

Micheline Montreuil

et / and

La Fédération de l'habitation coopérative du Canada  
Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada

présentent un atelier intitulé  
present a workshop entitled

Faire face au défi - Abattre les barrières  
Meeting the challenge - Breaking down the barriers

à / at

Assemblée générale annuelle 2004  
2004 Annual General Meeting

Jeudi 10 juin 2004 à 9 h 00 à Québec  
Thursday, June 10, 2004 at 9 h 00 in Quebec city

Les gens qui sont différents de nous  
People who are different than we are

Speaker : Micheline Montreuil

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## **The workshop**

### **Meeting the challenge : Breaking down the barriers**

The membership of housing co-ops is becoming more and more diverse. This means we all come in contact with people who are different than we are. But they are all members and are all protected by human rights laws.

How do we make sure we do not exclude or discriminate against certain groups within the co-op?

How do we ensure that our communities are as open and inclusive as possible?

Whether you are a member, a board member or a staff person, this workshop will increase your awareness of barriers that exist and how collectively we can remove them.

## **The speaker**

### **Micheline Montreuil**

Micheline Montreuil is a lawyer, a professor, a writer, a speaker and a radio hostess.

Her fight for the recognition of equal treatment for transgender people has reached new heights with many courts and judges have changing their point of view and their judgments since Micheline pleaded in front of them.

For her, even one case of discrimination is too much.

For her, the best way to eliminate prejudices is education at school and at conferences like this one which sensitize people about the differences.

Micheline Montreuil is very well placed to talk about that because she is a transgender.

That means that she is a former male who lives full time as a woman.

Why is she living as a woman?

There is no logical or certain answer.

The only answer that comes to mind is that she feels deep down inside herself that she wants to live in a different manner.

For example, one person may prefer living in the city and another in the country.

In her case, Micheline prefers to live as a woman instead of as a man.

She put on her first bra at the age of thirteen like a teenage girl and she dressed entirely as a girl for the first time at the age of sixteen.

For more information about Micheline Montreuil, go on her website at :

<http://www.micheline.ca>

## Fears #1

Are you afraid of

a spider?

a snake?

a bat?

a wasp?

a rat?

a tiger?

an octopus?

**Why?**

# Problems of perception

The most important question is :

Why are you afraid?

Tell me honestly why?

Have you ever been bitten by one?

So, where is the problem?

You think that they are dangerous !

You feel that!

You are sure that they are !

You believe that !

## Fears #2

Are you afraid of

a policeman?

a SS in his black uniform?

a black man?

a Mohawk warrior?

a person with a disability?

a Jew?

an Arab?

**Why?**

# Problems of perception

What do you think about a  
policeman or an SS  
in a bright pink uniform?

And about a black man?

On a recent weekend in Atlantic City, a woman related that she won a bucketful of quarters at a slot machine. She took a break from the slots for dinner with her husband in the hotel dining room. But first she would stash the quarters in her room.

"I will be right back and we will go to eat," she told her husband and she carried the coin-laden bucket to the elevator.

As she was about to walk into the elevator she noticed two men already aboard. Both were black. One of them was big, very big. A kind of intimidating figure.

The woman froze. Her first thought was : «These two are going to rob me.»



Her next thought was : «Don't be a bigot, they look like perfectly nice gentlemen, even if one of them is awfully black. However, the racial stereotypes were so powerful that the fear immobilized her.

She stood and stared at the two men. She felt anxious, flustered, ashamed. She hoped they did not read her mind, but she knew that they surely did because her hesitation about joining them on the elevator was all too obvious. Her face burned.

She could not just stand there. So, with a mighty effort of will, she picked up one foot and stepped forward and followed with the other foot and was on the elevator.

Avoiding eye contact, she turned around stiffly and faced the elevator doors as they closed. A second passed, and then another second, and then another. The elevator did not move. Panic consumed her. My God, she thought, I am trapped and about to be robbed!

Her heart plummeted. Perspiration poured from every pore.

