



**Réseau d'action  
pour l'égalité des femmes  
immigrées et racisées du Québec**

# CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

**FACING DISCRIMINATION  
AND RACISM AS A WOMAN.  
HOW TO OVERCOME IT.**

September 23rd, 2022

**ITHQ**

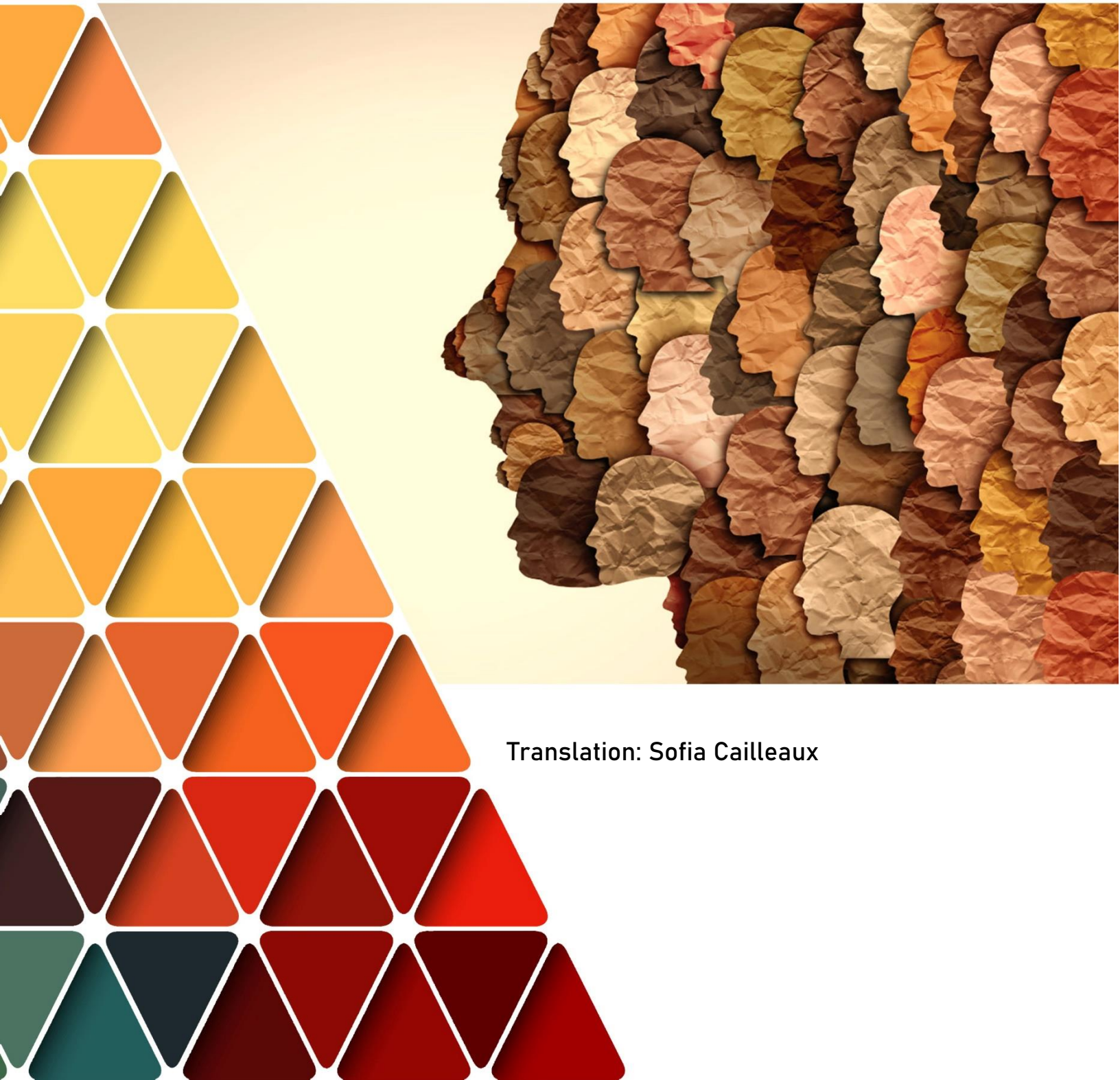


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## INTRODUCTION

According to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, from la Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse du Québec (CDPDJ) :

Discrimination is defined as :

"A distinction, exclusion or preference that has the effect of nullifying or impairing the right to equality". As the CDPDJ stated in its Consultation report on racial profiling and its consequences, "Discrimination is generally fueled by stereotypes and prejudices, conscious or not, which disqualify or stigmatize individuals because of their color, their appearance or belonging, real or presumed, in a group."

Discrimination and racism are phenomena that affect communities all over the world and are not more prominent in Quebec than in other communities. Public policy measures have been and are being taken in Quebec and in Canada to fight these issues affecting immigrant and racialized populations. Yet, there is still much to do, notably regarding the women who belong to certain groups that face these issues.

Racism and discrimination in all forms, are notable in different fields, such as employment, education, health, as well as access to housing. These fields were maintained in the tools developed by the RAFIQ and from which we draw inspiration in this text. During this conference, we will always and more particularly focus on these sectors.

## Access to Employment

Access to employment is a real challenge for immigrant and racialized women. The employment rate of immigrant women who arrived more than 5 years ago (76,3%) remains lower than that of native women (85,6%).

"The Statistical Institute of Quebec, in its study on the Participation of immigrants in the labor market in Quebec in 2009 confirmed that, throughout Canada, it is in Quebec that the financial situation of immigrants is the least favorable and that it is immigrant women who are at the bottom of the scale."

Multiple factors limit access to employment for immigrant and racialized women, including non-recognition of qualifications acquired outside Quebec.

"In 2005, a survey conducted by Statistics Canada among immigrant women revealed that 37% of them identified the non-recognition of foreign qualifications and skills as well as the difficulties of access to a first work experience on Canadian soil as major obstacles to their inclusion in the labor market. In 2006, the deskilling rate of immigrants was 42.1%. For immigrant women, the professional devaluation reached 44%."

Moreover, the lack of places in daycare centers at affordable prices for those with children under the age of 5 also limits their availability. Although graduates and accumulating years of work experience in their country of origin, many find themselves in small jobs.

