



SECURITY AND CITIZENS: NEW DEFINITIONS AND NEW PARTNERSHIPS WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENT

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INTRODUCTION

The unprecedented pace at which people, goods, finance and information are moving around the globe is changing both the structure and the values of our societies. Over the past three decades of economic and political restructuring, finance and trade have become the central organizing principles of civic life. Public governance is being fundamentally transformed as political power and social responsibility are simultaneously shifted upwards to trading blocs and global institutions, outwards to the private sector, and downwards onto local governments and private individuals (Swyngedouw, 2000).

These shifts, while contested and uneven in their implementation, are part of the powerful international trend to extend free-market competition, commodification and privatization to all arenas of human existence. As states download, off-load, shrink and eliminate their social security and public welfare functions in fa-

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vour of facilitating the interests of private enterprise, their resources, rhetoric and action are increasingly devoted to issues of “public” or “national” security. Instead of bridging social gaps and inequalities, states are increasingly accepting and policing them.

Large cities and city-regions in both the North and South have become central players in this scenario. Not only are they the command, control and service centres for the operations of globalized business and finance (Sassen, 2001), but they are also home to ever-larger numbers of people whose livelihoods have been eroded by rapidly growing and widespread poverty. The evidence that globalization has produced distinct social divisions is nowhere more visible than in cities.

The rapid rate of urbanization is dramatically re-shaping the social geography of our world. Just two hundred years ago, in 1800, 2% of people lived in cities. But with 180,000 people moving to cities every day, the United Nations projects that, by 2008, more than half of the world’s population will be living in urban areas.² Past waves of urbanization were directly linked to industrial expansion and economic growth. Now cities are expanding even as de-industrialization, unemployment and poverty grow and economies shrink (Davis, 2004). Slums, particularly in the South, are the fastest growing urban settlements in the world.³

For the people of the South, dreams of a better life in New York, Los Angeles, London, Paris or Toronto loom large. But the high-rises of Western cities are not all flecked with gold. The growing chasm between the rich Northern and poor Southern nations, which has spurred such widespread protests against corporate globalization, now extends into the urban landscape of the West. Although internal polarization has long been part of life in European and North American cities, it is re-emerging and hardening into new, deeper and more insidious patterns of segregation and re-segregation. The dividing lines are not only geographic, relegating people into slum-like conditions inside urban centres, but also economic, social and political. International migrants, along with women, people of colour, indigenous and working people are being steadily pushed to the physical and democratic margins of Western urban life (Koffman, 1995; Davis, 2000; Harvey, 2000). As a result, the boundaries of citizenship are being erected inside as well as around national borders. Even as passports and formal citizenship status become more important, they offer no guarantee of belonging or enfranchisement.

In spite of their growing numbers, people of non-European origin, immigrants and citizens alike, continue to be excluded from meaningful participation in economic, political and social life. For racialized communities, a simultaneous hy-

² U.N. Habitat Media Centre Urbanization—Facts and Figures, available online at hq.unhabitat.org/mediacentre/backgrounders.asp

³ *Ibid.*

per-visibility and invisibility marks their existence and erodes their humanity. For women, the additional dimension of gender inequity further erases them from the social landscape of Western cities even as their responsibilities to ensure the survival of their families and communities are greater than ever.

This paper looks at racialized and gendered poverty and its effects on the social citizenship of women of colour⁴ living in poor neighbourhoods in Toronto. The analysis is based on an action research project conducted between 2000 and 2003. Dubbed “Breaking Isolation, Getting Involved” it was centred on the situation, needs and desires of multiply marginalized women living in the city.

