TESTING "THE CANADIAN DIVERSITY MODEL"

Hate, Bias and Fear After September 11th

BY John Biles and Humera Ibrahim

IN THE 2001 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CANADIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION, CHIEF COMMISSIONER MICHELLE FALARDEAU-RAMSAY OBSERVED, "CANADA HAS A REPUTATION AS A PLACE WHERE PEOPLE FROM EVERY CORNER OF THE WORLD CAN LIVE IN HARMONY WITH MUTUAL RESPECT AND TOLERANCE. THAT REPUTATION IS WELL-DESERVED. BUT IN THE FALL OF 2001, OUR RESPECT FOR EACH OTHER WAS PUT TO THE TEST. IN SOME WAYS, OUR RESPONSE WAS ADMIRABLE; IN OTHER WAYS, NOT SO" (CANADIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION 2002: 4).

The reputation to which the commissioner refers is one that has been built most extensively since the end of the Second World War (Dreisziger 1988, Jaworsky 1979; Joshee 1995, Pal 1993, and Schiffer-Grahame 1989), but one which other researchers suggest has been developing for well over a century (Biles and Panousos 1999; Day 2000). While far from a coherent 'model' *per se*, the Canadian approach to fashioning a country composed of extremely diverse peoples does have some core elements: an emphasis on bringing Canadians of diverse backgrounds together; fostering a culture of inclusion; and a commitment to core values of equality, accommodation and acceptance.

This approach has been largely driven by Canadians themselves and is an amalgam of initiatives of individuals, communities, different levels of government and judicial decisions.

Of late there has been a number of attempts to meld this approach into an explicit "Canadian Diversity Model." Two of the most recognizable attempts are Prime Minister Jean Chrétien's "Canadian Way" speech at a conference on "Progressive Governance for the 21st Century" in Berlin 2-3 June, 2000 and a paper commissioned by the Department of Canadian Heritage from the Canadian Policy Research Network (2001) entitled, "The 'Canadian Diversity Model': Repetoire in Search of a Framework."

These attempts to articulate a coherent model are matched by a number of stock-taking exercises in the field of diversity undertaken by the Multiculturalism Program and other elements of the Department of Canadian Heritage. In preparation for the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (WCAR), two major exercises were undertaken. The first was a series of consultations with communities across the country, and the second was a pair of research studies that examined reports made to governments in Canada over the last twenty years in the broad field of diversity (Jedwab et. al. 2000, Davis and Brandt Castellano 2000). Each was designed to gauge the state of our "diversity model" and ascertain where future work needed to be targeted. In addition, a database of Canadian graduate work on diversity in the last twenty years was prepared for the Multiculturalism Program (Mulholland 2001). Collectively, these stock-taking exercises painted a picture of an actively engaged population.

Thus, many Canadians, non-governmental organizations and the Government of Canada were engaged in an exercise to refocus the "Canadian Diversity Model" to tackle new and emerging issues and to focus on entrenched issues that had not been successfully addressed. A sizeable Canadian delegation attended WCAR in Durban South Africa in early September 2001. Many of the delegation had not returned to Canada when all commercial air traffic ground to a halt in North America in the wake of the terrorist attacks on the twin towers in New York City, the Pentagon and in Pennsylvania.

POST-SEPTEMBER 11TH BACKLASH

Canadians and the Government of Canada were not resting upon their diversity laurels, but were actively trying to figure out how to proceed more effectively. Nevertheless, there was considerable confusion and several Canadian communities paid a price for that confusion. Muslim, Jewish, Hindu and Sikh Canadians all once again found themselves on the receiving end of unjust treatment meted out by their neighbours. Arab Canadians, and in at least one puzzling case Aboriginal Canadians, also found themselves victimized by hate and bias.

