



Chumir Ethics Forum



Sheldon Chumir Foundation for Ethics in Leadership

Phone: (403) 244-6666

www.chumirethicsfoundation.ca

Fax (403) 244-5596

**IDENTITY AND POLARIZATION:
IMPLICATIONS FOR OUR ABILITY TO LIVE WELL TOGETHER
OCTOBER 3 & 4 – METROPOLITAN CONFERENCE CENTRE, CALGARY, AB
DON'T FORGET TO REGISTER! SEE PAGE 4 & 5 FOR DETAILS.**

Thinking about Ethical Leadership

“Narrow Definitions of Identity are Dangerous ”

By Janet Keeping, President



How people are labelled can significantly influence how they are treated as individuals and how well we live together as a society. If the labels we use are too limiting, we risk objectifying each other as less than fully human and overlooking the common ground we actually share on issues of society-wide importance. Polarization

on the basis of identity is just plain dangerous.

In late July the Calgary Herald reported the sentencing of a Calgary man for assaulting a Jewish teenager and her friends. During the attack, the man said he hated Jews and called one of his victims a “Jewish piece of (crap).”

In 2006 a Toronto high-school student who is Muslim was sexually assaulted in a school bathroom. School administrators who learned of the attacks did not report them. They reasoned that a young Muslim woman with her “honour” so destroyed would get into even more serious trouble, this time with her family and faith community, if the attacks were reported. They decided it was better not to go to the police.

Although the cases are radically different – the Calgary man committed an unjustifiable crime, while the school principals in Toronto thought they were making a good decision – their actions were very similar in one important way. Both used narrow definitions of identity to single out individuals for different treatment.

The Calgary assailant treated his victim not as a whole person with many different attributes, but instead as one thing, a Jew, and that was enough to trigger his attack.

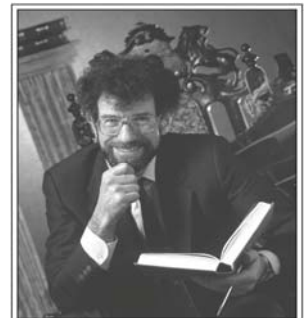
Staff at the Toronto school treated the assaulted student as one thing, a Muslim woman, and therefore didn’t call the police.

This narrow pigeon-holing of people goes on all the time. Aren’t we constantly asked which “community” (read: race, religion, sexual orientation or ethnicity) we are from? And most of us play this identity game without much thought to the consequences.

But we should resist limiting ourselves and others

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Sheldon M. Chumir

to narrow identity categories. And we should insist our leaders resist as well. Why? Because every one of us is many different things that those tight little identity boxes deny. Amartya Sen – the Nobel prize-winning economist – puts it well (I Canadianize his words): “The same person can be, without any contradiction, a Canadian citizen, of Caribbean origin, with African ancestry, a Christian, a liberal, a woman, a vegetarian, a hockey player, a historian, a schoolteacher, a novelist, a feminist, a heterosexual, a believer in gay and lesbian rights, a theatre lover, an environmental activist, a tennis fan, a jazz musician, and ...”

No doubt about it, Canadians are of different cultures, races, ethnicities, sexual orientations, eye colour, height, educational background, and whatever. But we also share things, often many things, in common. To take Sen’s list, maybe you and I are both environmentalists, hockey players and vegetarians. Maybe we both love tennis or jazz – fishing or football. If we focus on our differences, we may badly misunderstand each other, failing to understand we have significant shared interests. And it’s through those very shared interests that we can build rapport, learn to treat each other better, and discover a basis for discussing difficult public-policy issues, such as Canada’s military presence in Afghanistan or how best to develop the oil sands in northern Alberta.

Perhaps nothing except physical force will dissuade the really determined hate-monger from bashing Jews, Blacks or gays. But for all others, there is another option.