TORONTO

Toronto is Canada’s largest metropolitan area and one of North America’s fastest growing financial centres. It is one of the most diverse cities in the world and is the chosen destination of more than 42% of immigrants to Canada. Nearly half of its 2.4 million residents are people of colour and the population communicates in more than a hundred different languages.⁵

Although it has a unique character and history, many of the current challenges and contradictions facing Toronto mirror and/or anticipate those of other cities. In one respect, it is Canada’s undisputed financial hub, a second-tier global city and a cultural playground for Bay Street’s corporate classes. This Toronto—the rich and arrogant centre of Anglo-Saxon Canadian social, political and economic culture provokes undisguised resentment from other cities and regions across Canada. But, as its residents know too well, the view looks much different from the streets and crumbling apartment buildings of its many poor neighbourhoods. A recent report by the United Way of Greater Toronto shows “a dramatic rise in the number of higher poverty neighbourhoods in the City of Toronto in the last two decades, approximately doubling every ten years, from 30 in 1981, to 66 in 1991, to 120 in 2001.”⁶

Toronto’s changing racial demographics have been the focus of much media and public attention over the past 15 years. Since 1990, there has been a steady stream of statistical reports projecting that people of non-European ancestry will soon be the majority of the population in the city. Most recently, on March 23, 2005, Statistics Canada released fresh evidence that by 2017 more than 50% of the population of the Greater Toronto region will be made up of people of “visi-

⁴ This project’s mandate did not include the situation of First Nations women. The documentation of their situation remains outstanding and equally, if not more pressing, than that of the non-European women engaged in this study.

⁵ City of Toronto: www.city.toronto.on.ca/quality_of_life/diversity.htm

⁶ *Poverty by Postal Code*, The United Way of Greater Toronto 2004.

ble minority” origin.⁷ Despite their statistical strength, people of colour in Toronto remain, for the most part, at the margins of the economic and political life of the city. While numerical representation is not, in and of itself, a panacea, the almost total lack of representation from Toronto’s many communities of colour on city council betrays a stark gap in local governance. Just three city councilors (two men and one woman) out of a total of 44 elected from across the city are currently people of colour.⁸

Combined with the almost complete erasure of gender concerns from city decision-making in recent years, this has meant that the concerns of women of colour, who are nearly a quarter of the population, have not been on the agenda for concrete allocation of resources, services and support at City Hall. According to women of colour who are advocates following public policy at municipal, provincial and federal levels, the situation from the early 1990s to the present day has been one marked by rampant increases in racialized and gendered poverty, roll-backs of social security and cuts to critical social services and programs, especially those geared to the specific needs of women and ethno-racial communities.

In Toronto, multicultural diversity is the overt rhetoric, but deepening race-based inequality is the covert reality. City boosters tout Toronto as a “world within a city” and City Hall’s slogan, “Diversity Our Strength” is used to market the city to investors and tourists. Toronto has obvious potential to be an international model of a dynamic civic culture forged among people across multiple axes of difference. And its inhabitants make the best of these possibilities in their everyday lives, in spite of being diminished by increasing levels of racialized and gendered poverty. More than 40% of people of colour living in the city are poor.⁹ That is more than double the rate of the rest of the population.

For women living at the intersections of gender, race and class disadvantage, the situation is even more difficult. The issues they face are pressing and urgent, with average poverty rates of 53% to 59% for single women,¹⁰ and rising as high as 96% for single mothers in some communities.¹¹

In this city, as in many others in North America and Europe, an increasingly divided citizenship continues to be shaped along the fault lines of race, gender,

⁷ Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 91-541-XIE, Population projections of visible minority groups, *Canada, provinces and regions 2001-2017*, March 22, 2005. Also reported and elaborated in front page articles in the *Toronto Star* and *The Globe and Mail*, March 23, 2005.

⁸ Two of Chinese and one of Indo-Caribbean heritage as of March 2005.

⁹ *Urban Poverty in Canada—A Statistical Profile*, by Kevin Lee, published by the Canadian Council on Social Development, 2000.

¹⁰ *Ethno-Racial Inequality in Toronto: Analysis of the 1996 Census*, by Michael Ornstein, for the City of Toronto, 2000: 100-101.

¹¹ *Ibid.* p. 88. The 96.1% figure refers to Ghanaian female lone parents. Other single mothers facing high poverty rates include Tamil women: 84.4%, Vietnamese women: 84.9%, Central American women: 85.9%, Ethiopian and Somali women: 89.8% and 89.2% respectively.

poverty and geography. This is especially visible in the experiences and realities of low-income women of colour who live at the intersections of these divides. Their multiple disadvantages combine to reveal an effective expulsion from social citizenship,¹² even for those who have lived in the city for generations or have long held formal papers.