## The Education Sector

As the education system is not the same in all countries, the non-recognition of diplomas obtained elsewhere leads to professional deskilling. It is “.....one of the main factors of the economic inequalities of which immigrants are victims, strongly contributing to certain mechanisms of professional ghettoization experienced by newcomers, and more particularly women. The public debate around the recognition of prior learning and skills (RAC) is often limited to regulated professions and the role of professional orders, whereas it is much broader: it generally affects qualified immigrants, particularly those who hold university degrees, who settle in Quebec, and even more so, immigrant women”.

The comparative evaluation of studies done outside Quebec issued by the Ministère de l'Immigration, de la Francisation et de l'Intégration (MIFI) is not recognized by all employers. A return to school thus becomes a compulsory step and that is what shatters the dream of being able to easily access the labor market by arriving in Quebec as a skilled worker in most cases.

## The Health and Social Services Sector

The death of Joyce Echaquan in a hospital in Joliette, victim of racist remarks before her death, clearly demonstrated the existence of racial discrimination in the health sector and was recognized by the College of Physicians of Quebec.

Several factors were cited as having a negative effect on the health of immigrant and racialized women: violence, poverty, lack of childcare places and affordable housing, etc.

Other factors also hinder access to health:

- Language and cultural barriers were often cited as the main factors that impede immigrant and refugee women's full access to health services and affect the quality of care received.
- This has an effect on “screening, diagnosis, treatment and treatment-related follow-up, as well as treatment adherence.”
- The presence of interpreters, which is not always possible, also affects women's health.

Discrimination and racism also exist in the policies and practices of social services, particularly in relation to child protection, where black children and families are particularly affected. The placement rate of these children would be five times higher than that of other children.

The president of the Special Commission on Children's Rights and Youth Protection, Régine Laurent, expressed her concern about the high rate of reporting of black children to the Department of Youth Protection (DPJ). She said: "The Youth Protection Act has become a law of racist instrumentalization". This situation is very serious when we know of the low chances that these children have of leaving the reception circuit. (Le Devoir, January 11th, 2020)

## Housing

The Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms prohibits discrimination in housing. A landlord cannot refuse a tenant on the grounds of "race", colour, ethnic or national origin, or even language.

Despite the existence of these clauses and organizations campaigning for universal access to housing, discrimination and racism in housing do exist in practice.

Access to housing for immigrant and racialized women is a sociopolitical issue of paramount importance. Obtaining a first home is not always easy for these women, as they are often refused. Prejudices sometimes lead owners to conclude that immigrant women have large families and will therefore make a lot of noise or that their cooking will have a strong smell.

According to the Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse (CDPDJ), the housing crisis in Montreal has aggravated discrimination and racism in terms of access to housing. The number of complaints of discrimination when looking for accommodation is on the rise, although these cases are not always reported by the victims.

In addition, immigrants are more at risk of living in unsanitary or overcrowded housing because of their difficulty in finding employment or having a suitable income. This housing-related discrimination is also practiced at the level of the residential area.

In conclusion, it is clear that racism and systemic discrimination have a negative impact on the quality of life of the victims and prevent the development of their full potential. They also prevent living together and social cohesion.

We hope that this colloquium will, above all, make it possible to bring forward new solutions or recommendations, in order to remedy these phenomena and thus encourage all groups in society to live in a society free of discrimination and racism.



## OPENING



The opening of the conference began with the speech of Mrs. Christella THICAYA, president of the RAFIQ board of directors and mistress of ceremonies. She recalled at the beginning of her speech that the symposium was held in hybrid mode (face-to-face and virtual). She, on behalf of the RAFIQ, welcomed everyone present, especially those who came from outside Montreal. She thanked the Department of Women and Gender Equality Canada, a financial partner without which this colloquium would not have been possible and asked the participants to give each of the activities sustained attention and effort.

She underlined the presence of the panelists for honoring the RAFIQ by agreeing to participate in the conference and to share their experiences and analyzes with the participants.

She then presented the RAFIQ and its mission. The RAFIQ, she said, is a non-profit organization founded in 2011 on a feminist approach adapted to the reality of immigrant and racialized women in Quebec.

The organization's mission is to:

- defend the rights of immigrant and racialized women from a feminist perspective and based on values of equality between women and men,
- fight against all forms of violence, discrimination, exclusion and racism and find the means to put an end to it,
- promote dialogue between immigrant and racialized women in Quebec, develop empowerment practices and tools adapted to the needs of these women,
- undertake and support any activity promoting the equality of immigrant and racialized women in Quebec,
- better understand the migratory paths and the experience of immigrant women in Quebec in order to create spaces for speaking out and defining specific demands,
- promote leadership to ensure the participation of immigrant and racialized women as full-fledged citizens. And finally,
- develop and strengthen solidarity with Indigenous women, Quebecers, and women of all origins.

Finally, she invited Mrs. Michelle HANGNILO, project manager at RAFIQ, to present the progress of the activities of the project within the framework of which it is part..

Taking the floor, Mrs. Michelle HANGNILO recalled that this symposium is part of the project entitled *“Develop and strengthen the leadership of immigrant and racialized women to fight against discrimination and racism”* currently led by the RAFIQ.

Discrimination and racism, she continued, are phenomena that affect all societies in the world and Quebec is no exception. Quebec is not a more racist society than others.



Discrimination, she explained, is defined as *"a phenomenon that is fueled by stereotypes and prejudices, conscious or not, which disqualify or stigmatize individuals because of their color, their appearance or belonging, real or presumed, in a group."*<sup>1</sup>

As for racism, "it consists in defining a group by natural attributes, in deducing from its intellectual and moral characteristics which are valid for each of the members of this whole, no matter their actions and their will, and in possibly extending these representations by practices of inferiorization or exclusion."<sup>2</sup>

In the execution of the project, several steps were taken, including:

- the establishment of an advisory committee,
- the design of two awareness tools,
- the launch of the tools,
- the organization of several workshops,
- the organization of this conference which will lead to an advocacy plan.