Toronto educators presumably want to do the right thing. This requires that they report the sexual assault of the student and help her deal with the ensuing legal process. To do this they have to scrap their narrow perception of her identity as simply a Muslim woman, which prevented them from reporting the assaults in the first place. After all, she is many things. For example, to her parents she is a daughter, and a family’s response will usually be compassion towards, not further abuse of, their victimized child.

At the public policy level we also have to get beyond seeing each other in narrow identity terms. You may think you have nothing in common with the gay couple down the street, if that is the only way you think of them. But they may be home-owners too and also against the proposed widening of a neighbourhood street. If you can get beyond the gay/straight

polarization, you can join forces with them to resist the street expansion.

At the international level, too, we have to get beyond the name-calling of narrow identities – “Israeli” or “Palestinian”, “Jew” or “Muslim”, as if those labels really explain anything – and deal with the fact that the citizens of every country hold a variety of views and are a mixture of every conceivable characteristic. When we acknowledge this maybe we can find common ground and eventually a more profound understanding of each other.

We have to reject leadership at all levels and in all spheres that seeks to exaggerate our differences, rather than unite us in support of better ethics in public life and more ethical public policy.

Janet Keeping
President

See: www.chumirethicsfoundation.ca to download our Diversity Project concept paper:

“Ethical Leadership on Polarization, ‘Otherness’ and the Core Values of a Liberal Democratic Society”

Letter from Pretoria, South Africa

“Aliens in South Africa? Examining the government response to xenophobia”

News of the recent wave of xenophobic violence across South Africa not only stunned the local and regional population, but explosively hit international shores. Newspapers and television screens across the globe featured shocking images of men and women burning alive, orphaned children wandering empty township streets, and the devastating ruins of whole communities.

But how quickly these stories have dropped out of world headlines and ultimately out of our minds. The recent attacks in South Africa must not be discarded as just another disappointment from the struggling “Rainbow Nation.” In order to prevent future xenophobic violence in South Africa and the region, the causes of these attacks must be widely understood.

Studies in xenophobia attribute the hatred of foreigners to several causes:

- fear of loss of social status and identity
- threat, perceived or real, to citizens' economic success
- a way of reassuring national identity and boundaries in times of crisis
- a feeling of superiority
- poor inter-cultural communication.

Xenophobia is particularly strong in countries undergoing transition, where unfulfilled expectations of a new democracy see the foreigner embodying unemployment, poverty and deprivation.

South Africa has failed to effectively address this rising tide of xenophobia as serious attacks have occurred regularly since 1990. South Africa's history of xenophobia and the failure to resolve this mounting issue is directly linked to a lack of ethical leadership and accountability in the South African government. If South Africa is to successfully eliminate xenophobic sentiment and violence, a serious revision of the government's leadership role, legislation and other efforts must take place.

Although, in recent years, the South African government has begun to recognize the prevalence of xenophobia in the country and the need resolve it, politicians publicly expressed xenophobic views and presented them as the views of government itself. The former Minister of Home Affairs, Dr. Mangosuthu Buthelezi, described the influx of "illegal immigrants" as his "biggest headache" and, in a speech to Parliament, explicitly stated that "aliens...pouring into South Africa" would hamper economic growth. Despite being hailed as having one of the most progressive constitutions in the world, government officials have made it clear that human rights are inapplicable to non-citizens. In addition, the *Immigration Act* of 2002 gave police and immigration officers the authority to stop anyone and demand their immigration status. This Act has led to countless cases of corruption, intimidation and assault on foreigners.

The primary challenge the South African government faces is educational. Officials and police officers must be trained and sensitized about human rights and, in particular, the rights of foreigners and refugees to enjoy freedom from discrimination and the full protection of the South African Police Service.

Ordinary South African citizens must be educated about issues such as citizenship and xenophobia. Educators should stress the positive impact immigration can have on South Africa's economy and society.

Finally, it is important that foreign governments and policymakers are responsive to the core causes of the crisis. They must remind the South African government of its commitment to many international conventions and treaties, including the 1951 *UN Convention on the Status of Refugees*.

