppression? For Eng, the biggest progress we have made in the last few years is that our situation has become an active, rather than passive concern. "It used to be simply a fact ... And no one was doing much positively or negatively towards it. Today ... all I can say is that there's a balance rather than a passivity, and that is good, ultimately." In terms of employment equity, Eng asserts that it is up to us to make sure that it is not just white women who are benefitting from affirmative action programs. "I think that it's important for people to think about how their actions and achievements can help others do the same thing."

Clearly, Eng sees herself as a role model both in the Chinese community and beyond it. And looking back, she is glad she decided to go into law, even though growing up Eng "never had a vision" of what she would do. "I would encourage almost anyone, but especially women of Colour, to take it (law) on as a discipline, even if they don't intend to practice as a lawyer. The discipline is healthy because it gives you a sense of the framework within which we live ... (I)t helps you identify what the rule is, why it is there, and how we deal with it if the reason for that rule no longer applies. This is the kind of analysis that I think is valid for the kinds of things that we have to face."

At the reception held in her honour at police headquarters, Eng is tall and striking in a simple but elegant black dress. Single and in her thirties, she impresses one as being very much in command of her life. The reception, sponsored by the Urban Alliance, is a hefty gathering of family, friends and colleagues who are proud of Eng and what she has accomplished. Wilson Head and Joseph Wong are both present. They have been asked to say a few words, along with others who have known and

worked with Eng over the years. Her sister Rose, a project manager in venture capital with the Federal Business Development Bank, busily chats with well-wishers.

This is not the first, nor is it the only major appointment Eng has received in recent years. She is on the Premier's Council, a group of 28 business, government, university and labour leaders who are looking at Ontario's economic development strategies for the 1990s. She is also one of the Board of Directors of the Ontario International Corporation, which is attempting to promote the export of a range of goods and services by Ontario's businesses and governmental agencies. However, for Eng, as for those present at the reception, the appointment to the Toronto Police Commission is a significant one and represents the opportunity to make a difference in this very sensitive area of race relations. Certainly, Eng's appointment can be viewed narrowly as tokenism, but in light of her record and her 10-12 years of work in race relations, this would be a simplistic interpretation, she suggests. Says Joseph Wong, "Susan has always impressed me as someone who is very honest, and who has the integrity and the skills and knowledge to face the issues the Police Commission is facing now." Wilson Head feels that Eng is a very good choice for the Police Commission. "They will feel her presence," he states.

Ultimately, however, it is Eng's vision of Canada as a *truly* multicultural society — both in terms of the social reality and our attitudes — that places her in a strategic position to have an impact. "We in Canada don't yet recognize that our culture is not White people with a few new neighbours ... (but) if (our) different identities can be allowed to stand side by side in an equal fashion, then there is a synergy and a strength there that is vital and important, and for us a major advantage." Whether it is competing successfully at the international level or living in harmony at home, Susan Eng's version of Canada is the wave of the future.

Adrienne Shadd has her M.A. in Sociology. She is currently working on a book about Black Canadian Women.

It's About Time: Rita Deverell's T.V. Show Facilitates Multifaith Dialogue

by Susan Korah

An unpretentious red brick building at the corner of Queen and Berkeley streets in downtown Toronto is the home of a brand new T.V. network that practises what many multiculturalism theorists are preaching from political pulpits. Conceived as Canada's first multifaith and multicultural network, VISION TV began broadcasting in September 1988 in order to provide an "entertaining, enlightening and inspiring mix of drama, human affairs and music, viewed from the perspective of faith and values."

Faith and values? Strange words surely, in a world where the entire communications infrastructure seems dominated by crass commercialism and blatantly materialist values? Not to Rita Shelton Deverell, the dynamic, multi-talented anchor person who not only introduces and provides coherence and continuity to the daily mix six hours of programming, but also produces a weekly human affairs show in magazine format called *"It's About Time."* As unpretentious and down-to-earth as Berkeley studio itself where much of her work is done, Rita exudes warmth, sincerity and an incisive intelligence that suggests the richness and depth of her experience as an artist and a human being. Not for her are the shallow, tinseltown glamour and cosmetics counter slickness associated with T.V. producers and programmes that, by and large, provide mere candy floss treats for the mind and soul.