The symposium will focus on four sectors or themes that will help us do a synopsis of the situation, conduct reflections, and formulate recommendations on the topics of:

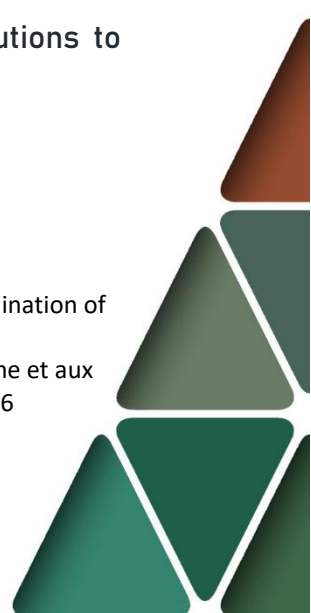
- 1- Discrimination in employment
- 2- Discrimination in education
- 3- Discrimination in access to health and social services and finally,
- 4- Discrimination in access to housing.

Finally, Mrs. Michelle HANGNILO made a point of recalling that the objective of this colloquium is not to propose new means, particularly legal ones, to counter discrimination and racism, since they already exist, but to propose new solutions to mitigate the phenomenon in our society.

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<sup>1</sup> Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse, Racial Profiling and Systemic Discrimination of Racialized Youth, Consultation report on racial profiling and its consequences, pp.14-15;2011

<sup>2</sup> Micheline Labelle : Un lexique du racisme, « Étude sur les définitions opérationnelles relatives au racisme et aux phénomènes connexes » P33. Center for Research on Immigration, Ethnicity and Citizenship (CRIEC), 2006



## PLENARY

The objective of the plenary presentations was to do a situational analysis in the sectors of employment, education, health and social services, housing and to promote solutions.

## CONFERENCE 1: ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT

During the first conference by Marie-Thérèse CHICHA, PhD, economist and full professor at the School of Industrial Relations of the University of Montreal, access to employment was discussed, which is a crucial issue. According to the statistical data presented by the speaker, the education rate of immigrant women in the economic immigration category represents 70.7% compared to natives of Quebec or Canada. Unfortunately the labor market indicators do not coincide.

The participation rate of immigrant women is low (62%) compared to immigrant men (73%). The conditions for entering the labor market are still not favorable to immigrant women, yet it is an available workforce. In 2020, the unemployment rate for immigrant women reached 12% compared to 7% for native women.

Systemic discrimination, far from being a system organized to harm, is *"a set of practices, behaviors, texts having a disadvantageous effect to certain people voluntarily or involuntarily"*<sup>3</sup>

Immigrant women are disadvantaged in the labor market because of persistent deskilling depending on whether they come from a country in the South or from a developed country. To Madame Thérèse CHICHA, deskilling "happens when a person with a certain diploma is forced to accept a job without a diploma requirement or even without a diploma."<sup>4</sup>

All the studies conducted here in Quebec or in other countries show that the immigration process is unfavorable to women. Thus, in the host country, some find themselves in lower economic situations than in their country of origin. It should be noted that 60% of immigrants from developed countries are more likely to get a first job compared to those from southern countries.

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<sup>3</sup> Oral presentation Marie-Thérèse CHICHA of September 23, 2022, RAFIQ Colloquium

<sup>4</sup> Oral Presentation Marie-Thérèse CHICHA, RAFIQ Colloquium September 23, 2022

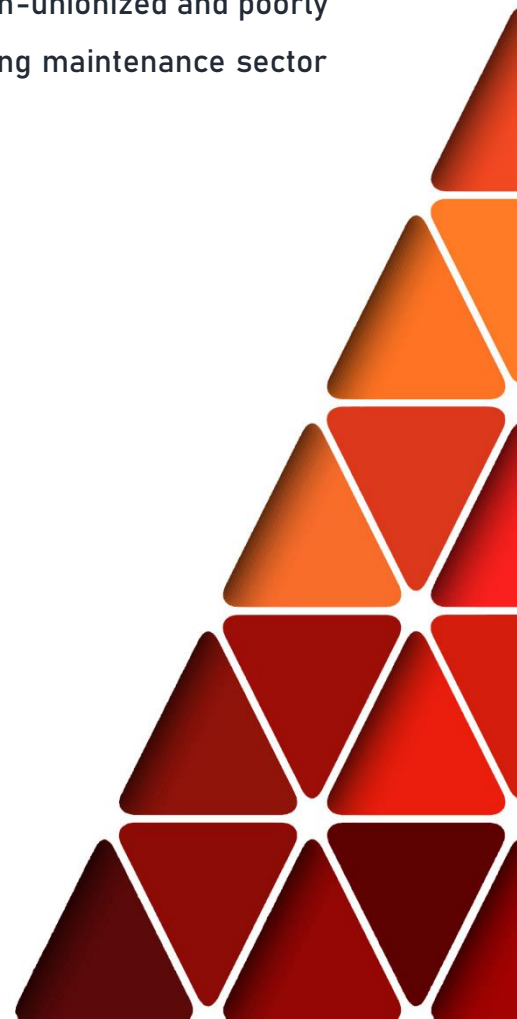


Three important actors participate in or maintain systemic discrimination: employers, universities and Cégep and close or extended family.

Although the labor problem is acute in Quebec, universities are still hesitant to offer bridging courses, which contributes to accentuating discrimination. Immigrant women sometimes find themselves accepting either short-term training that does not correspond to their profiles, forcing them to undergo deskilling, or having to return to school.

Another form of racism we call "modern racism" where during recruitment, the recruiter declares that they are not racist since he knows that it is punishable by law. But when the time comes to recruit, he will find a subtle way to dismiss the candidate.

Other significant factors such as the overqualification of immigrant women, the Quebec or Canadian experience required when hiring, the long and costly accessibility to professional orders and wage discrimination are all challenges faced by immigrant women. Despite having graduated and accumulated years of work experience in their country of origin, many women find themselves in precarious non-unionized and poorly paid jobs as educators in CPE, cashiers, in the household/building maintenance sector or others, offered by placement agencies.