Then one of the men said, "Hit the floor".

Instinct told her : «Do what they tell you.» The bucket of quarters flew upwards as she threw out her arms and collapsed on the elevator carpet.

A shower of coins rained down on her.

"Take my money and spare me. " she prayed.

More seconds passed.

She heard one of the men say politely, "Ma'am, if you will just tell us what floor you are going to, we will push the button. "

The one who said it had a little trouble getting the words out. He was trying mightily to hold in a belly laugh.

She lifted her head and looked up at the two men. They reached down to help her up. Confused, she struggled to her feet.

"When I told my man here to hit the floor, I meant that he should hit the elevator button for our floor. I did not mean for you to hit the floor, ma'am, " the average sized man told her. He spoke genially.

He bit his lip. It was obvious he was having a hard time not laughing.

She thought : «My God, what a spectacle I have made of myself.»

She was too humiliated to speak. She wanted to blurt out an apology, but words failed her.

How do you apologize to two perfectly respectable gentlemen for behaving as though they were robbing you? She did not know.

The 3 of them gathered up the strewn quarters and refilled her bucket.

When the elevator arrived at her floor they insisted on walking her to her room.

She seemed a little unsteady on her feet and they were afraid she might not make it down the corridor.

At her door, they bid her good evening.

As she slipped into her room she could hear them laughing while they walked back to the elevator.

The woman brushed herself off. She pulled herself together and went downstairs for dinner with her husband.

The next morning flowers were delivered to her room, a dozen roses.

Attached to each rose was a crisp one hundred dollar bill. A card said:

"Thanks for the best laugh we have had in years. "

It was signed :

Eddie Murphy and Bodyguard

a Mohawk warrior with his  
tam-tams and guns?

Will you have a new indian  
war in the co-op?

a handicapped person  
with his wheelchair?

It cost a lot of money and  
he is not like us.

Choose between  
a Jew or an Arab.

Why?

Will we have a new war?

Can you trust him?

Why not?

## Fears #3

Are you afraid of

a transvestite?

a transgender?

a transexual?

a gay?

a lesbian?

a bisexual

Why?

# Problems of perception

Do you know about the Plato's Cave,  
the Greek philosopher?

In 1933, Franklin D. Roosevelt,  
new elected president of the United States of America,  
said in his first speech as president :

“The only thing that we must fear  
is fear itself”

Why are there jokes about

Quebecers?

Newfies?

Blondes (girls)?

Fear, humor, envy, hate or ...

Why?

## Plato's Cave

The Allegory of the cave, or Plato's Cave, is an allegory presented by the Greek philosopher Plato in his work Republic (514a–520a) to compare "the effect of education and the lack of it on our nature". It is written as a dialogue between Plato's brother Glaucon and his mentor Socrates, narrated by the latter. The allegory is presented after the analogy of the sun (508b–509c) and the analogy of the divided line (509d–511e).

In the allegory, Socrates describes a group of people who have lived chained to the wall of a cave all their lives, facing a blank wall. The people watch shadows projected on the wall from objects passing in front of a fire behind them and give names to these shadows. The shadows are the prisoners' reality, but are not accurate representations of the real world. Three higher levels exist: the natural sciences; mathematics, geometry, and deductive logic; and the theory of forms.

Socrates explains how the philosopher is like a prisoner who is freed from the cave and comes to understand that the shadows on the wall are not reality at all. A philosopher aims to understand and perceive the higher levels of reality. However, the other inmates of the cave do not even desire to leave their prison, for they know no better life.

Socrates remarks that this allegory can be paired with previous writings, namely the analogy of the sun and the analogy of the divided line.



## **Few definitions - Part 1**

### **Important note**

All definitions use the male form but they apply to both men and women.

### **Transvestite or crossdresser**

A «transvestite» or a «crossdresser» is a man who needs to dress as a woman for fun, excitement, exhibitionism or fetichism but always for just a few hours or one or two days.