Rita has been an actor, broadcaster, writer and university professor. All her life she has been a breaker of artificial barriers that confine and diminish the human spirit and has successfully challenged the notion that black people have no roles to play (literally speaking) in white-dominated dramatic productions. She has been profiled as a "Woman to Watch" by Chatelaine magazine and her list of T.V. credits includes hosting *Take 30* and *CBC Access*, a network show produced with community groups. *"Say No to Racism"* is one of the many documentaries she has created.

Born and raised in Texas, Rita came to Canada when she married a Canadian, Rex Deverell. She was the Acting Director of the Regina School of Journalism in Saskatchewan before she accepted her present position with VISION TV.

What attracted Rita to VISION? "I have had a lifelong interest in the arts and in Theology," she said in an interview conducted towards the end of a particularly hectic day in her Queen Street studio. "I have also done a lot of work in ecumenical broadcasting and have been in touch with groups that have been working on the idea of co-operative multifaith programming in Canada." With her M.A. in the History of Religion from Columbia University and the Union Theological Seminary in New York, her experience in acting and broadcasting and her own multicultural worldview, she and VISION TV seemed to be made for each other.

Rita Deverell was also fascinated by the idea of non-racist, non-sexist, non-violent and multicultural programming that would not only provide viewers with alternatives to much of the dominant patterns of mainstream broadcasting, but also promote genuine dialogue and understanding among the world's various faith groups. These are indeed distinctive features of her weekly show *"It's About Time"* which is aired every Friday night at 7 p.m. and every Saturday night at 6 p.m.

"It's About Time" presents Canadians in all their multicultural, multireligious and geographic diversity, giving an equal opportunity to people who seldom have their say as well as those whose voices are frequently heard in the mainstream media. "In this show, we reflect on human issues from a variety of faith perspectives, but not faith from an official, institutional sense," explained Rita. The show deals with individual human beings and how they bring their faith and value systems to the solution of human dilemmas and problems.

"In a multifaith dialogue we assume that we can all talk to one another as equals," she says emphatically. "We don't assume that any one religion is superior to or propredominant over others and we don't attempt to convert others." Rita firmly disassociates VISION TV from any latter-day version of religious imperialism as well as from the fear mongering and aggressive sales tactics that the viewing public all too often associates with religious programmes.

People often complain that they seldom receive anything but negative, depressing news on T.V. — about wars and famines and pestilence-stricken multitudes. *"It's About Time"* goes beyond presenting events and situations in a cold, clinical, factual manner. Rita interviews people who are moved by faith, concern and compassion. Using her own insatiable intellectual curiosity and her finely-honed sense of drama, she probes the moral and ethical dimensions of news stories with thoughtful, concerned people who are finding creative solutions to community, world and faith problems. "We discuss issues, not with a sense of despair, but always with a sense of hope," she says. For example, in May and June this year, she is running a seven-part series call *"Choose You This Day"* about the struggle for freedom in South Africa. She will present the responses and actions of people of faith to the situation in South Africa. In July and August she will examine some of the difficult moral and ethical questions raised by advanced medical technology in a series on bioethics.

In addition to producing and hosting *"It's About Time"* Rita also does the network wrap-around for VISION TV. As part of this function, she recently invited four people of different faith backgrounds to give their views on the worldwide storm caused by Salman Rushdie's novel *The Satanic Verses* which is considered blasphemous by millions of Muslims throughout the world.

Rita's incessant search for fresh angles, new insights, interesting issues, people and places — the raw materials for her show — have led her in the past to a tranquil Japanese garden in the centre of Toronto, to Stony Plain, Alberta's multicultural centre and the "Great Hall" totem room at the University of British Columbia's Museum of Anthropology. Guests in her show have included Terry Shin, master of the Japanese tea ceremony in Canada, a woman Unitarian minister who has been a clown and a Zoroastrian (adherent of an ancient religion founded by Zoroaster or Zarathustra, a Persian who lived about 1000 B.C.) hair dresser who uses environmentally safe products in her salon.