Finally, Ms. CHICHA makes several proposals, urging:

- *Decision-makers to modify existing laws and policies in this area and ensure that they are properly applied;*
- *For a collective awareness of the true existence of systemic discrimination and racism;*
- *For an increase in funding for programs that favor immigrant and racialized women;*
- *To fix the wage gap, regardless of the origin of the worker;*
- *To put in place coercive measures for the application of Access and Equal Employment Programs.*



## CONFERENCE 2: ACCESS TO EDUCATION

This conference presented by Katia ATIF, Executive Director of Action Travail des femmes (ATF) was partially related to the one presented by Mrs. CHICHA on employment. To Ms. ATIF, the socio-political debate surrounding the concept of systemic racism in Quebec leads to another problem. In fact, according to her, certain militant actors, many stakeholders, and immigrant and racialized women have unfortunately interpreted this public debate as a real refusal by the Quebec State to effectively recognize systemic discrimination.

In addition, a significant number of stakeholders and immigrant and racialized women feel that they have no recourse against systemic discrimination, which is not the case. Therefore it is important to educate, inform and sensitize immigrant women on the legislative means that are already in place.

To better understand the means available to immigrant women in Quebec who are victims of discrimination or racism, Ms. Katia Atif addressed five (5) main points:

### 1- The Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms

In fact, anyone who is victim of direct, indirect or systemic discrimination in the context of a hiring process or even while in employment has a right of recourse. Systemic discrimination is legally recognized and has enabled many people who have been victims of it on the basis of Article 10 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms to file a complaint with the Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse of Quebec (CDPDJ)

### 2- Act Respecting Equal Access to Employment

The Act Respecting Equal Access is an important Quebec legal framework put together to counter the systemic discrimination experienced by women, visible and ethnic





minority persons, Aboriginal peoples and persons with disabilities in their access to Civil Service. This law is under the responsibility of the Commission for Human Rights and Youth Rights. It requires the institutional employer to ensure fair representation in the Civil Service, with equal competence, of the groups covered by the Act Respecting Equal Access. These are laws that exist, but the main problem arises in their application. This is why immigrant women must be informed of their rights.

### 3- Pay Equity Act

The Pay Equity Act is also a legal framework that acts to counter systemic discrimination, particularly the unequal pay for women. Any woman can assert her right with the Pay Equity Commission when she is in a situation in which there is inequity in wages.

### 4- Recognition of Foreign Learning and Skills

A majority of immigrant women settled in Quebec often hold university degrees. But once there, these immigrant women are faced with the problem of recognition of prior learning and skills. The Ministère de l'Immigration, de la Francisation et de l'Intégration, responsible for issuing the comparative evaluation of studies outside Quebec, is unfortunately not on the same wavelength as universities and employers. Finally, the equivalence certificate issued is not recognized by the various levels of education and some employers. Going back to school becomes the only alternative to access the labor market.

Note that there is, however, an Adult Education and Continuing Education Policy which seems to be a shortcut towards the labor market. Part 4 of this policy showcases principles and mechanisms for the recognition of foreign diplomas.



## 5- The Issue of Enforcing Frameworks and Access to Justice

Unfortunately, even if, in principle, Quebec has an arsenal of legal frameworks and public policies at its forefront to counter systemic discrimination, it is often the organizations responsible for applying them that restrict their deployment. There is also the issue of underfunding of the CDPDJ and the Human Rights Tribunal, which prevents these institutions from resolving effectively and within acceptable timeframes, issues of discrimination in the labor market.

Despite an efficient and guaranteed legal arsenal, by articles 10, 10.1, 16, 18, 18.1, 18.2, 19 and 49 of the Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms, the diversity of the individual and systemic spheres of action of the Commission and the Human Rights Tribunal, all women and particularly immigrant and racialized women tend to underuse the legal resources guaranteeing their rights to equality in employment.

The legal analysis framework based on the fundamental rights of a specialized court responsible for enforcing texts and laws and endowed with the power to put an end to violations is essential for the achievement of de facto equality between men and women on the labor market, and to fight against all forms of discrimination in employment. Despite a structural weakening due to historical policies of rigor and budgetary austerity, the scope of the Charter and its quasi-constitutional character must prevail over any other prerogative. The lack of resources deprives the CDPDJ of the ability to act more actively on the discriminatory organization of labor against immigrant and racialized women.



In light of the above, Ms. Katia ATIF made various recommendations and presented courses of action aimed at strengthening legal frameworks and public policies to counter systemic discrimination.

- *Strongly apply the policy of adult education and continuing education to the recognition of foreign diplomas by universities in Quebec*
- *Allow immigrants to benefit from bridges in universities or internships in companies or in institutions corresponding to their basic training, which would considerably reduce the unemployment rate and the lack of labor*
- *Broaden the scope of the Act Respecting Equal Access to Employment for government departments*
- *Strongly enforce the Act Respecting Equal Access to Employment aimed at institutions*
- *Increase the resources aimed at organizations supporting immigrant women in their efforts to find employment and in the process of getting their prior knowledge and skills recognized*
- *Increase resources in fundamental and labor rights education meant for immigrant women*
- *Reduce processing times for employment discrimination complaints by the Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse.*



## CONFERENCE 3 : INTERSECTIONALITY

For Ms. Nabila BOUCHALA, lecturer in the sociology department and at the media school at UQAM, PhD candidate in sociology:

*"Intersectionality is a concept used in sociology and political reflection that designates the situation of people who simultaneously experience several forms of oppression or discrimination in a society".* Starting from the definition of intersectionality, Ms. BOUCHALA, in a methodical and scientific approach, highlighted the different forms of domination and discrimination suffered by immigrant and racialized women in Quebec.

These women suffer both from the weight of the host society on the socio-economic and political level, but also from subordination when they immigrate, for example, under the sponsorship of their spouses. Thus, once in Quebec, despite their high professional qualification, these women devote their time to the education of children, while the spouse follows his path of professional requalification.

