

**the
proletarian
feminist
manifesto**



we want to build the proletarian feminist movement in canada

We believe it is necessary to unify proletarian women, transpeople* and their allies in recognizing the reality of class inequality, and by doing so recognize the necessity of linking the struggle for women's liberation with the struggle against capitalist and imperialist exploitation.

our basis of unity

1.

we are united on the condition of being proletarian

Our unity in the political struggle, as well as in our demands, is based on the needs and aspirations of proletarian women and transpeople*, especially those of the most exploited among them and NOT those from the privileged strata. This is why we define our movement as proletarian.

Proletarian women are those who live off the wages earned by their own labour, or who are unemployed. They could be students, mothers, Native women, immigrants, single or in relationships, young or old, or from other origins.

We live in Canada, one of the richest countries in the world. Every day, we are reminded of

how lucky we are to live here, surrounded by all this great wealth... but for whom does this wonderful country exist? Undeniably, there is a minority of men and women who profit from this “land of opportunity”, and they monopolize for themselves the immense majority of the social wealth produced in Canada.

The simple and undeniable social reality that imposes itself, despite the multiplicity of individual differences, is the division of the world expressed in our society. That is, the division between those who own the wealth, the means of production, the factories, the businesses, and thus power on the one side, and those who must “make a living” off starvation wages, with nothing or without employment altogether.

Women in Canada are not outside this social reality.

There are women who hold power, own and manage, and whose life has nothing to do with that of a Native woman in Winnipeg, a Filipina caregiver in Toronto, a minimum wage worker in Montreal, or a single mother in St. John.

These very different conditions and therefore generate very different needs and aspirations. On one side, there are those who want to preserve their privileges and powers, which they acquired from a society founded on the private rather than collective appropriation of social wealth. On the other side, there are those who simply aspire for decent housing; for meaningful jobs with fair and equitable remuneration; for free education; for healthcare and childcare services that are free and accessible; for a society where they will no longer be victims of racism, sexism, daily physical, psychological and sexual violence; where they will no longer be forced to accept poorly paid jobs with no protection.

This is a reality of irreconcilable class contradictions. In theory, there exists the idea that all women can unite in the same struggle for “women’s liberation”; this is not true. This liberation cannot exist outside of our social reality—otherwise, it would be idealism and therefore unachievable. Women’s liberation must and will only be realized in a completely different society than that which prevails today, which is a society founded on injustice, exploitation, and division into social classes.

Currently there is no real feminist movement in existence in the political arena, which goes beyond reformism. For the past 20 years this reformist feminism has mainly existed in the forms of services or lobby groups, in official institutions, in academia and among petty bourgeois currents, but seldom has feminism existed in actual struggle. To quote the American sociologist, Barbara Epstein: “Feminism today has become more of an idea than a movement, and

It is precisely because the historical trends of feminism – which sought to unify all women on the sole basis of gender without taking into account any other condition – reached the limits of what they could offer that we are calling for the creation of a new movement. We need a movement that is in line with the multiple realities of proletarian women in the imperialist world today. We aim to build the most strategic unity, in other words, a unity that would provide us with political tools to overcome oppression and destroy its roots.

We are reminded of the capitalist-imperialist nature of Canada:

- Where Indigenous women, more than anyone else, continue to live in unspeakably poor conditions and are being killed every day without an outcry from the rest of Canadian society.
- Where Canada supports and participates in unjust wars of domination.
- Where companies flourish by exploiting women here and elsewhere, destroying

and killing them every day, forcing hundreds of millions of women to migrate, and thus profoundly transforming their lives and those of their families.

- Where the global economic crisis exacerbates the vulnerability of the poor, of whom women are in the vast majority; they form the majority among those earning minimum wage, the majority of those working part-time jobs, and the majority as single parents.
- Where the meager gains in social housing, education and health are constantly under attack, where living conditions are further deteriorating, particularly among women with disabilities, elderly women, or single parents.
- Where prostitution, sexual exploitation and sex trafficking are being trivialized.
- Where violence against women (whether verbal, physical, psychological) is part of the daily life.
- Where sexism is displayed in advertising, media and TV shows.
- Where in social reality, although complex,

the class that has everything continues to oppress and oppose the class that has nothing.