VISION TV is a non-profit corporation with charitable status. Owned and operated by an independent board of directors, it is not controlled by any one religious group or coalition of groups. For the channel number in your community, call your local cable company or check your newspaper's TV guide.

Susan Korah is a writer who lives in Belleville.

"Courage Under Oppression"

by Elaine Thompson

Lionheart Gal:
Life Stories of Jamaican Women
by Sistren,
with Honor Ford Smith.
Sister Vision Press
pp.298/$14.95

Sistren (Jamaican for sisters or sisterhood) is the theatre collective born out of the political and cultural headrush of Jamaica in the 1970s. Most of the players are working-class women, first drawn together in a government emergency program which provided temporary low-paying jobs in order to ease urban unemployment. The drama group started as a workshop project, and the women expressed their desire to "do plays about how we suffer as women ...about how men treat us bad."

Under the guidance of theatre director Honor Ford Smith, the women drew on their personal experiences in order to create grim, realistic studies of the economic, social, political and cultural oppression of all women in Jamaica. In so doing, Sistren has established itself as a critical voice in the articulation of Caribbean feminism. Such is the power of the group's statements, that many a performance in rural Jamaica had to be cut short when males in the audience became enraged that the actresses dared represent the truth of sexist oppression.

Lionheart Gal documents the personal histories of each member of Sistren, from childhood to present. Each woman's journey to self-realisation exposes the contradictions, double standards and the outright

primitiveness that characterises attitudes towards women in Jamaica.

For example, in "Ole Massa and Me" one woman recalls, almost dispassionately, how her brother used to punish her by tying her to a tree in the yard and whipping her. This happened despite the fact that there was no significant difference in their ages. Her brother was granted this power by their mother who, though she was the bread-winner, felt a male should be the head of the household. And so, like many other women, from urban and rural backgrounds of poverty and ignorance, this woman learned that girl children should not expect humanity from fathers or brothers, that woman's work and earnings are not considered grounds for status or respect, and that physical and mental abuse are part of a woman's lot.

These messages or themes that come up repeatedly in the stories of the working-class women of the group. There are other images as well: the adolescent, ignorant of sex and sexuality, who gets trapped by unwanted pregnancy and has to leave school, cursed and rejected by the family; abandoned by the father, and forced into a life of never-ending struggle to work in order to provide for herself and her offspring. Small wonder that in most of the stories, success is not measured by achieving a stable relationship or even in getting a good job, but in the organization of one's life so that independence — economic and psychological — is assured. These women have learned, through searing hardship, that they have to take charge of their lives. No one else is prepared to do this for them. And it is this lionhearted — courageous — message that they deliver in this book.

Most of *Lionheart Gal* is transcribed "patwah", the lingua franca of Jamaica. It is also the language with which most Sistren women feel comfortable. Jamaicans who enjoy reading should have little difficulty getting into the rhythms and idioms of the stories, but it may be hard for readers unfamiliar with the sight or sound of patwah. It could not have been an easy decision to risk limiting the readership by staying with patwah, but it is a good decision. The turn of phrase, the choice of vocabulary, are clues to the character and history of each speaker, and would be lost if translated to Standard English. Perhaps, the Sistren women are saying "Take us as we are or don't bother," in the same manner that they present their plays.

Lionheart Gal is a sociological document of great weight. The thoughtful introduction by Ms. Smith includes a perspective on the Jamaican women's movement, which extends back to rebel Maroon leader Nanny or Ni, whose military skills frustrated slavers and the colonial powers. Ms Smith also acknowledged that as a group, the Sistren collective still has other battles to explore. The book leaves us confident that Sistren has the "street smarts" to survive.

Elaine Thompson is a Toronto writer.

Extraordinary "Ordinary" People

by Wei Ping Lu

Chinese Profiles
by Zhang Xinxin
and Sang Ye, Eds.
Panda Books, Beijing
pp.376/$7.95 paper

Chinese Profiles is co-authored by Zhang Xinxin and Sang Ye, two of the most promising of the younger generation of Chinese writers. Zhang Xinxin, who is a native of Nanjing and graduate of the Central Drama Institute, rose to fame in the late 1970s. Sang Ye, born in Beijing, has been a journalist since the late 1970s and is also a researcher in modern Chinese history.