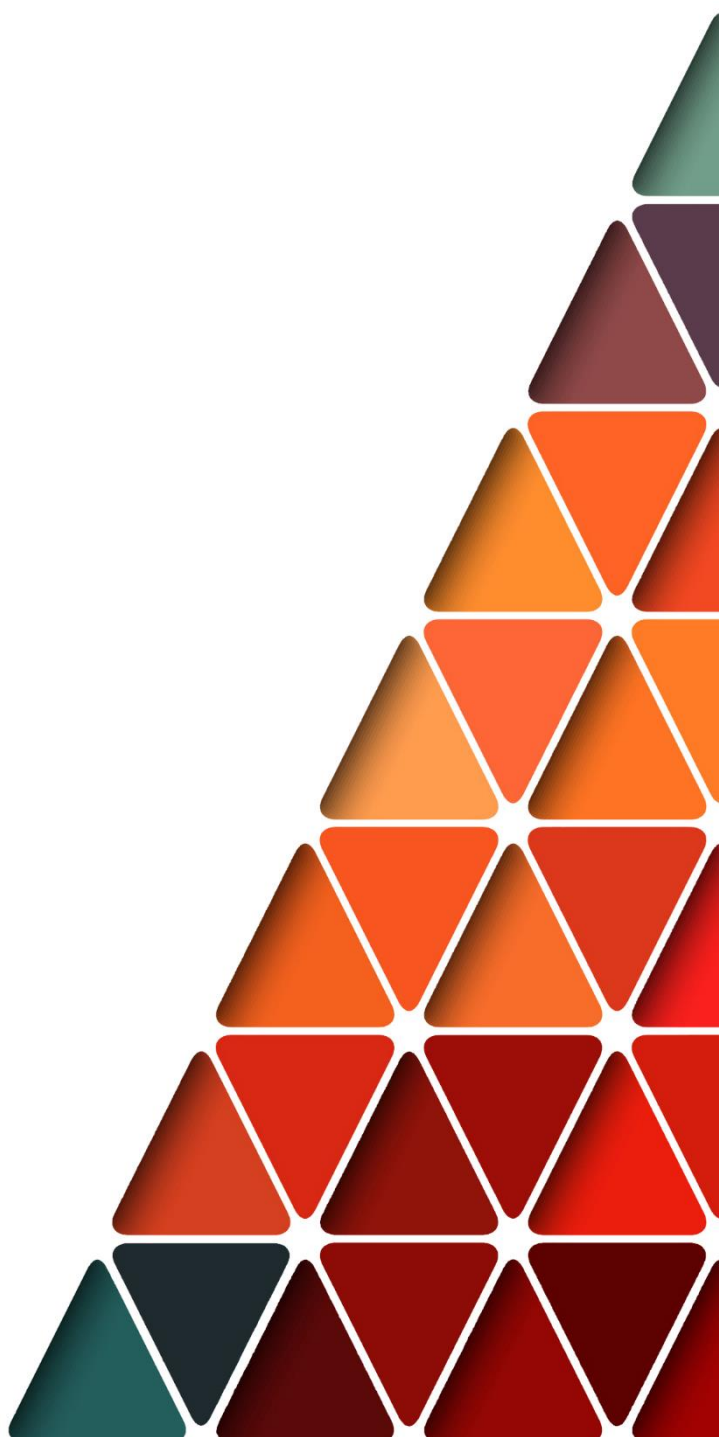
In the host society, most of these women experience direct discrimination in companies if they are employed, in public transport, and even in housing. All these cases are punishable by law, but one needs to know their rights in order to take advantage of them. Some of them had the courage to react and obtained compensation, but others prefer to remain silent and suffer these situations.

The most difficult cases to resolve are those of women who also experience discrimination within their community. The situations of discrimination that immigrant women experience are so diverse and varied that any attempt to draw up an inventory would risk ignoring areas not explored by community organizations and activists.;

This is the case for women who exclude themselves from society under the injunction of patriarchal power within their communities. The weight of patriarchy is another major issue in the fight against discrimination and racism that must not be disregarded if we wish to put an end to this evil that is eating away at society.

Ms BOUCHALA suggests:

- *A clear position in the intersectional analysis that would help further the discussion concerning issues faced by immigrant and racialized women*
- *To consider the subordination of women within the patriarchal system dominating within their community*
- *Identify more situations of oppression experienced by immigrant and racialized women, which are intertwined in the social system and lead to the weakening of these women's ability to take action*



## CONFERENCE 4: ACCESS TO HOUSING

Addressing the theme of housing, Mrs. Sev ROVERA and Meriem MOKDAD recalled that the Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms of Quebec prohibits discrimination and racism in the field of housing. According to the speakers, 51% of women are tenants, compared to 32% of men, and spend 30% or more of their income on rent when they are head of their household.

In addition, immigrant women pay almost 12% more for housing than non-immigrant women and 25% of immigrant women renting as the head of their families live in insufficiently sized housing, whereas this is only the case 4% of non-immigrants.

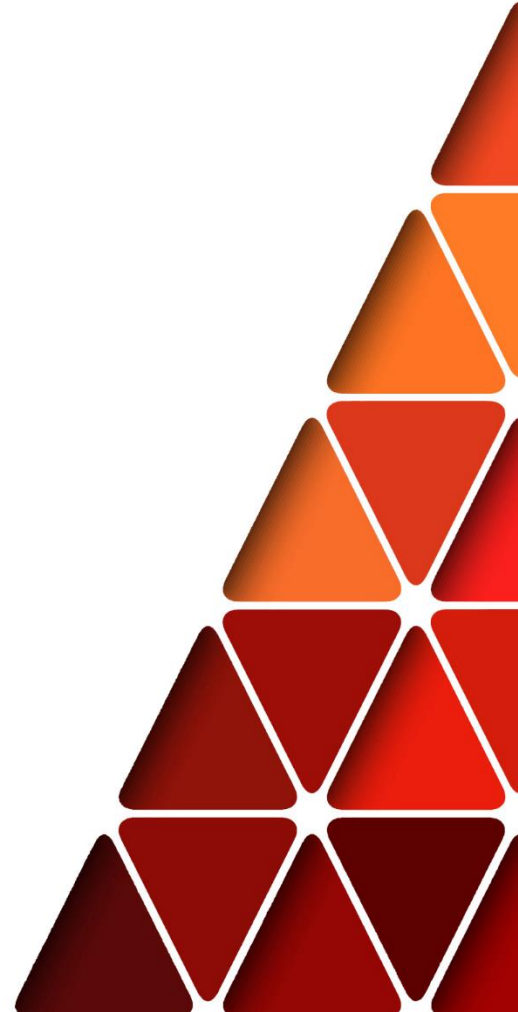
Indigenous, racialized, or disabled women tenants are often victims of discrimination. Access to housing for immigrant and racialized women is a sociopolitical issue of paramount importance. In the search for a first home, immigrant women are faced with many requirements from certain landlords such as credit history, references from a relative or acquaintance, proof of work, family size and gastronomy, which are issues raised to deny them rental.

