

Manifesto of the Pan-Canadian Young Feminist Gathering

WAVES OF RESISTANCE

We are the young ReBELLEs who have answered a feminist call and we are proud to call ourselves feminists. We recognize that there are multiple interpretations of feminism and we celebrate and integrate this diversity. We are committed to the continual expansion of the plurality of our voices. We are committed to an ongoing process of critical self-reflection to inform and transform our movement. We acknowledge the historical exclusion of "Othered" women by the majority Western feminist movement. We strive to learn from the past, honour the struggles of our foremothers and continue to dream for the future. We value the allies of feminism who support us in our fight for equity and justice.

We are women of diverse abilities, ethnicities, origins, sexualities, identities, class backgrounds, ages and races. Among us are employed, underemployed and unemployed women, mothers, students, dropouts, artists, musicians and women in the sex trade. We state that transfolks, two-spirited and intersexed people are integral to our movement and recognize and respect gender fluidity and support the right to self-identify. Our women-only spaces include everyone who self-identifies and lives as a woman in society.

We are told that feminism is over and outdated. If this were true then we wouldn't need to denounce the fact that:

In reality, many of the demands of our feminist mothers and grandmothers remain unmet. Women continue to be the victims of sexual violence. Our communities are haunted by the silence that follows these assaults. Throughout Canada, in spite of our right to it, access to abortion services remains insufficient. Across Canada as well, colonized, marginalized, racialized and disabled women are coerced and/or forced to undergo unwanted or uninformed abortions, forced to use contraception and are subjected to forced sterilization. The hyper-sexualization of women in the media has taught us to view women as sexual objects rather than complete human beings. Getting off, lesbianism and being queer are taboo and a women's choice to seek sexual pleasure is seen as negative. Our identities are eroded as we are taught, from the time we are children, and through television

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and magazines, that how we should look, dress, and act is determined by our sex. Violence is normalized, sexual abuse eroticized. Our sexual health education is inadequate and our reproductive rights are disrespected. Our needs are not being met.

In reality, women still represent the majority of the underprivileged. Our government steals children from poor and Aboriginal women. Capitalism exploits working-class women and confines middle- and upper-class women to "consumer" roles. We are told that equality has been achieved, but still the wage gap persists. Immigrant women are denied acknowledgment of their academic credentials and are forced to endure intolerable work environments in order to stay on Canadian soil. We lack affordable and accessible childcare. Women remain underpaid, underappreciated, and undervalued in the work force. We have gained the right to vote, yet gender-based discrimination keeps women virtually unrepresented in political office.

In this globalized world, we must construct international feminist solidarity. The actions of Canadian political and economic elites harm women around the world, and in a way that is specifically gender-related. War, genocide and militarization are characterized by the use of rape as a war weapon, femicide, and the sexual exploitation of thousands of our sisters. Free trade contributes to women's increasing social, economic and cultural insecurity. In response to Canadian imperialism, we will globalize our feminist solidarity.

In this so-called post-feminist world, our roles in society are still defined by traditional views on gender. Religious and political forces aimed at maintaining the pillars of power in our society silence us from voicing our rights. We denounce the current rise of right-wing ideology in Canadian society and the steps backward in women's rights that this has caused. We are being stripped of rights for which those who came before us fought hard. Geography marginalizes women, with remote, northern and rural women lacking access to basic services. Showing solidarity with our sisters means trying to understand all of the issues we face - including race, class and gender - and standing together against oppression.

Finally, we denounce the dismissal of the feminist movement as redundant. Our struggle is not over. We will be post-feminists when we have post-patriarchy.

Feminists Unite!