- Where the class that exploits us also includes women. Women who are leading political parties, governments and financial empires such as Walmart , Laurentian Bank, Sun Life Financial, Suncor Energy, the Federation of Chambers of Commerce, the Desjardins Group.

In uniting proletarian women in Canada from all origins on a class basis, we strive to build the greatest unity while preserving our will to fight in the most radical way. To fight all the way to the end, so that we may abolish capitalist exploitation and all forms of oppression that women suffer.

2. **we fight for the liberation of women against all forms of oppression**

In fighting against the oppression of women, we also fight against racism and all forms of discrimination, including discrimination against sex, origins, identity, sexual orientation or religious affiliation.

We recognize the diversity of proletarian women.

This diversity brings with it a multiplicity of demands, problems to be resolved, . Discrimination exists in the lives of Indigenous women, recent immigrants and home-care workers; it exists even among second generation immigrants working in the textile industry, servers and retail workers, single mothers, those with disabilities, and low-income students experiencing difficulties paying tuition, and women in same-sex relationships among other examples.

To effectively organize against exploitation and the different oppressions women suffer, we need to approach the totality of our differences in order to resolve the contradictions, rather than allowing these differences to fracture and

turn us against each other. We seek the highest unification on the basis of our common conditions, but without erasing these differences. This unifier is the fact that we all suffer capitalist exploitation, which weighs heavily on all of us in the current form of society.

The common struggle against our exploitation as proletarians is what unites us, and it is why we recognize the necessity of fighting collectively for a society free of all oppressions.

The proletarian feminist movement must fight against racism and discrimination that weighs heavily on immigrant and racialized women.

These women face systemic unemployment; who have different historical and cultural realities than other women; whether this is in the domestic realm of the family or in society; but who also want to be free of exploitation and oppression.

Currently in Canada, there are close to 3.3 million migrant women, that is, 1 out of 5 women. They account for 69%

of the growth in the female population of this country. Their experiences are a key example of proletarianization, for they live under the harshest conditions of exploitation and oppression. This is why migrant women constitute a formidable force; we must unite with them in order to change this unequal and unjust society.

With respect to the major urban centres, whether it is Toronto, Vancouver, or Montreal, the participation of migrant women of all origins is the determining factor for the development of proletarian feminism.

The proletarian feminist movement opposes the discrimination and historical negation of Native women's rights, but also the negation of the rights of their entire nations.

In a city like Winnipeg or Vancouver, but also in and around Montreal, Quebec, or the northern shore, a proletarian feminist movement cannot develop if it fails to build alliances with Native

women in advancing specific demands and organizing common political work.

The struggle against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity must also be part of the programme of proletarian feminism.

This is to say that a proletarian feminist movement is formed from a multitude of local groups that will vary in their composition, but they will all struggle against the oppression of women, against racism, against homophobia and all forms of gender discrimination. We have everything to win in combining our experiences as proletarians.

3. our movement will fight against capitalism... and against the social relations of oppression

The kind of proletarian feminist movement we need

today must necessarily be anti-capitalist.

Canadian capitalism develops in the 'globalization' of imperialism, which profoundly transforms the reality of women in every country, which forces the displacement of the population, delocalization, and migration on a scale never witnessed before, which continuously widens the great chasm between the rich and the poor. We reject this model of society and this system, and we fight for a new world!

Our exploitation and oppression are reproduced in a value system, in social relations, in the ways in which wealth is produced, and especially in the ways this wealth is appropriated. These values and social relations are, for the most part, inherited from the past.

However, even today they are reproduced, transformed, and used to benefit a single social class: the capitalists. To transform these values and social relations inherited from the past to the benefit of the general majority, it is necessary to attack this

system as it is currently maintained and reproduced.

In the workplace and at home, capitalism determines the conditions of our everyday lives.