The lack of funding from the various levels of government (federal, provincial, municipal) and the inadequacy of low-rental housing have aggravated discrimination and racism in access to housing. More and more immigrant women are at risk of living in unsanitary, too small or overcrowded housing. The number of complaints of discrimination when looking for accommodation is on the rise, but due to a lack of information on the rights of immigrant women, these cases are still not reported by the victims.

It is necessary to carry out an in-depth analysis of the supply and demand for housing, and in this case the requests coming from immigrant women who are deprived of reliable information on their housing rights.

The following recommendations were made by the speakers:

- *In the event of discrimination, get help from the Housing Committee in your neighborhood, make a request for intervention or file a complaint with the Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse*
- *Organize consultation and discussion sessions to which immigrant women, politicians, landlord organizations, housing committees would be invited in order to promote the identification of each other's needs*
- *Reduce the administrative burden for local interventions*
- *Increase the number of accessible social housing, especially for women who are victims of violence*
- *Inform newcomers of their rights and duties when looking for housing*



## CONFERENCE 5 : ACCESS TO HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

Mrs. Adina UNGUREANU, coordinator of the Immigration Family Observatory at the Alliance of Cultural Communities for Equality in Health and Social Services (ACCESSS), gave, in her introduction, the definition of health. According to the World Organization Health (WHO): "*Health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.*"<sup>5</sup> However, she reminded that health can be influenced by several factors such as: stress, poverty, disease, precarious social conditions, unemployment, alcoholism, drugs and other harmful substances, and according to her, several immigrant women are affected by one or many of these factors.

According to Mrs. Adina UNGUREANU, to speak of good health, certain conditions must be met, namely:

Income and social status, employment, physical and social environment, healthy child development, personal health practices and coping capacity, availability and access to health services, social support networks. These conditions can be difficult for immigrant women to find, a permanent challenge they face.

Mrs. Adina UNGUREANU cited a few examples: women are more often victims of violence than men within their natural environment and outside of it; women are generally poorer than men; pregnancies and family obligations often prevent women from having access to promotions; twice as many women will experience severe depression in their lifetime due to stress and overwork compared to men.

Immigrant women are often informed through pamphlets of the steps to obtain care during their first visit to a CLSC or a walk-in clinic. However, gynecology-obstetrics services are not offered in these places.

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<sup>5</sup> Oral presentation by Adina UNGUREANU RAFIQ conference of September 23, 2022



The issue of mental health remains a taboo in many cultures. In addition, mental health services are difficult to access (long waiting list, difficulty of access due to immigration status or language, lack of available interpreter).

Many immigrant women turn to organizations such as Doctors of the World or community organizations for the management of their health.

It is important to note that health and social services in Quebec are accessible to anyone with permanent residence, or at least the Quebec selection certificate giving the right to the Quebec health insurance card.

Speaker's Recommendations:

- *Provide CLSCs and care clinics with interpreters to facilitate communication between caregivers and users,*
- *Establish an intercultural approach in health and social services*
- *Enable universal access to health services*

## DISCUSSION WORKSHOPS



Four simultaneous workshops focusing on the recommended solutions and recommendations took place in the afternoon. They were articulated around the themes: Discrimination in employment; Discrimination in education; Discrimination in access to health and social services; and finally, Discrimination in access to housing.

## WORKSHOP 1: DISCRIMINATION IN EMPLOYMENT

The first discussion workshop was led by Ms. Guerda Amazan and reported by Ms. Leila Cantave. The discussions revolved around actual cases or reported cases of discrimination in employment. Ms. Amazan pointed out that systemic discrimination against immigrant women is a deep evil that affects all spheres of society, business, the education sector and the family. In companies, there are wage gaps, job insecurity and the lack of representation of immigrant women at the level of decision-making.

When hiring, not all employers recognize the comparative evaluation of studies completed and skills acquired outside Quebec. Deskilling explains the overrepresentation of immigrant women in menial jobs. The lack of childcare spaces was also mentioned as another structural barrier. Direct discrimination in connection with the names of candidates on CVs (which reflect ethnic origin) is a real issue experienced by immigrant women. In many cases, the selection is biased, as the choice of the candidate is made not on the basis of her skills, but on her name.

### Recommendations :

- *Amend or adjust existing laws on PAEEs (Equal Access to Employment Programs)*
- *Increase funding for programs that support equitable employment integration*
- *Form joint committees within companies for fair and equitable decisions*
- *Put in place mechanisms for the recognition of acquired knowledge and skills at the level of the educational institutions*
- *Set up a counseling system (ministry/community organizations) from the country of origin to prepare immigration candidates for employment challenges*