Although Toronto's situation is unique in many respects, these types of demographic shifts, and their accompanying polarizations, are increasingly evident in cities across Europe and North America and around the world. The dangerous contradictions of numerical strength on the one hand and marginalization on the other that mark the existence of people of colour in this city shadow the realities emerging in other city-regions. As such, the situation of women of colour in Toronto paints a telling picture of a largely unaddressed but central feature of the international urban condition.

THE CASE STUDY—ORIGINS AND APPROACH

The “Breaking Isolation, Getting Involved” action-research project was initiated with the support of an ad hoc group of women's advocates. It was funded largely by the Federal Government's Office for Status of Women Canada with a small supplementary grant from the City of Toronto. It officially culminated with the public release of the project report entitled *If Low Income Women of Colour Counted in Toronto*¹³ in the fall of 2003. However a coalition of women's advocates extended the work for another year until November 2004, to ensure action on the findings and recommendations. As a result, the report was presented to the Mayor's office, City Council's senior Policy and Finance Committee, along with a number of City Council committees, and senior bureaucrats in relevant city departments, agencies, boards and commissions. In all, the direct work on the project ran over a period of four years.

The project design was multifaceted and, to some extent, unorthodox, in that it consciously combined policy analysis, research and advocacy. Using quantitative, qualitative and activist approaches, it sought to document, contextualize and bring the urban realities of women of colour into the centre of the city's social, political and economic life. The aim of the project was not to create a dispassion-

¹² I use citizenship in its broadest sense to encompass formal citizenship rights conferred (or not) by the State, and the formal and informal forms of enfranchisement (or disenfranchisement) in other non-state forms of governance and decision-making, such as private institutions, community-based and civil society organizations, the family and religious institutions. In short, the notion of citizenship is used to denote effective, rather than nominal, participation in public life.

¹³ The full text of the report is available on the web at www.socialplanningtoronto.org/Research%20&%20Policy%20Updates/Low%20Income%20Women%20of%20Colour%20Aug03.pdf

ate, detached academic record. It was explicitly intended to begin the long-term, and long-overdue, task of reversing these women's marginalization by raising their issues and voices in the public arena. As the report's introduction notes:

Because it was designed to engage women rather than simply survey them, it relied on the development of a fairly intimate interaction between the facilitator and the participants. Meetings were approached as an opportunity for women to share their stories, listen to each other and learn from the facilitator as well as from each other about how their experiences relate to public policy-making at various levels of Government.

In most cases, a warm sense of solidarity evolved over the course of the animated conversations. Women began to see themselves within a broader picture of women of colour in low-income neighbourhoods across the city, and they developed a deeper empathy with the challenges faced by their neighbours. Women repeatedly decried the fact that there are very few ongoing opportunities for them to meet in this way. They expressed a desire to learn, share and unravel their everyday encounters with others, outside of a social work framework in which they are pathologized as clients with problems.

Even though it was unfamiliar territory for many, the chance to analyze their realities in a collective, "big-picture" framework in a down-to-earth, friendly and humorous way provided both solace and a much needed sense of hope. Too many women said their confidence is regularly shattered as a result of being dehumanized in their encounters with mainstream society. While many were sceptical about the willingness of politicians to take them seriously, they were heartened at the sense of possibility that the meetings engendered.

This is the specific and unconventional approach that resulted in the findings of this report. Although we had a specific design to guide the sessions, no rigid formula or standardized survey could have produced the particular revelations and insights recorded. They are the result of an affectionate engagement that the women, facilitator and community partners all brought to the project.

As the project researcher, author of the final report, a first-generation immigrant to Canada, and a woman of colour, my relationship to the issues and to the women whose lives and views are the core of the work was multilayered. I was simultaneously a facilitator, participant, organizer and empathetic advocate. As such, my presentation of the research, both in the final report, and this subsequent appraisal, is framed by these roles and relationships.