Hate and bias activity is notoriously difficult to monitor. Different police forces record incidents differently and there is no centralized reporting structure to allow a truly national comparison. (The Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics at Statistics Canada has examined the issue and has a forthcoming report on how this should be tackled in the future.) As a result, to examine the hate and bias incidents that followed the September 11, terrorist attacks, we will use a combination of statistics, some collected by non-governmental organizations and others by police forces. The result is a portrait of some of the reported incidents, many more are likely to have gone unreported.

In addition, we will examine the sense of fear that gripped many Canadians following the events of September 11, and the hate crimes and bias activity that followed. This is essential since, as criminologist Julian Roberts notes, "The statistics fail to convey a sense of the true harm inflicted upon the individuals and groups that are the target of hate crimes" (Roberts 1995: 3).

ISLAMAPHOBIA

As the community most commonly linked to Osama Bin Laden, Muslim Canadians bore the brunt of hate and bias incidents. Although generally those who engage in hate and bias activities are not terribly discerning. For example, a Hindu temple was burnt to the ground, Sikh Canadians reported prejudice and an Aboriginal man was attacked in British Columbia. Jewish Canadians, perennial targets of hate in Canada, were also targeted by hate and bias.

The Muslim Canadian community has settled in Canada in large numbers fairly recently (roughly 600,000 Muslims live in Canada according to community estimates, but most have arrived since the 1970s). As a result, the community is not as institutionally complete as the Jewish community (356,315 Jews lived in Canada in 1991. Jews have been in Canada since the 18th century, but the first big wave came to Winnipeg in the 1870s according to historians Abella (1999) and Tulchinsky (1992)). Nevertheless, a sizeable number of community organizations helped Muslim Canadians contend with the backlash aimed at them. These organizations included the Canadian Muslim Civil Liberties Association, Canadian Labour Congress, Council on American-Islamic

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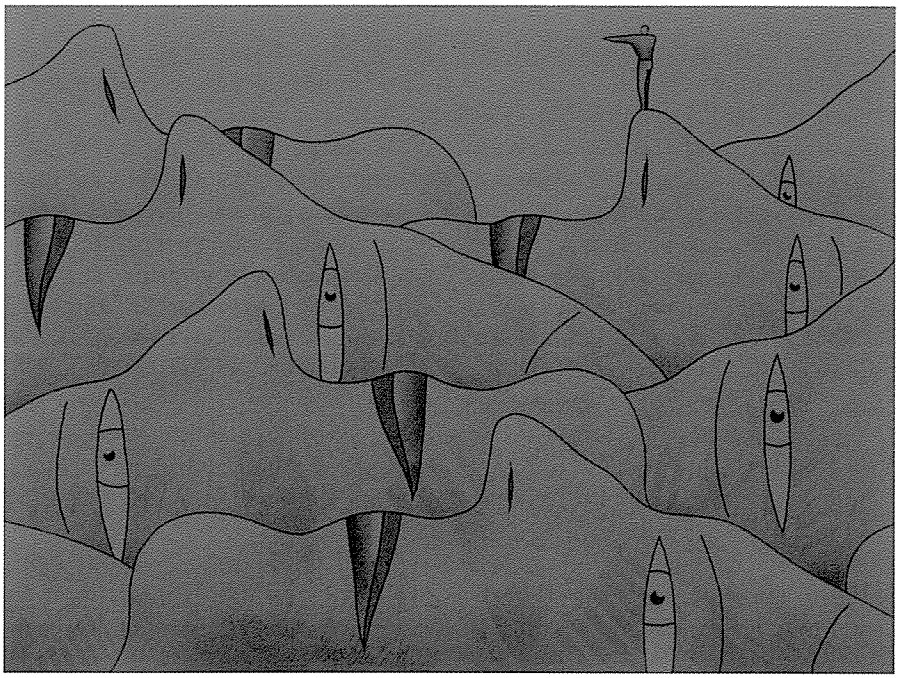
Relations Canada, Canadian Council of Muslim Women, Canadian Race Relations Foundation, B'Nai Brith Canada, Canadian Arab Federation, Center for Research Action on Race Relations, Federation of Muslim Women, Canadian Association of Jews and Muslims, Council of Agencies Serving South Agencies, Afghan Women's Organization, Urban Alliance on Race Relations, Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Agencies, Chinese Canadian National Council, Jamaican Canadian Association, and the Canadian Islamic Congress.