Allison Coady
Master's Candidate, University of Pretoria
Pretoria, South Africa



Pretoria, South Africa

Photo Credit: www.african-safari.com

IDENTITY AND POLARIZATION: IMPLICATIONS FOR OUR ABILITY TO LIVE WELL TOGETHER OCTOBER 3 & 4— METROPOLITAN CONFERENCE CENTRE, CALGARY, AB

WHY THIS? WHY NOW?

Canada is often pointed to as a model of how a highly diverse population can live together peacefully. But our diversity can present challenges.

The Chumir Foundation is launching a multi-year project on diversity by looking at a few basic issues. How do we identify ourselves? Why is identity of ethical importance? And what does this all mean for public policy and good governance?

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 3RD

EVENING

5:30 Informal Dinner

6:15–7:00 All Nations Theatre presentation

KEYNOTE ADDRESS:

7:15 “What is the ethical significance of how a person identifies her/himself?”

- **Kwame Anthony Appiah**

Coffee and dessert reception to follow.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 4TH

9–10:15 “Social Identity in Canada: How does it work: What are the facts and issues?”- **Morton Weinfeld**

“Who am I?: Social Identity in Canada and why I see it this way” - **Carl James**

10:15–10:30 Coffee break

10:30–11:15 “Identity can be dangerous: some Canadian examples” - **A presentation and panel.**

11:15– Noon Open discussion of the examples

LUNCH WITH SPEAKER

12–1:30 “How do identity and diversity intersect with poverty?” - **Grace-Edward Galabuzi**

1:30–3:00 Polarization along religious lines – “Religion in politics” - **Janice Stein**

3–3:15 Coffee break

3:15–4:45 How to make democracy work well in a highly diverse society – “What are the building blocks of a healthy democracy in a diverse society?” - **Daniel Weinstock**

4:45–5:30 Wrap-up with All Nations Theatre

Keynote Speaker: Kwame Anthony Appiah



Kwame Anthony Appiah was born in London (where his Ghanaian father was a law student) but moved as an infant to Ghana, where he grew up. He attended Clare College and Cambridge University, in England, where he took both B.A. and Ph.D. degrees in philosophy. Since Cambridge, he has taught at Yale, Cornell, Duke, and Harvard universities and lectured at many other institutions in the United States, Germany, Ghana and South Africa. He is now a member of the Princeton faculty, where he has appointments in the Philosophy department and the University Centre for Human Values.

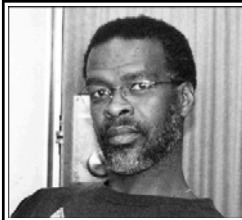
Kwame Anthony Appiah has written extensively on the ethical implications of identity. He wrote *The Ethics of Identity* in 2005 and a year later published *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*, which won the 2007 Arthur Ross Award of the Council on Foreign Relations. In January 2008, Harvard University Press published his *Experiments in Ethics*, based on his 2005 Flexner lectures at Bryn Mawr.

SYMPOSIUM SPEAKERS: SATURDAY OCTOBER 4, 2008



“Social Identity in Canada - How does it work: What are the facts and issues?”
Morton Weinfeld, McGill

Morton Weinfeld is a Professor at McGill University and is currently the Chair in Canadian Ethnic Studies. Prof. Weinfeld has written extensively in the area of ethnicity and public policy. His most recent publication is Like Everyone Else But Different: The paradoxical success of Canadian Jews (McClelland and Stewart, 2001). Among his many publications, he wrote The Social Costs of Discrimination in Canada, a research report for the (Abella) Royal Commission on Equality in Employment, 1983.