### **Transexual**

A «transexual» is a man who needs the Sex Change Surgery to change his body because he believes that she is a woman trapped in a male body.

Traditionally, these people had to live with a permanent dichotomy. Certain people have committed suicide, others have tried to mutilate themselves by cutting off certain organs and others have tried to live with this permanent dysphoria.

### **Transgender**

A «transgender» is a man who dresses himself as a woman because he believes thinking that he is a woman with a body slightly different than the body of other women.

She lives and works as a woman and accordingly, she dresses herself as a woman and identifies herself as a woman.

Usually, she will not pass through the Sex Change Surgery but she may use surgery, implants, laser or some other things to change or not, a little bit or a lot, her appearance to look more feminine.

### **Transgender, Trans People or T-Girl**

The word «transgender» and the expressions «Trans People» or «T-Girl» are often use to cover the words transvestite, transexual and transgender.

### **Person in transition**

The expression «person in transition» applies to a person where the «Sexual anatomy» and the «Sexual identity» are incompatible with each other and who intends to make his «Sexual anatomy» compatible with his «Sexual identity». So, each Trans Person is a Person in transition.

## **Few definitions - Part 2**

### **Sexual Anatomy**

The «Sexual anatomy» is the exterior appearance of a person; it is the physical sex.

In 99.9% of cases, it is possible by looking at a nude person to determine if this person is of the masculine or feminine sex.

Nature sometimes makes mistakes, there remains a small 0.1% of ambiguous cases.

### **Sexual Identity**

The «Sexual identity» or «Gender identity» is what the person believes themselves to be : it is the gender.

It is therefore a psychological notion and only the person can say if he feels that he is a man or if she feels that she is a woman.

### **Sexual orientation**

The «Sexual orientation» concerns the sexual preference : a person may have a preference for a person of the same sex or of the opposite sex, for an animal or for an object.

The topic of «Sexual orientation» is not important for this workshop.

## **Micheline - From Transvestite to Transexual**

In a traditional way that include the transvestite, the transgender and the transexual, I would say that I was a transvestite from the age of 13 to 43 with all the shades and the limitations that it is possible to add, and that now, I am a transgender or a transexual since the age of 43.

From the age of 13 to 18, I was a curious transvestite because I searched to understand, but I stay hidden.

From the age of 18 to 23, I was a whimsical transvestite and even perhaps a fetichist because I had fun dressing myself as a woman, but I stayed hidden.

From the age of 23 to 34, I was a hidden transvestite because I wished to be seen without being seen. I wanted to go out, but I didn't want to be recognized.

From the age of 34 to 40, I was a serious transvestite who sometimes went out dressed as a woman and who wanted to have my own female identity without knowing what it is to be a transgender.

From the age of 40 to 43, I was an out-of-the-closet transvestite who went out dressed as a woman and had a real female identity.

From the age od 43 to 45, I was a known transgender who discovered herself and who has a real female identity.

From the age of 45 up to now, I have taken hormones to let my breasts grow and I had laser treatment to remove unwanted hairs. I am a well known transgender who lives her life fully and permanently as a woman. Consequently, I may say that I am a pre-op transexual.

That means that I work dressed as a woman, go out dressed as a woman, travel dressed as a woman and try to be a part of the female word.

I am «Micheline Montreuil», a woman. I am not exactly identical to other women, but nevertheless I am a woman - even if it disturbs you.

Does it mean that some day I will have a vagina. Do I need one?

Right now, I feel fine with my body and no changes are expected fore the foreseeable future but, as you know "Que sera,sera" or "What ever will be, will be". I do not know and I really do not care because I do not know what may happen, when, why, how. So...

## **So, is it important for you to know?**

So, is it important for you to know if one of your neighbor is :

a policeman (usually invisible)?

a black man (usually visible)?

an indian Mohawk warrior (often visible)?

an handicapped person (usually visible)?

a jew (usually invisible)?

an Arab (usually visible)?

a transvestite (usually invisible)?

a transgender (some time visible, some time invisible)?

a transexual (usually invisible)?

a gay (some time visible, some time invisible)?

a lesbian (usually invisible)?

a bisexual (usually invisible)?