The organization that took the lead in tracking hate and bias activities was the Council on American-Islamic Relations Canada (CAIR-CAN). In a press release on November 20, 2001 CAIR-CAN reported 110 anti-Muslim incidents across Canada in the two months following September 11th. When considering these figures, it should be noted that there is likely to be significant differences between incidents that will be reported to a non-governmental organization and those that will be reported to the police. The variance is probably especially pronounced among newcomers to Canada who may have negative perceptions of the justice system shaped by experiences in their country of origin, or by negative experiences with the Canadian justice system. Nevertheless, many incidents were reported to the Toronto Police Service: 57 hate and bias incidents aimed at Muslims were reported in Toronto in 2001: 1 arson, 13 assaults, 2 bomb threats, 5 criminal harassments, 20 mischief, 1 robbery and 15 threat incidents (Toronto Police Service 2001).

ANTI-SEMITISM

The Canadian Jewish community has faced discrimination in Canada for over fifty years, most notably on the eve of the Second World War (Abella and Troper 1983). As a result, the community has developed solid infrastructure to tackle hate and bias. Indeed, much of Canada's hate crime legislation springs from the work of the Jewish community (Walker 2001).

The level of hate and bias is so consistent that B'Nai Brith Canada publishes an annual audit of anti-Semitic incidents. The 2001 Audit reported 286 anti-Semitic incidents in 2001, roughly the same level as 2000, but an increase of 35% over the figures of five years ago. According to the report 35% of all incidents were reported in the aftermath of September 11th, with 20% in the immediate aftermath and close to an additional 15% in October (B'Nai Brith 2001).



For 2001, the Toronto Police Service reported 60 incidents of anti-Semitism: 1 mischief, 1 threat, 1 advocate genocide, 3 assaults, 2 bomb threats, 7 criminal harassment, 7 mischief, 24 threats and 14 wilful promotion of hate (Toronto Police Service 2001). While there were more anti-Semitic incidents than anti-Muslim incidents reported by the Toronto Police Service, it is important to note that the Muslim community was much more likely to experience physical violence than their Jewish counterparts, especially assaults.

HATE AND BIAS

B'Nai Brith Canada reported that the various police reports across the country report "a spike in hate crimes in general during that volatile period [September-October 2001], targeting minority ethnic and religious groups" (B'Nai Brith 2001). This was reinforced by Krista Foss who reported in The Globe and Mail that police in Ottawa and Calgary confirmed that "'hate crimes doubled in the 30-day period after the terrorist attacks and police confirmed that the incidents ranged 'from assaults, arson, death threats and bomb threats to slurs yelled out of passing cars, vandalism and venomous e-mails.' Police in Montreal, Calgary and Ottawa reported 40, 24 and 44 hate-related incidents respectively" (CAIR-CAN 2001, Foss 2001: A6).

The Toronto Police Service's "2001 Hate Bias Statistical Report" recorded an increase in reported hate crimes in Toronto from 204 in 2000 to 338 in 2001, a 66 percent increase. The report notes, "The Toronto Police Service received 121 hate occurrences directly related to the terrorist attacks. This figure represents 90 percent of the total increase in hate crimes from the year 2000" (Toronto Police Service 2001).

What stands out most clearly from the statistics is the clear predominance of religious and race related hate crime occurrences. Hate crimes based on religion ballooned from 35 incidents in 2000 to 118 in 2001, representing 36 percent of the total hate crime occurrences. While relatively less frequent, hate crime motivated by nationality also increased dramatically from 9 incidents to 35 in 2001.