“Who am I?: Social Identity in Canada and why I see it this way.”
Carl James, York University

Dr. Carl James is Professor at York University in the Faculty of Education with a cross-appointment in the graduate programs in Sociology and Social Work. He has conducted research which has resulted in publications that focus on the experiences of marginalized youth, particularly African Canadians. His history of professional development with educators and social service workers draws on his theoretical work with issues of identity, diversity, racialization and masculinity, and involves practitioner level dissemination of research results.



“How do identity and diversity intersect with poverty?”
Grace-Edward Galabuzi, Ryerson University

Grace-Edward Galabuzi is Professor in the Department of Politics and Public Administration at Ryerson University. He is a research associate at the Centre for Social Justice in Toronto. His research interests include globalization, local community responses to global economic restructuring; the racialization of the Canadian labour market; and social exclusion and the social economic status of racialized groups in Canada. In addition to his academic career, Dr. Galabuzi has also worked in the Ontario government as a senior policy analyst on justice issues, and he is a former provincial coordinator of the Ontario Alliance for Employment Equity.



Polarization Along Religious lines- “Religion in Politics”
Janice Stein, University of Toronto

Janice Gross Stein is currently the director of the Munk Centre for International Studies at the University of Trinity College, University of Toronto, as well as Professor of Conflict Management and Negotiation within the University of Toronto's department of political science. Stein regularly lectures on conflict management at home and abroad, at venues such as the Centre for National Security Studies in Ottawa and the NATO Defense College in Rome, Italy. Ms. Stein is perhaps most recently known for The Unexpected War: Canada in Kandahar co-authored with Eugene Lang. She is a member of the Order of Canada and was the Massey Lecturer in 2001.



“What are the building blocks of a healthy democracy in a diverse society?”
Daniel Weinstock, University of Montreal

Dr. Weinstock holds a Canada Research Chair in Ethics and Political Philosophy and is the founding director of The Research Centre in Ethics at l'Université de Montréal. His areas of expertise include the politics of language and identity, democracy, citizenship, and pluralism. He has also been an active participant in public policy, having been a member of a Ministry of Education working group on religion in public schools in Quebec. Since 2003 he has been the founding director of Quebec's Public Health Ethics Committee.

REGISTER TODAY!

Please see our website:
www.chumirethicsfoundation.ca

or email info@chumirethicsfoundation.ca
for more information.

Full Symposium:

\$ 90.00 or \$ 45.00 (student/low-income rate)

Friday Night Only:

\$ 30.00 or \$ 15.00 (student/low-income rate)

Diversity and Gender Equality: Why the eagerness to accommodate?



One focus of the Foundation's multi-year project on diversity is the impact of increased cultural and religious diversity on gender equality. As we all know, Canada is home to people from a wide spectrum of cultural and religious traditions, some of which sanction an inferior status for women. It looks like increased diversity of this kind is imposing a strain on gender equality in Canada, and in the course of the project the Foundation will examine this issue.

In this article I highlight one aspect of the problem – the disturbing readiness on the part of some Canadians and Canadian institutions to sacrifice gender equality in the face of real or perceived pressure from socially conservative groups. One example concerns the DuParc YMCA in Montreal, which agreed to frost its work-out room windows so that the Orthodox Jewish boys at the neighbouring school would not be “distracted” by the sight of women in their exercise clothing. Other examples abound. Looked at as a whole this willingness to cave into the demands of groups opposed to equality for women points to a fragility in our society's understanding of, and commitment to, gender equality.

Consider the factors that play into this willingness.

- Some mistakenly think that gender equity is so well entrenched in Canada that apparently minor compromises (e.g., frosted windows) are no big deal;
- Some people don't see the gender equity issue at stake. For example, some thought the Montreal YMCA was just being a good neighbour in offering to solve the “problem,” instead of expecting Jewish school officials to take the initiative and frost their own windows;
- Others may sense there is something wrong from the gender equity point of view, but are afraid to question the culturally different practices of others – they don't want to appear intolerant;
- Others may seem ready to sacrifice minority women's rights in ways that they would never sanction if mainstream women's rights were at stake.