THE CASE STUDY—SCALE

Working at the neighbourhood scale was an important feature of the project. Toronto recently became a “megacity” as a result of the amalgamation of the inner-ring post-war suburbs and the downtown core into a single political entity. Social democratic and middle-class reform politics have held considerable political sway in the city centre over a number of decades. These were forced into a contest with the more conservative political cultures of suburban areas. Most social services, justice coalitions and civil society groups are based downtown. But Toronto’s poverty curve takes the shape of a ‘U’ that curves around the central part of the city running straight through the western and eastern suburbs and linked at the south end by the downtown core (see Map Source: The United Way of Greater Toronto, *Poverty by Postal Code*, 2004¹⁴).

Geographic patterns of social housing investment, immigrant settlement, gentrification, along with gender and race discrimination in access to housing in the city centre, have relegated large numbers of racialized and poor people to the private high-rises and subsidized social housing developments within the path of the poverty curve. Poor and racialized women disproportionately live in these under-serviced areas. In order to engage with them and get an accurate picture of their lives we needed to go to where they live.

The findings of the research component of the project are drawn from group conversations with women in the neighbourhoods, as well as the insights of community partners—the women’s community groups who work with women on a daily basis. The final report also contains analysis informed by ongoing monitoring of policy and political developments at City Hall, active participation in provincial, citywide and neighbourhood-based coalitions and campaigns on issues of concern to multiply marginalized women, literature reviews of related research reports and statistical research, and interviews with women’s advocates.

The following is an excerpt taken from the introduction and summary of *If Low Income Women of Colour Counted in Toronto*. It encapsulates the central issues raised by the women.

Mapping the Issues—A Short Preview

Poverty is these women's biggest challenge and even their tough resourcefulness cannot overcome the impossibilities this condition creates in their lives. Yet the women, many of whom are racialized immigrants, have insistent dreams of better and more independent lives. Managing rising levels of stress and ill health, Toronto's low-income women try to make the impossible possible. Decent housing is hard to find in a tight rental market, and many landlords discriminate against women who are sin-

¹⁴ Available online at www.unitedwaytoronto.com/Poverty-by-Postal-Code/map-pages/toronto2001.html

gle mums, social assistance recipients or racialized women. Increasing numbers of women have lost the roof over their heads while many more face an invisible form of homelessness in which they are bunking with relatives, barely surviving in substandard, expensive and overcrowded units, which are badly maintained and too often infested with pests and vermin.

In spite of their great desire to work and better their economic circumstances, few of the women are able to find paid work. Those who do have jobs find themselves in part-time, insecure, low-paying positions with little hope of advancement. Many aren't able to even look for work because of the lack of affordable childcare. Few low-income women know how to access regulated care and, where they do find childcare, informal arrangements are the norm. Elderly women, many of whom speak little English, find themselves stuck doing long hours of unpaid work caring for their children's children.

Social assistance doesn't bring in enough money to pay the bills. But it still exacts a heavy price as it takes away dignity and privacy through the constant scrutiny of authorities who investigate for minor "infractions" such as unreported gifts, food or money from friends and relatives.

Women are keenly aware of their isolation and how it weakens their position. Opportunities to make connections outside of their immediate family, cultural and religious networks are extremely limited. In both the former suburbs and downtown, women said they have nowhere to go to meet women from other communities. As a result, they are housebound and vulnerable to abuse from partners, children and other family members. Some have been in Canada for many years and, despite having gone through formal language training programs, have never had the social opportunities needed to develop their conversational English skills.

There are few accessible, non-commercial and secular places for healthy activity and social interaction among women, especially near their homes. In many communities, space is at a premium and public recreation centres, where they exist, charge for the use of rooms and offer few drop-in activities. Women and girls are no longer a designated priority in the City's Parks and Recreation Department and there are few, if any, women's programs left in the schedule. As a result, recreation centres too easily default into a competitive, masculinist sports culture that implicitly excludes most women.

Transit costs are out of reach for low-income women. Those who travel the TTC overwhelmingly report discrimination and abusive behaviour by operators towards poor and racialized women. Disabled women have few options other than WheelTrans. Pick-up times can be delayed up to five hours, during which they are expected to wait outdoors, regardless of the weather.

Distrust of authority figures is not unfounded for low income and racialized women.