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DOWN WITH the colonial legacy of genocide and assimilation of Aboriginal peoples,
particularly of Aboriginal women

DOWN WITH the sexism and racism of the Indian Act

DOWN WITH dishonoured treaties

DOWN WITH assimilation

DOWN WITH racial profiling

DOWN WITH Canada's fake multicultural policy

DOWN WITH warmongers & military power

DOWN WITH racist child welfare policies

DOWN WITH stereotypes in the media

DOWN WITH genocide and femicide

DOWN WITH stealing women and children

DOWN WITH COLONIALISM

RebELLEs **AGAINST** banks for hijacking the world

RebELLEs **AGAINST** drug companies for institutionalizing women's health

RebELLEs **AGAINST** public spaces that don't accommodate all bodies

RebELLEs **AGAINST** development that destroys nature

RebELLEs **AGAINST** the class system that keeps us impoverished and deprives us of safe,
affordable housing

RebELLEs **AGAINST** the state that forces other countries to adopt the capitalist system

RebELLEs **AGAINST** the devaluation of women's paid and unpaid work

RebELLEs **AGAINST** corporations for making money off our backs

RebELLEs **AGAINST** the advertisers who destroy our self-esteem and then sell it back to us

RebELLEs AGAINST CAPITALISM

RISE AGAINST the industries that cause us to hate our bodies and our sexuality

RISE AGAINST heterosexism that makes it seem that there is only one way of living,
loving and being sexual

RISE AGAINST the socialization of children in gender binaries, race categories and
colonial erasures

RISE AGAINST the education that reinforces the heteronormative nuclear family

RISE AGAINST the religious Right and its influence on State policy and legislation

RISE AGAINST rape and violence against women

RISE AGAINST the objectification and control of women's bodies

RISE AGAINST all anti-choice bills, laws and strategies

RISE AGAINST the sexual division of labour

RISE AGAINST poverty and women's economic disadvantage and dependency

RISE AGAINST income support programs based on family status instead of individual status

RISE AGAINST masculinists, their false claims and demagogic arguments

RISE AGAINST sexual exploitation

RISE AGAINST PATRIARCHY

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We envision communities committed to:

- ★ Eradicating all forms of violence - including sexual, institutional, emotional, economic, physical, cultural, racial, colonial, ageist and ableist
- ★ Challenging all forms of oppression, power and privilege
- ★ Recognizing that others' struggles against oppression cannot be separated from one's own, because all people are intrinsically linked; and being conscious of how one fits into the different structures of oppression while fighting to eliminate them all
- ★ Freeing our children and ourselves from the gender binary
- ★ Building institutions and structures that promote the principles of Justice, Peace & Equality
- ★ Eliminating economic inequality
- ★ Funding and supporting affordable, accessible childcare, and the economic freedom to mother in the way we choose
- ★ Learning and teaching true herstory and histories of our victories and struggles, especially those of women of colour and Aboriginal women
- ★ Fighting the stigma and shame of mental health and psychiatric survivors and supporting their struggles

We will: Change our attitude: get pissed off, refuse, resist, walk out, speak up!

We will: Transform our daily lives and relationships: actions can take place in small interactions

We will: Encourage people to learn about, care for and love themselves and their bodies

We will: Support safe and accessible space for individuals to define and express themselves without fear of judgement

We will: Create alternatives, write poetry, articles, letters, make art

We will: Join with others, find common ground, build community, create feminist spaces and gatherings, raise awareness, educate, spread the word

We will: Believe that a better world is possible and work to achieve it

We will: Organize and struggle: build alliances with existing feminist groups and create new ones, fight together in solidarity, be seen and be heard, disrupt, trouble, destabilize established powers, become culture jammers

We will: Build solidarity based on the commonality of our diverse struggles and perspectives

We will: Value people rather than profits

We will: Demand massive State reinvestment in social programs and the end of privatization

We will: Organize pan-Canadian decentralized days of feminist action against the rise of the Right

We will: Protest and resist sexist bills and laws that threaten our reproductive rights, racist immigration laws, war, free trade, repression, the criminalization of political movements, corporate exploitation and plunder of the earth, and violence against women

We will: Champion safety, respect, justice, freedom, equality and SOLIDARITY!

This manifesto was adopted at the Pan-Canadian Young Feminist Gathering Waves of Resistance, Montreal, October 13, 2008.



This is a call to action!

Find out more, get involved!

www.rebelles2008.org

info@rebelles2008.org