1 <http://www.accommodements.qc.ca/documentation/rapports/rapport-final-abrege-en.pdf>

2 Arnold, Janice “No reason to change Quebec Charter, CJC says.” www.cjnews.com

The security of women's right to equality in Canada

Women's situation in Canada has dramatically improved over the last thirty years but many would say that feminist activism is a victim of its own success. By this I mean that contrary to popular opinion, women's equality has not yet “arrived”. Much more needs to be accomplished (e.g. implementation of a comprehensive child-care policy without which women as a group will never have equality of opportunity or result).

There is the occasional official recognition that women's equality is not a done deal. For example, the Bouchard-Taylor Commission on cultural accommodation in Quebec received submissions to the effect that, within certain ethnic and religious groups, gender equality was faltering. The Commission recommended that the following interpretation clause be added to the Quebec *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms*: “The rights and freedoms enunciated in this Charter are equally guaranteed to women and men.”¹ This proposed change met with opposition from religious and cultural groups such as the Canadian Jewish Congress.

But more common now are announcements of cuts to programming for women, such as closing women's spaces, cuts to funding for gender-based research and shelters and – to rub salt in the wound – removal of the word “equality” from the mandate of the federal Status of Women department. This is ironic from a federal government which exports gender equality as a core Canadian value to countries all over the world through CIDA projects. It would seem that the current government views women's equality as having been accomplished.

Failure to recognize gender discrimination in multicultural settings

Canada is one of the few countries in the world which formally supports multiculturalism. Our multiculturalism policy aims to ensure that “...all citizens can keep their identities, can take pride in their ancestry and have a sense of belonging.”³

On an ideological level, it seems that Canadians

3 http://www.pch.gc.ca/progs/multi/inclusive_e.cfm

4 <http://www.acs-aec.ca/oldsite/Polls/Poll38.pdf>

support this framework. A recent poll commissioned by The Association for Canadian Studies showed that 71% of Canadians polled agreed that multiculturalism is “very important” to Canada’s national identity.⁴

But do Canadians really understand what multiculturalism means? Are we well equipped to handle the controversies which arise when central Canadian values – such as equality – conflict with traditions that resist women’s equality?

Consider again the YMCA in Montreal which agreed to frost its windows when the Hasidic Jewish community complained that their youth were being distracted by the sight of women in workout wear. This example has been cited by many as just good, simple “neighbourly relations” However, the message the Y sent to its women members was not so nice: women wearing clothing entirely appropriate for a workout facility while in such a facility were made to feel inappropriate.

Not surprisingly, this “neighbourly act” was not greeted well by many of those female members. A large member-driven petition caused the YMCA to remove the window frosting a year later.

The question is inevitable, if the Jewish community was offended by the sight of women in workout clothing, why was the onus on the women to cover themselves? If you don’t like the TV show, change the channel. However minor this case may be in the grand scheme of multiculturalism, it does point to the relative ease with which institutions and individuals can overlook the gendered implications of cultural accommodation.

Failure to appreciate the gender significance of diversity issues has taken on considerably more extreme forms in Canada. For example, in 2003 Syed Mumtaz Ali, a retired lawyer and scholar of Islamic law announced to the Canadian media that the Islamic Institute of Civil Justice would use Islamic legal principles and Ontario’s Arbitration act to extend religiously-based arbitration of family disputes such as child custody to Muslims.⁵ Orthodox Jews and some Christian communities had been using the Arbitration Act for years. Eventually the province rejected the extension to Muslims and repealed all such arbitrations, but only after a long debate did the full implications of giving the force

⁵ Korteweg, Anna “The Sharia Debate in Ontario”, p.1, http://www.isim.nl/files/Review_18/Review_18-50.pdf

of law to religions which do not treat women equally emerge. An issue of serious significance to gender equity had been treated as one of administrative expedience (keeping cases out of the family courts) and accommodation of cultural difference.