Around public housing complexes, Police and security guards operate on stereotypes and assumptions about poor people. They are slow to respond to women's calls on domestic violence but quick to harass their children for spending time outdoors with friends in their neighbourhoods.

Few women have even basic information on their rights or the avenues through which they can access justice. The daily experience of being treated as a second-class citizen leaves some hopeless about the possibility of effecting change. Without ongoing support, counsel and encouragement they cannot develop the capacity to advocate individually or collectively for much needed changes in the conditions of their lives.

When the stress of coping mounts to the breaking point, affordable counseling is rarely available so some women turn to doctors. Class, language, cultural and gender biases mean that women are often misunderstood, disbelieved or dismissed by medical professionals. This lack of communication can have devastating consequences.

Women's groups, where they exist, offer a glimmer of hope. But they are grappling with overwhelming needs and severely limited staff, space and resources. Women's centres are forced to tightly program their work according to the dictates of funders. Many can no longer function as drop-in centres.

Most ethno-specific women's initiatives are in much the same position as their clients. They have little or no access to stable funding, are forced to operate on short-term projects with volunteers, and underpaid part-time and temporary staff that don't have a chance to develop their skills beyond their basic qualifications. Larger community service agencies, on the other hand, largely operate in a gender and/or race neutral framework. Their approaches do not address the complex and differing issues arising from the women's multiple and intersecting experiences of racism, sexism, poverty, immigrant or refugee status, disability, old age, widowhood, or single parenthood.

In all, women suffer from a chronic lack of resources and supports. There are very few opportunities for them to engage in advocacy work on behalf of themselves or their communities. They rarely interact with other women in similar circumstances outside their own families or cultural communities, let alone with women in other neighbourhoods across the city. In their own racialized communities the voices of poor, old, single, and disabled women are submerged by affluent and influential men who are readily awarded the role of official spokespeople for the entire community. (Khosla, 2003:11-13)

ALTERNATIVE POSSIBILITIES AND POLICIES

Although the mandate of the project was to focus on local and municipal issues, the realities of the women crossed all scales of policy and politics. Beyond articu-

lating the issues they face, women participants collectively deciphered the level of government responsible, as well as the various types of taxes they contribute to each. This helped them formulate initial ideas for action which were compiled by a project subcommittee into eight recommended initiatives for action at City Hall.

Given the systemic nature of the issues involved, there was some concern among committee members that the recommendations not be seen as a “quick fix” allowing politicians to bypass the deeper implications of the findings. We recognized that sustained political pressure was the only way to ensure the ongoing attention of policy makers. It was agreed that the recommended initiatives be presented as initial steps to “kick start” change with the recognition that a strong and enfranchised constituency of women of colour in the city, working within and across neighbourhoods, is a prerequisite for a more fundamental transformation. Accordingly, the main recommendation called for a network of community-based women’s houses which would provide neighbourhood space and social support, and build the social connections and advocacy skills needed for women to organize. As the report states:

“Backed by support from both foundations and government, they would operate as full time, drop-in, community-based facilities designed to serve multiply marginalized and low-income women, specifically women of colour, immigrant and refugee women. Shaped as public spaces that provide resource, relief, civic education, engagement and advocacy support, the houses would not provide individual direct social services. They would, instead, make referrals and links to appropriate community services as needed by participants. They would initially operate during daytime hours with some evening events programming, with scope for expansion of hours in the long-term.”

Other recommended initiatives called for improvements in city housing standards in which “public, non-profit and private housing would be evaluated on a pass/fail basis, with fines imposed on those landlords who refuse to ensure that their buildings are maintained to a high public standard guaranteeing a healthy and humane living environment for tenants”; a transit access initiative that would offer discounted passes to social assistance recipients and address racism, sexism and other forms of discriminatory treatment on the city’s busses, streetcars and subways; an anti-violence training initiative for front-line workers in ethno-specific and settlement agencies, as well as low-income women’s advocates and community activists who are in contact with survivors of violence against women; an initiative to ensure greater access to public recreation centres and programs for women of colour through elimination of user fees, linguistically and culturally appropriate programming and publicity, antiracism training for recreation staff, and women-only sports and fitness activities; a multilingual information cam-

paign to increase access to all city services and programs; a public health review of the issues women of colour face in accessing health services; and support for a community-based, cross-cultural women's social planning body mandated to address the cross-cutting needs of low-income, racialized and marginalized women.