We are conditioned to accept the fact that the financial broker – who plays on the virtual stock exchange reaping profits for shareholders of large corporations – earns 3 to 4 times the salary of a textile worker who produces our clothing, of a domestic worker, of an educator who cares for our children, or of a cook who makes food for others. We are conditioned to accept that domestic work, reproductive and care-work in the family and performed in the majority of cases by women have absolutely no value. Why is this so?

The cause behind the super-exploitation of women is not the gendered division of labour (historically, women took on the reproductive work and cared for the children and the family). If we attached the same value to this work – which was the case in early classless societies, i.e. before

the emergence of private property, the patriarchal family and social classes – as we do to production, all salaries/ remuneration would be more or less equal. All useful labour in reproducing society would be valued in the same way.

With the development of the forces of production on a global scale, capitalist relations in the economy become the dominant relations that establish the value of labour. This value is strictly based on the creation and accumulation of maximum profits.

According to capitalist criteria, the service sector, including healthcare, education, administration and commerce, does not produce “surplus-value,” or at least insufficient quantities of it.

Wages must therefore be kept at a minimum. Whether a man, a woman, an immigrant, a young or old person occupy these jobs, it really doesn't matter at the end. That is why - even if it takes time -capitalism can and will address the issue of equal pay for men and women in 20, 30 or perhaps

**“women
half**

**hold up
the sky”**

-mao zedong

100 years from now. What capitalism can't accept, and what is key for us, is the transformation of the value of labour. The class of owners—the bourgeoisie—will accumulate profit wherever they can, and will minimize costs whenever profits are down.

Fighting for equal pay between men and women is not enough to resolve the problem of exploitation among proletarian women, nor is fighting to ensure equal access for women to traditionally male-dominated professions. The sexual division of labour is not the source of women's oppression. Instead, the source of women's oppression is in the debasement of "unproductive" labour by capitalists. The latter cannot extract surplus-value at the same rate as they do in productive labour.

Proletarian women must fight for the complete transformation of the workforce and the revalorisation of women's work.

Proletarian women want to fight for a society where the work of each person will have equal "value" in accordance to its usefulness to the community and to the whole of society, whether women are working in manufacturing, teaching in daycares, providing domestic support work or driving a bus.

We are against all forms of sexual exploitation and the exploitation of women's bodies!

We are conditioned to accept as a "natural" fact of life the idea that everything can be commodified, including women's bodies. Today, prostitution, pornography, and the objectification of women in advertising, all form part of the "sex industry". They want us to believe that everything, including our bodies, can be bought and sold on the market. And furthermore, that by purchasing the commodity, the buyer can do whatever they want to it.

The average age of entry into prostitution is 14 years old in Canada; almost 95% of prostituted women want to

change their life. Prostitution is not a profession one chooses.

Capitalism turns sex, prostitution, pornography, and sex tourism into a profitable industry for a minority. This is done on the backs of the immense majority of women who are involved in this “industry”, the latter playing a major role in the everyday reproduction of sexist behaviours and violence against women.

The “sex industry” not only reproduces the same exploitative labour relations as it does elsewhere in capitalist society, it also reproduces sexism and the objectification of women’s bodies.

Prostitution and different forms of sexual exploitation are primarily relations of economic oppression between rich men and poor women.

In fact, prostitution is a specific oppression of women in the lower and most exploited layers of the proletariat: poor and exploited workers, women who are excluded from the mainstream labour market,

undocumented women and migrant women (including children), and Indigenous women.

The hegemonic force of capitalism seeks to normalize all social behaviours that facilitate the accumulation of capital. This includes the exploitation of one person by another. Today, prostitution and pimping are among the worst and most cruel forms of capitalist exploitation that specifically targets proletarian women. While there is a saying that “prostitution is the oldest profession in the world”, neoliberal ideology increasingly distorts the concept of prostitution and “pimping” into a legitimate commercial activity on par with other businesses. These are slippery semantics that turn prostitutes into “sex workers” and pimps into legitimate actors in the “sex industry”.