## WORKSHOP 2: DISCRIMINATION IN EDUCATION

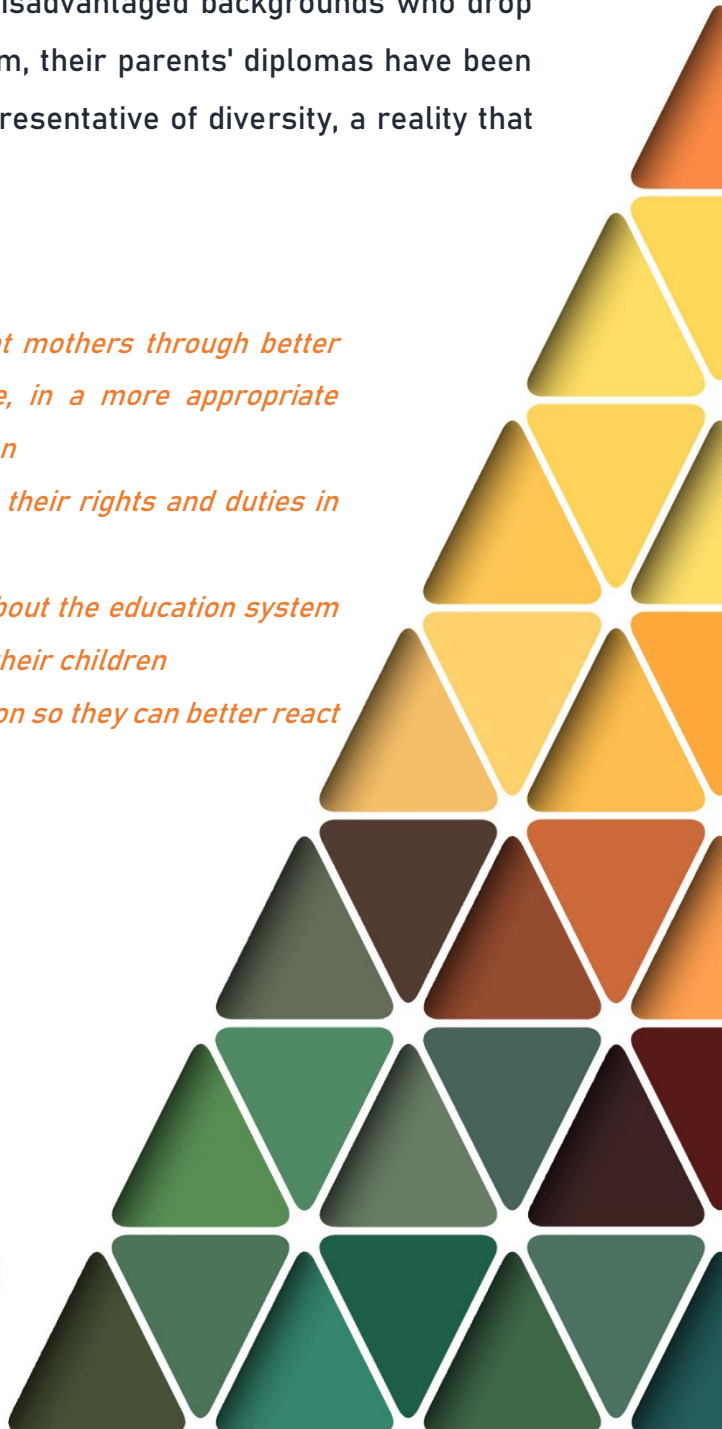
The workshop was led by Mrs. Elvira Kamara and reported by Mrs. Lovely Médé Odigé. The discussions revolved around actual cases or reported cases.

Systematic deskilling and the non-recognition of prior learning and qualifications force immigrant women to either go back to school or to stay at home to take care of their children. During this time, the man continues his professional career without too many constraints.

This situation affects certain young people from disadvantaged backgrounds who drop out of the education system early, because to them, their parents' diplomas have been useless. School staff in some schools are not representative of diversity, a reality that destabilizes some children.

### Recommendations:

- *Anticipate the non-employability of immigrant mothers through better training of teachers able to help them face, in a more appropriate manner, the multiple challenges of immigration*
- *Educate, inform and sensitize newcomers on their rights and duties in the host country*
- *Raise awareness among immigrant women about the education system in the host country in order to better support their children*
- *Sensitize children to the reality of discrimination so they can better react to discriminatory acts.*



## WORKSHOP 3: DISCRIMINATION IN HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

The workshop is led by Ms. Maguy Metellus and reported by Ms. Lyse Farah Gélin. The discussions revolved around actual cases or reported cases.

The participants confirm that several factors have a negative effect on the health of immigrant and racialized women: domestic violence, poverty, alcoholism and the lack of affordable housing.

Other factors also hinder access to quality care, such as: linguistic (lack of interpreters) and cultural (women who refuse to be examined by a man) barriers, the distance between the residence of the immigrant woman and care clinics. Some participants reported being victims of prejudice and discriminatory remarks. Reference was made to the 2020 death of Joyce Echaquan in a hospital, the victim of racist remarks before her death.

### Recommendations :

- *Educate care providers on intercultural realities (doctors, nurses and other caregivers)*
- *Accept differences (other cultures, other mores) in order to live together in harmony*
- *Integrating a transversal intercultural approach into medical training.*



## WORKSHOP 4 : DISCRIMINATION IN HOUSING

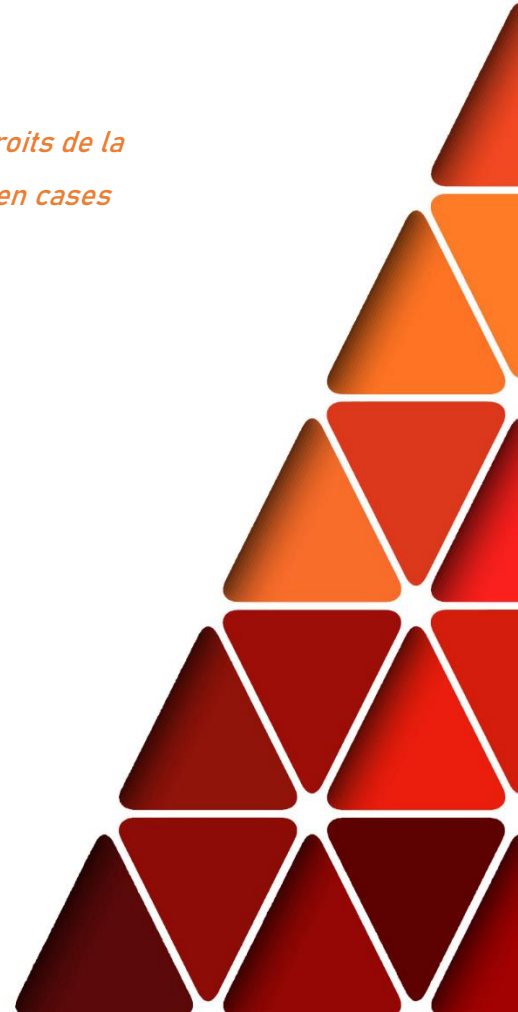
The workshop is led by Ms. Carminda Mac-Lorin and reported by Ms. Maïka Espérance. The discussions revolved around actual cases or reported cases.