OUTCOMES AT CITY HALL

The report's findings and recommendations were supported in principle by City Council's Policy and Finance Committee in July 2004 and each of the recommendations was sent to their appropriate committee for implementation and, where necessary, consideration for funding under the 2005 budget process. During this period, a coalition of women's advocates met with the Mayor's office, City Councilors, and senior bureaucrats to follow up on the recommendations. At minimum, the report succeeded in drawing attention to the issues and sparking some long overdue discussion of the situation of low-income women of colour in Toronto. As predicted, in most cases the interest was short-lived and tended to ebb and flow in tandem with the extent of media coverage.

The issue of systemic racism against people of colour on the transit system generated the biggest controversy. Transit management and the union representing operators reacted vehemently and defensively, denying any possibility of racist practices and painting themselves as the victims of aggressive and violent riders. The call for an inquiry into systemic discrimination was initially supported by members of the Transit Commission, but was ultimately eclipsed by budget considerations and calls for federal and provincial governments to address the lack of funding for the system.

The greatest resistance came from the City's Parks and Recreation Department, which was unresponsive. It continues to plan and deliver services in a largely gender- and class-neutral framework, bypassing the specific needs and experiences of low-income women. As a result of priorities set by the Mayor's office, some attention is being directed toward immigrant communities and young people, but overall, the framework remains focused on revenue generation through the charging of fees, creating "efficiencies" and privatizing programming.

In other areas, there has been some openness to the implications of the report. The City's Public Health Department has taken steps toward a review of systemic barriers to health services for women of colour. The Community and Neighbourhood Services Department is considering funding a pilot project for a women's house in one neighbourhood, and City Council has acknowledged the need to improve housing standards. Unfortunately, the fierce competition for funds and turf wars among mainstream, professionalized advocacy groups have

effectively sidelined the proposal for a cross-cultural women's social planning council.

OUTCOMES IN THE COMMUNITY

Some of the women who were involved in the action-research phase are now working toward the establishment of a pilot project for a community-based women's house in one of the city's poorest neighbourhoods. The hope is that this will become the prototype for a series of similar community-run spaces for women of colour across the city.

In spite of the resistance, the report *If Low Income Women of Colour Counted in Toronto* has functioned much as it was intended: as a scattering of seeds, which should, over time, take root and emerge in new organizational and political forms. Women's and other grassroots groups have shown great interest in its findings and continue to request speakers and workshops on the issues it has raised. Interest in the report has extended beyond the boundaries of the city, the province of Ontario and Canada.

It is important to note that in spite of these successes, and given that there has been little change in the overall economic and policy climate, the women whose experiences and ideas are at the heart of the report remain in fundamentally the same position as before.

BROADER IMPLICATIONS

The situation of women of colour in Toronto as documented in this case study points to the emergence of an effective divide in social citizenship in Western urban space. The women find themselves in a paradox that operates on many levels. On the one hand, they are isolated, immobile, marginalized and abused. But they are also performing crucial social functions, ensuring the daily sustenance, health and basic survival of their families and communities. Neoliberal globalization and its resultant race, gender and economic polarization make the women critical, but invisible, players in Western economic and social life.

Two-tiered social citizenship *inside* the West is most visibly enforced at the national level. Laws and policies governing refugee determination, immigration procedures, border controls, national security and formal citizenship requirements have been tightening in recent years. This was occurring both prior to, but also as a result of, the anti-terrorism measures introduced in the wake of the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center in New York.

But as the case study and a growing school of urban research reveal, the lines of social control, so explicit at the national level, have simultaneously been intensify-

ing in cities and surrounding urban regions. Through multiple processes of privatization, criminalization, racialized and gendered forms of segregation and re-segregation are creating implicit divisions between enfranchised and disenfranchised urban residents.

When women cannot get jobs or access community services and supports, are not mobile and do not speak English, experience race and gender discrimination in public space, and abuse in the home, the resulting isolation has deep social and political implications. The lack of access to public life and to social, economic and personal security amounts to a disconnection from public life. This privatization of their existence is an extension of the overall processes of privatization central to the current conjuncture.