The proletarian feminist movement opposes all forms of exploitation connected to the sex industry, whether it is prostitution, pornography, sex tourism, or the commercial objectification of women’s bodies.

We oppose the capitalist model of society, which maintains and reproduces the commodification and commercialization of women.

4. build unity with proletarian men, while fighting against sexism

For women to participate in revolutionary struggle they need a place to organize, to gather, not only to transform themselves in the struggle, but also to take measures against the sexist behaviours and sexual oppression around them. In these places, women need to be able to speak freely about the oppression and violence they experience, about their victimization. They should be places where women learn to self-affirm, to discuss politics and struggle with each other as equals.

Even if proletarian feminist groups exclude men, they have as their objective to facilitate the participation

of women in organizations that wage broader political struggle.

Thus, we want to build a unity with men who share the same political goals, while banishing at the same time sexism and sexist conduct in our ranks. This dual task is necessary and will remain necessary until we completely transform the existing society.

Indeed, this work has its own contradictions. We must learn to wage the struggle alongside men, while preserving that which unites us.

The men who will struggle with us need to recognize their own sexism and fight against it. For instance, it is necessary to identify and criticize those actions that we consider to be domination. We will neither tolerate nor condemn these actions without first addressing them according to their severity. It is necessary to struggle with these men in order to help transform them.

The proletarian feminist groups will adopt and implement the following:

- To list and discuss all behaviours and conduct that will not be tolerated and that need to be banned; this will be for women to decide, and not for the bourgeois courts and legal system

- To adopt these principles and bring them to the various organizations we work with for adoption

- To rely on these principles in denouncing sexism and sexist behaviour when they occur so that concrete measures can be taken (apology, reprimand, expulsion, etc...)

- To build mechanisms that collectively resolve conflicts related to sexist behaviour

- To maintain discussion and debate with men that need to be reformed and re-educated with confidence

- To avoid vague and generalized accusations

We aim to expose problems and work toward resolving them without unnecessary antagonism. We will identify what needs to be changed and transformed, and will take measures to ensure unacceptable behaviours and actions are stopped.

We must also strive for self-

transformation and overcome our self-imposed limitations.

The Proletarian Feminist groups are places for self-transformation, which will help educate us in recognizing harmful behaviours both in ourselves and in others. In capitalist society, which still holds firmly to patriarchal values, both men and women reproduce behaviours expected of their genders.

As women, we sometimes act against our own political development. We don't make the effort to go all the way in resolving problems and clearing obstacles in our path. We give up too quickly! We take the path of least resistance, the path that is most comfortable. We often see ourselves as individual victims that must bear the brunt of sexist behaviour instead of seeing ourselves as part of a collective of women in solidarity. Furthermore, as a collective that could transform our everyday realities by first demanding that they be changed, and who will defend themselves and criticize openly; a collective that will struggle all the way to the end.

We must learn, develop, and increase our fighting capacity, to debate and to participate in political life in all its forms.

5. proletarian women at the forefront— our plan in the political struggle!

Our goal is to increase the number of proletarian women participating in struggle and expand their political influence within our revolutionary political organizations.

Through their struggles, proletarian women are well placed to convince more and more women that the problem of achieving complete gender equality is not an isolated problem. It is not a “woman’s problem” separate from other political issues. A definitive solution to this problem will not be achieved unless there are fundamental changes to the existing society.

We refuse to limit our struggle

strictly to “women’s” issues. We believe that women need to participate fully and directly in the common political struggle, to be present in great numbers at every decision-making level, and help guide the political and activist organizations of the masses and of revolutionaries in the fight against capitalism and imperialism.

The Proletarian Feminist Groups that we are calling for will be places for the organization and political education of women. They will aim to develop leadership so that women can participate as equals in the political struggle: these will be places for education on all fronts. They will allow us to reflect, to discuss, to intervene, to participate, to direct, and in sum, to “learn through struggling”. These groups will create the conditions that favour the participation and leadership of proletarian women in the general political movement.