FEAR

Researchers examining hate and bias activity observe that the crime is against both the individual and the

community in general through lingering fear. After September 11 fear gripped much of the western world and it preyed particularly heavily upon the minds of minority communities within western societies.

Allan Fotheringham, a senior journalist, went so far as to observe that the racism facing Canadians in the wake of September 11 was, in fact, terrorism by another name (Fotheringham 2001: 88). The fear felt by the Muslim Canadian community in particular manifested itself in closed schools, cautionary tips on websites, a wallet-sized card advising Canadians of their rights, and a number of children and youth carrying cell phones with a pre-programmed emergency number (Page 2001: A7). One Ottawa woman mused in the *Ottawa Citizen*, "I've always thought that Canada was the land of freedom and multiculturalism, but now it doesn't seem like it. Most Muslims came here seeking a better life, but why do we have to live in fear?" (Zeidan 2001).

Community fear in the immediate aftermath of September 11 came to a particularly ugly head on two occasions. First, when a Muslim teenager was pulled off his bike in Ottawa and badly beaten (Roman and Korn 2001: A4). Second, when a 50-year old Muslim woman was beaten up on a Toronto bus (Madaka 2002: 1). Fear from high profile cases like these two was compounded by a number of anthrax threats directed at the Jewish community. The Toronto Police Service reported 79 criminal biological threats, 19 including hate/bias motivation (Toronto Police Service 2001: 22).

During debate over the *Anti-Terrorism Act* (C-36) the fear felt by Arab and Muslim Canadians was highlighted repeatedly. For example, then president of the Canadian Arab Federation, John Asfour, told a parliamentary committee "some members of the community are so afraid of mistreatment that they have stopped leaving their homes" (Tibbets 2001b). Similarly, a spokesman for the Muslim Lawyers Association, Khalid Baksh told a senate committee "We have issues up and down the line because of this climate of fear ... C-36 ratchets it up to an unbearable level that you can feel it every time you walk into the community" (Tibbetts 2001c). This fear may have been well-founded. Roco Galati, a lawyer renowned for defending Canadians accused of terrorism, estimated that 800 Muslims and Arabs were detained by Canadian immigration officials following the terrorist attacks (Tibbets 2001b).

Fear of the state also manifested itself in many ways in the months following September 11. Restrictions on charities following the passage of the *Charities Registration (Security Information) Act* (C-16) led many Muslim Canadians to stop their charitable donations or remittances to "impoverished relatives overseas for fear of being investigated by police" (Tibbetts 2001c). Given the importance of remittances to international development (DeSipio 2000) this may prove to be an extremely harmful outcome. Various security alerts also increased fear in minority communities. For example, in January 2002, as the hunt continued for potential terrorist suspects, the announcement that a Tunisian suspect was sought led to a perceptible level of fear in Montreal's Tunisian community (Brooks 2002a; 2002b).

The extremely contentious issue of profiling was debated widely in public discourse. The announcement of a special police unit in Ontario to "hunt down illegal immigrants with outstanding deportation warrants and deport them" drew both then Premier Mike Harris and one of his security advisors, retired Major-General Lewis Mackenzie, into the debate. They both claimed that racial profiling was a problem and Mackenzie stated "I find that [profiling] distasteful and only increases tensions," yet at the same time maintained that "closer scrutiny of particular ethnic groups at certain checkpoints is an aspect of security" (Schmidt 2001: A5).