Fear of appearing intolerant

There are also many cases where it is perfectly well understood that women’s equality is being sacrificed, but the people involved are afraid of appearing “politically incorrect” and thus do not speak out in defense of women’s rights in the way they know they should.

Sacrifice of minority women’s rights

Perhaps our greatest scandals in this area are when women’s equality is ignored because the women involved are from minority groups. Sadly classic in this regard is the alleged rape of a fourteen year old Muslim girl by six young men at C.W Jeffreys High School in Toronto. A teacher informed the school administration of the allegation, who failed to report the incident to anyone, including the girl’s family. There was a fear that, given her religious affiliation, the girl would face reprisal at home as a result of the assault. Instead of treating her as any other young woman in need of help and justice, school authorities tried to ignore the attack on her. The same would never have happened had the victim been a mainstream Canadian.

For every example that has been outlined here there are many more. Ethical leadership on this layered issue can take many forms. One answer may lie in rejecting blanket solutions while upholding and strengthening Charter rights and universal standards. As immigration levels rise and the perception remains that gender equality in Canada is a non-issue, it is even more important for public policy to be informed by a range of women’s voices and experiences. These voices can be heard through funding to minority women’s groups, gender-based research and inclusive political consultation. Equality may mean different things to different cultural and religious communities, and indeed *within them*, but Canada is capable of strong leadership on reaffirming our commitment to gender equality.

Katherine Austin-Evelyn
Intern

Intern Announcements

Farewell Katherine Austin-Evelyn, 2007-08 Intern

After a very successful year in which she organized the Foundation's first event in Lethbridge, "Dialogue on Democracy: Where are the women?", conducted a study tour on "gender and diversity" (see her article on page 6), and contributed to all aspects of the Foundation's work, Katherine Austin-Evelyn will complete her internship in October 2008. We are grateful that she will stay on to help with our Symposium before heading to South Africa in January 2009. Good luck Katherine in your MA Program at the University of Cape Town's African Gender Institute.

Welcome Erin Power, 2008-09 Intern

The Foundation is pleased to welcome Erin Power, who began her internship on September 4, 2008. Erin completed her MA in Philosophy at Dalhousie University and her BA (Hons) in Philosophy at the University of Calgary. She has received numerous scholarships and awards and has held many volunteer positions in Calgary. Erin's combination of academic study of ethics and community involvement are a natural fit with the Foundation's mandate of promoting ethical leadership and informed discussion.

Event Announcements

The Media's Right to Offend: Exploring the Legal and Ethical Limitation on Free Speech

The Chumir Foundation is continuing to explore the impact of human rights legislation on freedom of speech and freedom of the press by partnering with King's College School of Journalism's Joseph Howe Symposium.



Joseph Howe

**Panel Discussions &
Keynote Speaker:
Globe and Mail Columnist Margaret Wente**

**November 1st, King's College
Halifax, Nova Scotia**
Check our website for updates

Dialogue on Democracy: **HERE ARE THE WOMEN!**

WHEN: Thursday, October 30th, 2008, 5:30-9:00 pm
WHERE: MacDougall Centre, 455 6th Street S.W.
Calgary, Alberta

In partnership with the Famous 5 Foundation we are hosting an event entitled "Dialogue on Democracy: Here are the Women!" as a follow up to our "Dialogue on Democracy: Where are the Women?" series. We will be hearing from female politicians about their experiences at each stage of the political process followed by audience participation and discussion.

SPEAKERS TBA

Registration Fee: \$25 (\$15 students & low-income)
Dinner included
RSVP by October 15th
Register online www.famous5.ca

For more information contact: Famous 5 Office at
403.253.1927

Sheldon Chumir Foundation for Ethics in Leadership

Suite 970, Kahanoff Centre, 1202 Centre Street S. Calgary, AB T2G 5A5
tel: (403) 244-6666 fax: (403) 244-5596 www.chumirethicsfoundation.ca info@chumirethicsfoundation.ca