

**Women Working with Immigrant Women is an umbrella organization of community-based agencies providing services to Women of Colour and immigrant and refugee women.**

### **Message from the Board of Directors**

What a year it has been for Women Working with Immigrant Women (WWIW)! We continued our work within the Women of Colour and immigrant women's communities, as well as our collaborative efforts with labour, anti-racist, anti-poverty and women's groups. We cultivated working relationships with new organizations, initiated projects which brought a diverse group of organizations together and continued to develop innovative resources.

We persisted in our efforts to incorporate an anti-racist and grassroots approach to organizing, giving as much importance to the process as to the outcome. The community's input has been crucial at all levels of our organizing. WWIW has put tremendous time and resources into building and sustaining alliances and strengthening solidarity between oppressed groups of people.

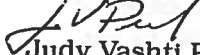
What is so amazing about this year, is the fact that we have not only survived a year of funding cuts, but we have also engaged in a wide range of exciting work - despite having to greatly reduce staff hours due to a decrease in financial resources. For the period of January to December, 1995, the organization's staff position was reduced from full-time (5 days per week) to part-time (1.25 days per week). This speaks to the tremendous energy, dedication and commitment of WWIW's sole staff person, Salome Loucas, our membership and Board of Directors.

Over the last year, WWIW continued to coordinate the work of the Anti-Racism Action Centre's (ARAC) Task Force, a project which is being co-sponsored with the Cross Cultural Communication Centre. The result will be the development of an innovative centre/service in Toronto, which will provide one-to-one support and advocacy services to people experiencing racism. This has been identified as an urgent need by People of Colour, anti-racist activists and community workers. In addition to our coordinating role, we also assisted in a feasibility study, funded by The Trillium Foundation, to develop models for the delivery of these services.

Other exciting projects of WWIW have been the series of educational and strategizing workshops focussing on the roles of various organizations in responding to racism, an empowering public forum looking at the issues and strategies of Women of Colour internationally, the ground breaking coalition building through weekly forums which we engaged in during the organizing of International Women's Day, and a support and educational group for community advocates active in the Jewish, Black, Indo-Caribbean, South Asian, West Asian and Arab Communities.

Despite it being a very difficult year, financially, WWIW was very successful in all its endeavours, managing to initiate and participate in a range of activities. Thank you to the coordinator, members and Board of Directors of WWIW. We would like to thank the individuals and organizations within the People of Colour, women's, immigrant, anti-poverty, lesbian, anti-racist and labour communities who have supported and participated in our work. A special recognition goes to the members of the Anti-Racism Action Centre's Task Force, as well as our sisters who worked with us in organizing International Women's Day. We could not do the work we have done without you. We would also like to thank the funders for their financial contributions to our organization.

On behalf of the Board of Directors

  
Judy Vashti Persad  
Chairperson



## **WWIW Annual Report 1995 - 1996**

### **Board of Directors 1995/1996**

*Judy V. Persad*  
Chairperson

*Tania Das  
Gupta*

*Maria Teresa  
Andrade*

*Carolyn Egan*  
Treasurer

*Kowser Omer*

*Salome Loucas*  
Staff/Exofficio  
member of the  
Board

## **WWIW Activities**

*WWIW identifies the needs of Women of Colour, immigrant and refugee women and initiates the development of programs and services to meet those needs.*

*Pools, develops and facilitates the sharing of community resources.*

*Provides a forum for information sharing and serves as a support network for these communities.*

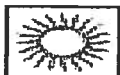
*Facilitates the sharing and the development of skills for community workers working with these communities.*

*Engages in social action related to the needs of these communities.*

*Works in coalitions and builds alliances among different Women of Colour and immigrant and refugee women's communities and between these communities and mainstream organizations and movements.*

*Politicizes mainstream organizations and movements on the interests of and issues affecting these communities and builds political support for the demands and struggle for equality of Women of Colour and immigrant and refugee women.*

*Lobbys governmental organizations for policy changes.*



## **Anti-Racism Action Centre**

In early 1994, the Anti-Racism Action Centre Task Force had developed a proposal to establish an Anti-Racism Action Centre which would provide services to individuals who experience racial discrimination. The proposal was submitted to numerous funders and it was discussed at a number of meetings which were set up in the summer and fall of the same year. While the ARAC Task Force proposal was received with great interest by funders (generally funders agreed that there is a gap in providing anti-racism services to individuals,) this interest did not materialize into financial support. After much debate and discussion, the ARAC Task Force was informed by funders that the provision of services to individuals who experience racial discrimination did not fit into their programs and funding criteria.