# The Law

## Canadian charter of rights and freedoms

2. Everyone has the following fundamental freedoms:
  - a) freedom of conscience and religion;
  - b) freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication;
  - c) freedom of peaceful assembly; and
  - d) freedom of association.
  
15. (1) Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.

## Charter of human rights and freedoms of Quebec

3. Every person is the possessor of the fundamental freedoms, including freedom of conscience, freedom of religion, freedom of opinion, freedom of expression, freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association.
  
4. Every person has a right to the safeguard of his dignity, honour and reputation.
  
5. Every person has a right to respect for his private life.
  
10. Every person has a right to full and equal recognition and exercise of his human rights and freedoms, without distinction, exclusion or preference based on race, colour, sex, pregnancy, sexual orientation, civil status, age except as provided by law, religion, political convictions, language, ethnic or national origin, social condition, a handicap or the use of any means to palliate a handicap.  
  
Discrimination exists where such a distinction, exclusion or preference has the effect of nullifying or impairing such right.
  
- 10.1. No one may harass a person on the basis of any ground mentioned in section 10.

11. No one may distribute, publish or publicly exhibit a notice, symbol or sign involving discrimination, or authorize anyone to do so.
12. No one may, through discrimination, refuse to make a juridical act concerning goods or services ordinarily offered to the public.
13. No one may in a juridical act stipulate a clause involving discrimination.  
Such a clause is without effect.
14. The prohibitions contemplated in sections 12 and 13 do not apply to the person who leases a room situated in a dwelling if the lessor or his family resides in such dwelling, leases only one room and does not advertise the room for lease by a notice or any other public means of solicitation.
15. No one may, through discrimination, inhibit the access of another to public transportation or a public place, such as a commercial establishment, hotel, restaurant, theatre, cinema, park, camping ground or trailer park, or his obtaining the goods and services available there.
16. No one may practise discrimination in respect of the hiring, apprenticeship, duration of the probationary period, vocational training, promotion, transfer, displacement, laying-off, suspension, dismissal or conditions of employment of a person or in the establishment of categories or classes of employment.
17. No one may practise discrimination in respect of the admission, enjoyment of benefits, suspension or expulsion of a person to, of or from an association of employers or employees or any professional order or association of persons carrying on the same occupation.
18. No employment bureau may practise discrimination in respect of the reception, classification or processing of a job application or in any document intended for submitting an application to a prospective employer.
- 18.1. No one may, in an employment application form or employment interview, require a person to give information regarding any ground mentioned in section 10 unless the information is useful for



the application of section 20 or the implementation of an affirmative action program in existence at the time of the application.

18.2. No one may dismiss, refuse to hire or otherwise penalize a person in his employment owing to the mere fact that he was convicted of a penal or criminal offence, if the offence was in no way connected with the employment or if the person has obtained a pardon for the offence.

19. Every employer must, without discrimination, grant equal salary or wages to the members of his personnel who perform equivalent work at the same place.

A difference in salary or wages based on experience, seniority, years of service, merit, productivity or overtime is not considered discriminatory if such criteria are common to all members of the personnel.

20. A distinction, exclusion or preference based on the aptitudes or qualifications required for an employment, or justified by the charitable, philanthropic, religious, political or educational nature of a non-profit institution or of an institution devoted exclusively to the well-being of an ethnic group, is deemed non-discriminatory.

20.1. In an insurance or pension contract, a social benefits plan, a retirement, pension or insurance plan, or a public pension or public insurance plan, a distinction, exclusion or preference based on age, sex or civil status is deemed non-discriminatory where the use thereof is warranted and the basis therefor is a risk determination factor based on actuarial data.

In such contracts or plans, the use of health as a risk determination factor does not constitute discrimination within the meaning of section 10.