

**IMPROVING THE REPRESENTATION OF BLACK WOMEN AND TRANS WOMEN IN POLITICS
(VISIBLE AND/OR SEXUAL MINORITIES)**

SUBMITTED TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

Working Group: Lourdine DUMAS and Solange A.MUSANGANYA (June 2018)

1. CURRENT SITUATION

“Of a total of 687 candidates, 75% were men and only 26.5% were women. Among ethnic candidates, 77.8% were men and 22.2% were women. Among visible minority candidates, 52.9% were men and 47% were women. There were also fewer women elected: 78.3% of candidates elected were men and 21.7% were women.” Fédération des femmes du Québec, *“Les femmes immigrantes dans les postes décisionnels”*, 2009. [Translation]

Women face barriers throughout their involvement in politics. We have identified the barriers that we believe should be removed with respect to the identification and training of future female leaders. Our perspective is that of women who are immigrants and members of the black community and visible and/or sexual minorities.

With respect to black women, we note they are invisible in Canadian politics, both inside and outside the system, which sends a strong message about the lack of inclusion of these groups and their lack of representation.

We should remember that the homogeneity of a majority group as seen from the outside (thus, the lack of black women in Canadian politics) presents the image of a Canada that is totally white and where black women from all backgrounds cannot live or adapt.

It is deplorable that in a country such as Canada, which claims to respect the rights of minorities, we do not hear the voice of a transsexual woman at any political level, whether it is federal, provincial, or municipal. For example, a trans candidate was thrown out of her party when her past as a sex worker came to light. However, that is often the path that has to be taken in order to pay for the exorbitant cost of transition, which the ministries of health are not willing to cover.

Other factors that we have identified are as follows: rivalry among women rather than a sense of sisterhood, work-life balance, accessibility of information, transportation to relevant events across Canada, the perception of women’s engagement, demystifying politics and opportunities, networking, developing one’s influence, image management.

Several organizations are working on this issue and have many proposals. However, because of their limited communications budgets, they are missing the mark.

2. OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Create the Canadian Woman Leadership Academy. This academy would first and foremost be a bilingual, multimedia, multidisciplinary educational platform that is available online and off line and as a mobile app. Its mission would be to strengthen leadership and mutual support of women and young girls.**
- **Encourage immigrant women, especially those from visible minorities, to take an interest in politics, and establish quotas in decision-making bodies where black women should be represented. This would also apply to trans women.**
- **Establish high-level political positions for immigrant women from visible and/or sexual minorities to increase their visibility and in this way ensure the full representation and the diversity of women in Canadian politics.**
- **Enable trans women to participate in Canadian politics, which would confirm to other countries Canada’s respect for human rights.**

3. CONCLUSION

We did not want to focus solely on sexism and misogyny, which are also major barriers to women's participation in politics. We believe that education, training, intergenerational transmission of knowledge, the identification of and support for future female politicians are excellent vectors that will eliminate these prejudices. Our recommendations are meant to be a summary applicable to all women, which will allow them to grow and succeed. We can attest to the fact that the groundwork must be laid well in advance in order to become a political leader.

4. THE WORKING GROUP (in alphabetical order):

Lourdine DUMAS – Social Entrepreneur, Activist, Journalism Student



Lourdine was born in France to Haitian parents. She is a Canadian at heart and obtained her permanent residency in 2006. She is a committed professional, a consultant specializing in the development of future leaders. Under the banner of Linkéa, she has created workshops (leadership, women's networking, etc.) and established projects to train and engage youth who will be our future leaders. Lourdine holds a Brevet de technicien supérieur in sales and a certificate in project management (HEC Montréal). In 2007, she was a member of the Forum jeunesse de l'île de Montréal. She served as a trainee adviser at the Table des groupes de femmes de Montréal. Lourdine is a member of the Réseau des jeunes femmes leaders, a Cré de Montréal initiative (2009 cohort). She has participated in several youth political simulations in Quebec, playing the roles of MLA, municipal councillor, and political journalist. In 2009, she was officially thanked by the Mayor of Montreal, Gérald Tremblay, for her engagement as a future female leader at International Women's Day. In 2011, she was awarded a leadership capacity grant by the Girls Action Foundation for her Étoiles Noires project.

Solange A.MUSANGANYA – International LGBT Consultant, Activist



Solange is the first Quebec woman of African descent to openly work on advancing the LGBT cause in Quebec. She is a member of the steering committee of the Comité d'orientation du réseau international francophone LGBTQI. Solange A. Musanganya is a Quebecker of Rwandan descent, a trans* woman and LGBTQI activist who has been living in Abidjan in the Ivory Coast for the past two years. After founding the Montreal organization Arc-en-ciel d'Afrique (2004), launching the Massimadi Festival (2009) and working with several Quebec LGBT organizations, Solange worked with the Fondation Paul Gérin-Lajoie (2012) to help rebuild Haiti after the 2010 earthquake. Solange holds a Masters in International Management from ENAP and a Bachelor in Management from UQAM. She shares her time between Canada and the Ivory Coast. She is also the Director of Programs for Maison de la Culture des Diversités Humaines. Solange was named the Person of Excellence at the 10th annual Arc-en-ciel Gala organized by the Conseil Québec des Gais et lesbiennes (cqgl.qc.ca) in October 2010. Solange was also the winner of Egale Canada's "What About Us" contest held during Black History Month (2009).