PRIVATIZATION

Privatization is a key manifestation of the steady shift away from the Keynesian welfare state towards the “free market” orientation of globalized neoliberalism. The retreat of governments from public investments in social reproduction and collective responsibility for general welfare has meant privatization and spending cutbacks, which have reduced the availability of social assistance, healthcare, public housing, public transit, legal aid, public space, and community services and supports at all levels of governance.

These rollbacks in social services and programs shift responsibility onto “families,” and the work defaults to women who are forced to pick up the slack. The critical, health, eldercare, childcare and social support functions no longer provided by the state do not disappear; they become unpaid work and underpaid jobs performed mainly by women of colour (Bakker and Gill, 2003).

This silent offloading of social functions onto the shoulders of multiply marginalized women was strongly corroborated in the findings of our project. Across Toronto, in all neighbourhoods, residents, community workers, and advocates echoed each other with stories of women juggling the demands of poorly paid jobs, raising children, caring for aged and ill family members, while negotiating with sexist and racist authorities and institutions without legal social support for their own health, sanity or well-being.

Nearly all the women we met were either unemployed or underemployed. For them, a secure connection to the workforce would be a privilege. Sponsored immigrants have no independent incomes at all. As access to paid work becomes the purview of a shrinking section of the population, daily survival itself is becoming privatized.

Women of colour are finding themselves effectively relegated back into the domestic space. They have little time to go outdoors, cannot afford transit and even if they make the time and find the money, there are few welcoming community and public spaces.

Public space, services and programs are being effectively closed off to large sections of the population. Where they still exist, accessibility is sharply reduced either by user fees, limited availability, narrow eligibility criteria, lack of information, or systemic discrimination. Many women are bypassed by a simple lack of information. They don't know that recreation centres, daycare subsidies, and other programs even exist in their neighbourhoods or are surprised to learn that they can use these services. Racism, dehumanization and a rising authoritarian culture are yet another barrier.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE

Privatization does not always take the obvious form of a wholesale sell-off of public assets to the private sector. Public-private-partnerships (PPP's), in which the public takes on much of the financial risk of an enterprise, while handing over management and governance functions to arms-length organizations, are increasingly popular.¹⁵ Decision-making is taken out of the realm of public institutions (Swngedouw, 2000). Non-profit "civil society" organizations are also being utilized as low-cost alternatives to government-run social programs. They are rarely provided with the funds required to adequately operate the services they are contracted to provide. In a bid to save programs that might otherwise be completely eliminated, they find themselves becoming private non-profit managers of under-funded services dependent on large amounts of volunteer labour. Although they are arguably closer to communities in some respects, these groups have less public accountability requirements than the public sector. As Lake and Newman point out in their work on the "shadow state":

While the growing size and importance of the not-for-profit sector have been widely noted, less attention has been focused on the implications of this trend for meaning and consequences of citizenship. If non-profit institutions are increasingly assuming functions of the state but access to, and participation in the shadow state are unevenly distributed, the result may be selective disenfranchisement or differential citizenship. Furthermore the negative effects of such differential citizenship are likely to fall most directly on those segments of the population that are most dependent on the

¹⁵ According to UN Habitat's *State of the World's Cities, 2001*, 63% of the world's cities have established public-private partnerships since 1996.

services and functions that have been transferred from the state to the non-profit sector. (Lake and Newman, 2002:09)

Differential citizenship is as much an issue for “civil society” groups as it is for the State. In Toronto, the climate of funding cuts has contributed to a competitive culture among community agencies. As the political and practical stakes rise, trade unions and social service agencies with a stable resource base have become *the* influential community voices at the table. Transparent and democratic practices within the social justice sector are too often bypassed and justified in the name of protecting the integrity and survival of the organizations. Discussions of differential impacts of social, political and economic development on women and racialized groups are viewed as divisive and threatening to the survival of the community sector.