We must collectively ensure that conditions are met so that the legitimate rage of proletarian women finds

correct expression. Proletarian women will want to join an organization that will facilitate their organizing, to learn to combat, and above all, to militantly confront the old world and work toward the destruction of capitalism, toward building a new people's power. It is therefore up to us and to all those who want revolutionary transformation of this rotting society to elaborate the program for women's liberation, and to win over proletarian women to the struggle for revolution and for people's power.

we call for the creation of proletarian feminist groups

- To mobilize in an openly anti-capitalist and class-oriented perspective: proletarian women of all origins, employed or unemployed, queer and transwomen, and any women activists committed to fighting against all the specific oppressions, including gender expression, sexuality, and

race.

- To develop through investigation and discussion, demands that meet the specific needs of women in their communities.
- To fight through political action (demos, calls, rallies, actions of all kinds) against any attack on women's rights from a class perspective.
- To educate themselves about the general political struggle by actively supporting, by establishing alliances, or by joining political organizations that advocate proletarian feminism and against capitalism for a new society.
- To lead the struggle for proletarian feminism and its program for women's liberation, to be an essential part of the general program of revolutionary organizations fighting against capitalism and imperialism.

1. Joining a Proletarian Feminist Group is a political commitment. The PFG will not be groups that provide community services. These will be groups that are oriented to struggle, actions organization, education and debate. They will defend the proletarian feminist and anti-

the programme for liberation as contained in the Manifesto. They will do all this openly. These groups will advance demands, participate and initiate struggles in their neighbourhoods, regions, and institutions. They will mobilize with the objective of rallying the greatest number of proletarian women.

2. Joining a Proletarian Feminist Group means, above all, initiating local activity that will encourage the participation and practice of women.

It is better to start with a small group of 2 or 4 and to mobilize women one-by-one according to geographical proximity. We aim to multiply these groups in every territory. Each region, locality, or institution has its own specific characteristics. For example, immigrants/migrants are more numerous in Montreal or Toronto than in Sherbrooke or Thunder Bay. In the student milieu, we run the risk of recruiting those who lean toward intellectualism, even if they are low-income students than we do recruiting proletarians with less

education; that is the plain reality! It is the totality of our movement that will generate the most diversity. We need to gain a real understanding of the environments where we agitate in order to mobilize proletarian women around their needs and their struggles.

The PFGs aim to collectively produce materials for education sessions, for mobilization, and to organize their distribution for a given action, to denounce cuts in social assistance, to support a particular struggle or campaign, etc...

In correctly organizing our work, we must:

- Conduct investigations of our milieus
- Produce our tools (tracts, brochures, pamphlets, etc...)
- Identify places where we will find proletarian women
- Make our groups visible
- Meet regularly
- Speak up
- Initiate public and political actions

Women must defend their right to assert themselves, to fight, to fully and directly participate, to organize and to develop their leadership in the struggle. This is the goal of the proletarian women's movement that we would like to build.

Our meeting places and gatherings must facilitate the participation of proletarian women. It's up to us to go to them, and not for them to come to us! We will spread out and make ourselves visible to proletarian women in their neighbourhoods, their places of work, in front of grocery stores, at the day care centres. We should meet with them in their homes, or at least nearby. We strive for shorter and more efficient meetings instead of ones that extend endless debate and lead nowhere.

The Proletarian Feminist Groups will be places for collective political education, for studying the different political and revolutionary experiences of social transformation across history and the role of women in these struggles. They will

be places for training in dialectical materialism rather than idealism (which is what we are taught at school) and for the expression of our points of view; for debate in spite of disagreements. They will be places for developing our capacity for criticism, but also for self-criticism in the hope of building a unified point of view.

The Proletarian Feminist Groups are places for debates. Wherever they exist, these groups will initiate debate with other women's organizations, and will rise to the occasion in clarifying and defending the proletarian feminist point of view in all actual struggles (For example, the current debate on the so-called Charter of Quebec Values on "secularism".)



the proletarian feminist front toronto

facebook.com/proletarianfeministfronttoronto

profemtoronto@gmail.com