Many proponents of profiling, especially newspaper editorials, argue that it is only common sense that it be allowed (*National Post* 16 February 2002: A17, Gillis 2001: A5, *Vancouver Sun* 7 June 2002: 13-14, Krauthammer 2002: 60, Morgan 2002: A14). On the other hand, as political scientist Reg Whitaker pointed out, "[Profiling] inevitably involves actual injustice" (Gillis 2001: A5). This point of view was taken up by the New Democratic Party when it censored the government:

> *Just as harmful, though not noted in the Report [Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration Report on border issues], is a more subtle mythology that has emerged that equates immigrants – especially refugees – with terrorism. The most disturbing manifestation of this is the association by some Canadians of specific groups with a terrorist threat based on race or religious beliefs. Incidents including vandalism, insults and assaults have been reported across Canada. This is unacceptable and a pro-active government response is necessary. Instead, the government has sent the exact opposite signal by sanctioning its officials' profiling of certain immigrant and refugee applicants ... (Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration 2001: New Democratic Party Dissenting Opinion).*

Critics of profiling argued that it would be ineffective (Berck 2002: A14, or that it put Canada on a slippery slope

The victimization associated with hate-motivated crimes can be more severe when compared to non-hate crimes. Hate crimes result in a disproportionate level of harm, which affects not only the individual, but also the entire community, associated with the victim.

CRRF Appeal for Ongoing Vigilance

that would lead to greater racism and discrimination in Canada across the whole spectrum of activities (Hurst 2001: A30, Ovenden 2001: A1, Saloojee 2002: A15 .

When polled, Canadians appear almost evenly divided although slightly more in favour of profiling immediately after September 11. In an EKOS poll conducted from September 24-26, 2001 50 percent of respondents agreed that it was acceptable for police and customs officials to give special attention to individuals of Arabic origin, while 34 percent disagreed and 15 percent opted for neither (Gwyn 2001: A6). However, two months later in an IPSOS-Reid poll only 37 percent of respondents agreed with racial profiling of people of Arab appearance at the border and 36 percent disagreed (Lindgren 2001: A1).

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The largest spectre that raised its head over the last year has been the question of internment. The Prime Minister moved quickly to dispel fears, yet constant media references kept the concern in the centre of public discourse (Harper 2001: A8). Minorities in Canada decried the imposition of security measures that limited civil rights and argued that this was the slippery slope to internment (Cooper 2001: A17, Hebert 2001:A15). The right wing critics of diversity argued that this might be a justifiable measure. Journalist Dan Gardner in the *Ottawa Citizen* noted that 'columnist Diane Francis called for mass arrests under the authority of the (long defunct) War Measures Act" (Gardner 2001: A18). Even more frighteningly, however, journalist David Warren wrote in the *Ottawa Citizen*, "What I fear is that we are now moving instead in the direction of mass expulsions, and internment camps. And let me make this clear as day: this is not something that I want to see, it is something that I dread. It would represent the death of an important part of our old 'liberal dream' that is also my dream, a closing of the 'open society.' But how can it be prevented, given the way the world is now moving?" (Warren 2001: A14).

Mutual suspicion also fuelled fears. While communities were afraid of immigration officials, there was also a fear campaign targeted at then Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Elinor Caplan, who received 15 to 20 pieces of hate mail per day following September 11th (Aubry 2001b).

CONCLUSION

In any exercise as complex as the reaction of Canadians and the Government of Canada there are lessons to be learned that will guide future actions and allow society to handle future crises. This was definitely true post-September 11. To be sure, there were mistakes made, and there are knowledge gaps that need to be addressed. However, no domestic crises emerged that indicated any fundamental failures of "the Canadian diversity model." Indeed, much of the response commends the resilience of Canadians and their communities. In roundtables conducted with Canadian youth, D-Code found that "in the aftermath of September 11 our respondents became more aware of the importance of multiculturalism and tolerance not only in words, but, more importantly, in actions. They indicated that episodes of ethnic intolerance made them more adamant about the need to protect and support multiculturalism as a core Canadian value" (D-Code 2002: 4). This response and that of Canadians and the Government of Canada suggests that our collective commitment to social inclusion in Canada may have been strengthened rather than weakened by the post-September 11 fallout. This is not to discount the hate, bias and fear that some Canadians experienced. Rather, it is to emphasize that a renewed commitment to eradicating these types of incidents is required.

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