In late 1994, WWIW and the Cross Cultural Communication Centre, the two sponsoring organizations were ready to facilitate the transfer of responsibilities from the sponsoring organizations and the Task Force to an ARAC Board. However, the lack of adequate financial resources delayed this transfer and made it necessary that WWIW continue to coordinate the work of the ARAC Task Force and the development of ARAC. In 1995, on behalf of ARAC, WWIW applied and received funding for a feasibility study. The objective of the study was to map out the existing anti-racism services and programs in the Metro Toronto Area and to propose models for the delivery of anti-racism services to individuals who experience racial discrimination.

WWIW allocated a third of its' staff time for co-ordinating the work of the ARAC Task Force and administrating the Anti-Racism Action Centre's Feasibility Study. WWIW was involved in the development of the study and involved in compiling and analyzing the information for the study. Also, it provided the use of equipment, word processing, correspondence, record keeping and mailing services for the ARAC Task Force. In total WWIW co-ordinated and participated in 30 ARAC Task Force and consultation meetings, and meetings between the Cross Cultural Communication Centre and WWIW the two sponsoring organizations.

## **Responses to Racism Workshops**

The objective of these workshops were to educate workers in immigrant service organizations about issues of racism and how racism manifests itself in the different areas of people's lives, to assist participants to identify the limitations that the structure of their organizations (providing legal, employment and housing services) and existing legislation have in dealing with issues and cases of racism, to develop strategies for networking as to provide effective services to people who experience racism and to train participants in developing new structures and policies in their workplace to implement an anti-racism process.

## **The Role of the Legal Clinics**

Resource person for the workshop was Barrister and Solicitor Miguna Miguna. In the workshops participants examined the structures and procedures of legal clinics, identified the limitations of legal clinics in providing support to people who experience racism and in dealing with cases of racism and learned about pieces of legislation that legal clinics use to settle complaints of racial discrimination. Also, this workshop served as a consultation forum to collect information that would be used for the ARAC feasibility study.

Participants recommended that WWIW should initiate the establishment of a network among legal clinics for the coordination of legal clinics' anti-racism education and training.

### ***Reporting, Investigating and Dealing with Cases of Racism in Housing***

Resource person for this workshop was Mitzi D'Souza, anti-racism coordinator of the Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation. Participants in the workshop discussed cases of racism in housing and learned how these cases are dealt with by the Ontario Human Rights Commission.

### ***Challenging Racism in the Workplace***

Resource people for the workshop were Hassan Yussuf, Director of Human Rights Department of the Canadian Auto Workers and St. Clair Wharton, Equity Coordinator of the United Steelworkers of America. Participants in the workshop learned how cases of racism are dealt with in organized workplaces. Also, participants raised their concerns about the lack of understanding of issues of racism by many union representatives. Although the CAW and the USA offer their support to unorganized workers, in general unorganized workers do not receive support when they experience racial discrimination in the workplace.

The workshops were attended by community workers from the following immigrant service organizations: Parkdale Legal Clinic, the Barbara Schliffer Clinic, Workers Health and Safety Legal Clinic, Osgoode Hall Legal Clinic, Parkdale Interagency Association, the Workers Information and Action Centre, INTERIM Place, the Scarborough Housing Help Centre, the Metro Toronto Housing Authority, the Canadian Arab Federation, Cross Cultural Communication Centre, Cross Cultural Counselling and Communication, the Unite Steelworkers of America and some individual activists.

### ***Forums***

#### ***Women of Colour Leading the Women's Movement Internationally- Report from Beijing: The Experience of Women of Colour***

The media coverage of the Beijing conference and the NGO forum in Huairou, China, focussed on what was going wrong while ignoring the issues being discussed. Little was reported about the strength of the international women's movement which is one of the strongest forces for progressive social change worldwide and little was reported about the energy, drive, creativity and leadership role of Women of Colour at the forum.