The expansion of this shadow state facilitates, albeit unwittingly, the rise of the authoritarian state and the shift in public spending from social security to hard security. In varying degrees, Western governments at all levels have reallocated public resources and priorities towards policing, border controls, the military, intelligence and, more recently, anti-terrorism initiatives.

CRIMINALIZATION

Increasing criminalization of poor people, racialized people and women is shrinking the very definition of who constitutes the deserving “public.” Stigmatization of low-income neighbourhoods in the press feeds the impression that crime is increasing in Toronto, even as statistics indicate otherwise. Police boosters have used “fear of crime” to justify American-style pre-emptive policing initiatives aimed at stopping crime before it happens. In spite of ongoing denials by police officials and conservative politicians, racial profiling and discrimination by Toronto police is now well documented. Targeted policing initiatives in low-income, tourist, and business areas of the city involve regular sweeps of poor and homeless people from parks, unjustified stops of young people of colour, as well as raids on bars in the gay district of the city. In 2002, *The Toronto Star*, the city’s mainstream daily newspaper, used police data obtained through a Freedom of Information request to document widespread practices of racial profiling by Toronto police. A subsequent report by the Ontario Human Rights Commission corroborates this and documents numerous cases of racist policing. Somali, Caribbean and South Asian women fear for their children who experience a constant threat of police harassment in their neighbourhoods (Khosla, 2003:74-75).

Western cities have been incubators for the introduction of law and order initiatives. The “broken windows” theory, which advocates pre-emptive policing

through aggressive prosecution of smaller crimes in order to deter larger ones,¹⁶ has become the basis of a number of urban policing initiatives around the world. It was the driving force behind former New York Mayor Rudy Guiliani's much touted "zero tolerance" initiative. It swept the city streets of homeless people, squeegee youth and poor people of colour to clear the path for urban gentrification and re-development. Now Western city mayors, including London's "red" Ken Livingstone, are using zero tolerance as the basis of stepped-up law enforcement strategies.¹⁷ As urban scholar Neil Smith warns:

The danger is that the New York Model will, as in the 1970's, become the template for a global, postliberal revanchism that may exact revenge against different social groups in different places, doing so with different intensities and taking quite different forms. (Smith, 2001:73)

Law and order practices extend beyond the police. The discourse of criminalization classifies people into "worthy" and "unworthy" citizens, regardless of their formal status. In Toronto, it is apparent that those implicitly and explicitly deemed unworthy are those who are poor, unemployed, or welfare recipients. They are backed by a range of policies that bolster the punitive powers of authorities in all spheres of social interaction. People of colour, women, the homeless and the poor are assumed to be criminals and thieves by a growing range of people they encounter. From welfare workers, to Parks and Recreation staff, transit operators and front-line community workers, the role of public and government intermediaries has shifted from closing or bridging social gaps to enforcing and policing them.

The lines of assumed criminality are the contours of a two-tiered citizenship emerging in Toronto. This second tier of citizens is made up of immigrants, black people, people who do not speak fluent or unaccented English, or are of non-European heritage, young people, women and single mothers.

Harsh policing, social security cuts and privatizations are rolling back the rights and concessions won by the anti-racist, feminist, third world liberation and class-based social movements of the fifties and sixties. As the Toronto case reveals, the result has been to effectively disenfranchise large segments of diverse, vulnerable and disadvantaged populations in Western cities, to the benefit and enrichment of a shrinking elite.

Campaigns for democratization that do not acknowledge, address and account for these deeply embedded realities are unlikely to result in real transformations. As key players in the new paradigm of survival, low-income women of colour are

¹⁶ Developed by James Q. Wilson and George Kelling, and first published as an article in *The Atlantic*, in March 1982.

¹⁷ *The Economist*, February 19, 2004.

critical to any project seeking the democratization of Western cities. The need to engage them and their eagerness to participate is evident in our case study. It remains for those who have the organizing capacity to take up the call. As the report concludes:

The need for proactive approaches in the city has never been greater. Inequality based on race and gender is not new. But in the past fifteen years feminized and racialized poverty and segregation have created a ballooning underclass in Toronto—one that is falling out of the democratic processes of both decision-making and community resistance. Only a concerted effort for meaningful action by policy-makers, analysts, advocates and residents can reverse the trend.

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