The book was originally a collection of the lives and ideas of a hundred ordinary Chinese as revealed in interviews conducted during a year on the road. These interviews first appeared in the literary supplement of a New York newspaper *Meizhou Huaqiao Ribao* in late autumn, 1983. Due to the warm acclamation from the reading public, five Chinese literary magazines — *Shanghai Wenxue* (Shanghai Literature), *Shouhuo* (Harvest), *Zuojia* (Author), *Zhongshan* (Mount Zhong) and *Wenxuejie* (Writer) — simultaneously published some interviews in their first issues of 1985. Since then it has aroused many high evaluations from the critics at home and abroad.

Now there are two English versions — one was published in Beijing in 1986; the other in New York in 1987. The New York edition, which collects 64 stories, is entitled *Chinese Life: An Oral History of Contemporary China*; and the Beijing edition which includes 39 stories is named as *Chinese Profiles*. In spite of the fact that some of the stories appear in both books, the two English versions are basically different. Here the focus is on the Beijing edition.

Following the style of reportage, the authors have used tapes and notes to recreate a faithful oral record of their encounters. The widely divergent world-views and life experiences of these extraordinary "ordinary" people come together in a rich tapestry that represents a wide cross-section of contemporary Chinese society. The thirty-nine stories chosen in the *Profiles* are all touching, some even soul-stirring and unforgettable.

The book is highly informative, for it provides the reader with a great deal of information concerning Chinese society, Chinese economy, and ordinary Chinese people's lives, as well as their joys, worries and hopes. For example, the first story "The Cyclist" tells the reader how a woman worker has cycled to work every day for ten years. In fact, "riding a bike's so common, almost everybody cycles to work in Beijing", comments the interviewee. Owing to the Cultural Revolution, hundreds of thousands of young people's education was broken off. After working either in the countryside or factories for about ten years, many people of this generation are working very hard for a certificate. The story "Certificate" describes how the middle-aged worker Li Xiaohang, who went to work in Inner Mongolia in 1968, struggles hard for a certificate. She tells her interviewers: "I have been doing a course, then sitting an exam, then doing another course, then sitting another examination. Altogether I need to do nine courses then I'll get a certificate — equivalent to a university degree." In present-day China in order to secure one's job or get a promotion, a certificate is fundamentally important. Therefore, Li Xiaohang and her classmates are making painstaking efforts to get one. Historically, the social status of Chinese women was extremely low. Although it has been improved in some way since 1949, conventional ideas die hard. The story "Living in Widowhood" is a sad story about a young widow who has to endure social pressures as she tries to find new love.

Profiles is an entertaining book because all the chosen stories, sad or joyful, are told in vivid oral dialogue, which makes the reader feel a direct communication between themselves and the protagonist. For example, in the story "'A Fly in a Bottle', That's Me", a high school leaver says:

> I'm waiting for a job...I don't do a thing, sponge on my family. Some time ago a foreigner, a woman, came here and asked me, "Waiting for a job, does that mean unemployed?" Ha, she spoke damn fluent Chinese, with no farting foreign accent. I knew she was having me on —

she understood. I told her, "Unemployed means you've lost a job; waiting for a job means waiting for work. They're not the same." That floored her. She said, "You're good at repartee." I retorted, "You are good at firing off questions!" I couldn't be bothered with her, was thinking, "You're not my wife, to waste my time talking rubbish." But I kept a smile on my face to look friendly.

Here, a picture of a naughty and outspoken young man is vividly drawn, which makes the readers laugh and shake their heads at the same time.

It is believed that *Chinese Profiles* in writing style shares a strong similarity with Barry Broadfoot's *The Depression* and Studs Terkel's *Working*. The translators are all experts in both languages. As a result, the English version reads just as easy and smooth as the Chinese in the original.

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Erratum:
The Refugee Families and their Children was published accidentally in Issue 5. Our apologies.