This leadership role did not surprise Women of Colour in Toronto who have been playing a leadership role in the Canadian Women's Movement. Examples are the leadership positions held by Women of Colour within the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, and the leadership role held by WWIW in Toronto in organizing International Women's Day.

The objectives of the public forum were to learn about the commitments made by the Canadian government regarding the improvement in Canadian women's lives, to discuss the similarities of the struggle of Women of Colour and learn from the organizing strategies employed by Women of Colour worldwide.

This Public Forum was attended by over 70 people and it was organized by WWIW, the Cross Cultural Communication Centre and Desh Pardesh. Speakers were Meerai Cho from the Korean Canadian Women's Association and the Labour Council of Metro Toronto, Miche Hill, Vice President of National Action Committee on the Status of Women and of the Micmac Nation of Quebec, Winnie Ng from the Canadian Labour Congress (Ottawa), Ramabal Espinet, Writer, Educator and Activist and Sunera Thobani, President of NAC. The forum was moderated by WWIW's chairperson.

## IWD - 1995/6



Saheli-South Asian Theatre Collective



Sunera Thobani - President of NAC



Leah Casselman - President of O.P.S.E.U.

## Coalition Building - International Women's Day

WWIW uses the organizing of International Women's Day to build alliances among the women's, labour, anti-racism, anti-poverty and lesbian communities by providing weekly forums for discussions of issues. Last year, WWIW successfully organized one of the largest IWD events in Toronto. The event was co-sponsored by 29 women's, community and labour organizations and it was attended by over 2,000 people. In October 1995, WWIW approached the following organizations and invited them to participate in the planning of WWIW's IWD 1996 event:

*Cross Cultural Communication Centre, LAMP Toy Library, United Food and Commercial Workers, Working Women Community Centre, Canadian Auto Workers, CAW Local 512, Ontario Council of Hospital Unions, National Action Committee on the Status of Women-Southern Ontario Region, Korean Canadian Women's Association, Ontario Coalition for Abortion Clinics, International Socialists, Labour Council of Metropolitan Toronto and York Region, United Steelworkers of America, Union of Needletrades and Textile Employees, Coalition of Visible Minority Women, U of T Women's Centre, De Poonanni Posse-Black Lesbian Group, Babaylan Pinay Lesbian Group, United Farm workers Union, Birth Control and VD Information Centre, Saheli-South Asian Theatre Collective, Anti-Racism Action Centre, KYTES, CKLN, Sistering, Low Income Families Together, Ontario Coalition Against Poverty, Embarrass Harris Campaign and East Timor Network.*

Among the speakers at the rally were Judy V. Persad, WWIW Chairperson, Sunera Thobani, President of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, Leah Casselman, the President of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union, Linda Torney, President of the Labour Council of Metro Toronto and York Region, Maggi Wilson and Deborah Frenette from the Low Income Families Together and Mervis White, Area Vice President of the Ontario council of Hospital Unions. MC for the rally was WWIW coordinator Salome Loucas.

## Community Advocates Support Group

This discussion group consisted of advocates active in the Jewish Community, the Black Community, South and West Asian Communities and Arab Community. The need to set up the group was indicated by the tensions between activists from these communities during numerous community educational forums and meetings. These tensions were caused by the lack of understanding of the similarities and differences between issues of anti-semitism and racism and the competition among these communities for recognition of their particular issues and the oppression they experience. The meetings of the group provided a forum for advocates from these communities to discuss issues of anti-semitism and racism and to educate themselves about the issues and the experiences affecting these communities.

## Community Participation

WWIW participated in the following community meetings and forums: **Canadian Labour Congress - Fighting for our Rights National Anti-Racism Task Force, Union Community Consultation** and presented an update on community anti-racism initiatives as well as an update on the effects of provincial cut backs on anti-racism and immigrant service programs. **Settlement Renewal Consultation** which was organized by the Access Action Council. **Metro's Community Advisory Committee on Anti-Hate and Anti-Racism** meetings and took part in the community's advocacy efforts regarding the future funding of Metro Multiculturalism and Race Relations. **"Speak Sister Speak"** conference for Arab women which was organized by the Canadian Arab Federation. Among other topics discussed, there were discussions on immigration policies and how they affect Arab women in particular and discussions on issues of racism and domestic violence experienced by Arab women.