Discrimination in housing is prohibited in Quebec. However, some landlords refuse to rent their apartments to immigrant women who are doubly affected by this reality. Several reasons are put forward by the owners such as the size of the family (the number of children), cooking smells, religion, etc. In some cases, the discrimination comes after the signing of the lease. The owner, to evict the tenant, refuses to make repairs. With the housing crisis in Montreal, discrimination has worsened.

Owners are more selective. Some listings specify “Cultural communities abstain”. Also, due to a lack of financial means, families find themselves in housing that is too small and unsanitary.

### Recommendations:

- *Inform future tenants of their housing rights and obligations*
- *Inform newcomers of the existence of Neighborhood Housing Committees*
- *Do not hesitate to file a complaint with the Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse in the presence of proven cases of discrimination*



## CLOSING



### Motion of Thanks

Ms. Christella TCHICAYA, President of the RAFIQ Board of Directors, thanked the Department of Women and Gender Equality Canada for its financial support for this conference, which focused on one of the major themes of our time. She wished to salute all those who honored this meeting with their presence, which provided a framework for reflection and discussion on the issue of discrimination and racism.

She particularly thanked Mrs. Marie-Thérèse TCHICHA, Mrs. Nabila BOUCHALA, Ms. Katia ATIF, Mrs. Adina UNGUREANU, Mrs. Sev ROVERA and Mrs. Meriem MOKDAD who, during this colloquium, enabled the participants to benefit from their very enriching knowledge and analyses.

Before the closing statement, Ms. Christella TCHICAYA held out her microphone to gather the impressions of some participants. In general, all the participants said they were satisfied with their participation and satisfied with the newly acquired assets in countering discrimination and racism in their workplaces. They promised to work closely with RAFIQ for future challenges.

### Closing Statement

Mrs. Christella TCHICAYA, President of the RAFIQ Board of Directors, on behalf of RAFIQ, thanked the organizers of the symposium and all the participants for their contribution to the success of the various workshops. She particularly thanked the participants who came from outside Montreal and earnestly hoped that they would come back often to share their journeys and experiences with the RAFIQ. She finally declared the colloquium closed <<*Facing Discrimination and Racism as a Woman. How to Overcome It*>>. It was 4:05 p.m. when this sentence was pronounced.

## ANNEX

### PLENARY SPEAKERS

Marie-Thérèse CHICHA, PhD., is an economist and Full Professor at the School of Industrial Relations at the University of Montreal. In 1995, she chaired the committee of experts mandated by the Quebec government to prepare the Pay Equity Act; between 2001 and 2004, she was a member of the Federal Task Force, mandated by the Minister of Justice of Canada to propose a new Pay Equity Act at the federal level. She is the author of several articles and books relating to systemic discrimination, employment integration, particularly of immigrant women, equal access programs and pay equity. Since 2004, she has acted as an expert on equality policies with the International Labor Office (Geneva). In recognition of her scientific and social contribution to the fight against discrimination and for equality, she received, in 2015, the Governor General's Award in Commemoration of the Persons Case; in 2019, the ACFAS – Pierre-Dansereau Prize for social commitment; in 2020, the Thérèse-Casgrain Equality Award, Tribute category, from the Government of Quebec; in 2021, the Tribute to Rights and Freedoms Award from the Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse du Québec.

Nabila BOUCHALA, Lecturer in the sociology department and at the media school at UQAM, PhD candidate in sociology. Her current research focuses on the identity co-construction of immigrant women on digital social networks and addresses issues related to discrimination. She coordinated, from May 2021 to September 2022, the women's component within the community organization La Maisonnée.

Katia ATIF, Executive Director of Action Travail des femmes since 2011. She has more than 20 years of experience in the Quebec feminist movement. She was, among other things, the mobilization coordinator at the R des Centres de femmes du Québec and project manager at the Table of Women's Groups of Montreal.

Adina UNGUREANU, Immigration Family Observatory coordinator, ACCÉSSS. She is responsible for programs at the Alliance of Cultural Communities for Equality in Health





and Social Services (ACCÉSSS) and offers training on several subjects, including the functioning of the Quebec health network, healthy and safe housing and gynecological and breast cancers. She participates in several research groups related to access to health services for people with an immigrant background and represents the group on several committees.

Sev ROVERA, Coordinator at the Villeray Tenants Association. Passionate about social justice issues, they are committed to contributing to the emergence of solutions to the housing crisis as well as to the construction of healthy and inclusive living and working environments.



## WORKSHOP FACILITATORS

Guerda AMAZAN, Manager by profession, during her professional career, she had several project coordination mandates relating to the improvement of the practical needs of women and their strategic interests. She has participated in several international conferences, led workshops and formed several groups on gender issues. Currently, she holds the position of Deputy Director General of the Maison d'Haïti. Feminist activist, she is also an entrepreneur.

Elvira KAMARA, Afro-feminist and anti-racist activist, is also a writer, editor, blogger and speaker. Her writing touches on the means of documenting and reclaiming her story as a Black woman living in a Western context.

Maguy METELUS is a Quebecker of Haitian origin, an Afro-feminist activist, a vocal artist, a lover of words, and a much sought-after facilitator. Over the past twenty years, she has hosted events/activities for the RAFIQ, the FFQ, the Table of Women's Groups of Montreal (TGFM), the World March of Women, Quebec Breast Cancer Action, to name a few.

Carminda MAC-LORIN, PhD., PhD in Applied Human Sciences graduated from the University of Montreal, activist involved in several transnational networks and musician. She was co-coordinator of the 2016 World Social Forum and is a member of its International Board. She has been in charge of the Summer School of the Institut du Nouveau Monde since 2019. She is also the founder and CEO of an international non-profit organization called "Katalizo" ([www.katalizo.org](http://www.katalizo.org)). Carminda cultivates the dream of seeing the multiplication of spaces of connection in the world that go beyond national, generational, religious, disciplinary, professional, political, artistic borders... allowing as many people as possible to actively define their present and their future.



# Plenary Highlights





Workshop Highlights



Voice POP



