Conspiracy of Silence: Honour-Based Violence in North America

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CONSPIRACY OF SILENCE: HONOUR-BASED VIOLENCE IN NORTH AMERICA

ARUNA PAPP

To say that I was overwhelmed with the invitation to speak this afternoon would be an understatement. Thank you for having me. It has been a very long journey for me to reach this podium. I often attend conferences, workshops, and events such as this aimed at front line service providers, academics, and others who are passionate about eliminating violence against women. However, quite often the voices of the women who have survived violence are missing. I hope that in the few minutes allocated to me, I will be able to give you a glimpse of what it is like to live in an honour-based culture; where a female knows from the day she is born that her life is in danger because she was born the wrong gender.2

I was born in India, the oldest of seven children—six girls and one boy. My formative years were governed by three constants: my father’s service in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church; the culture of honour and shame that dictated the behaviour of my family and everyone I knew; and my yearning for an education that continually eluded me. When I was seventeen my parents arranged for me to be married to a much older man, and at twenty-one I immigrated to Canada with two young daughters, an abusive husband, and the equivalent of third grade education. There I slowly awoke to the rights and protections Canada offered women. After embarking on this long and frightening journey, I ultimately achieved two master’s degrees, founded three agencies, which assist women abuse victims, and wrote my memories in Unworthy Creature: A Punjabi Daughter’s Memoir of Honour, Shame and Love.3

1 Counsellor/therapist and research assistant for Canada’s Frontier Centre for Public Policy.
In honour-based cultures, a woman’s ultimate role in life is to be married and become a mother of sons. Daughters must remain “chaste and asexual before marriage” and then be a virtuous wife after marriage.  

"[T]he social stigma against any kind of premarital sexuality is so strong that women are held responsible for any assumed promiscuity, including rape." Once married, she becomes the responsibility of her husband and his family. Like millions of other women, I too believed that this was my kismet, my fate, and that there was no other option. It is every family’s fear that young, unmarried girls might do something that will bring shame and humiliation to the family name. If this occurs, a family’s dishonour can only be remedied through publicly punishing the offending daughter, such as a forced marriage or honour killing. Every female born in these cultures knows, from birth, the danger around her. I left my father’s house of abuse and moved into my husband’s house of abuse, threats, and intimidation.

My father was the eldest son in a large extended Punjabi family. In both India and Canada, he was a church pastor with the Seventh Day Adventist Church. He was a well-respected man, a wonderful preacher, and a God-fearing man. I loved and adored my father. I listened to his sermons and believed every word he said. I lived for his approval until he died a few years ago. There was nothing I would not have done for him.

However, my father’s mother, our Dadi Ji, often referred to my sisters and me as “curses, which had engulfed her beloved son.” Our Dadi Ji also cursed our mother for giving birth to six girls. She would often yell, “You have produced stones which hang around my son’s neck. They will drown him in debt and shame.” Dadi Ji regularly threatened to throw us in the well; confident that she could get away with it. Dadi Ji was fair skinned, with light-coloured eyes and hair. She was a beautiful woman, and, more importantly, she had six caches, or sons. Our mother believed that Dadi Ji had the power to get away with killing her daughters. Whenever our mother went to the bathroom, she would say to me, “stay alert, watch your younger sisters, don’t get off the cot, don’t wander away, and scream loudly if you have to.” Instinct told me that she was not warning me to look out for snakes and scorpions. Additionally, Dadi Ji’s neighbours often stopped by to sympathize with her and they recommended trips to holy shrines to beg for miracles.

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4 Sandeep Hunjan & Shelagh Towson, “Virginity is Everything”: Sexuality in the Context of Intimate Partner Violence in the South Asian Community, in BODY EVIDENCE: INTIMATE VIOLENCE AGAINST SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN IN AMERICA 53, 54 (Shamita Das Dasgupta ed., 2007).
5 Id. (citations omitted).
6 Id. at 53.
7 PAPP WITH KAY, supra note 3, at 9-19 (describing the conversations and interactions with the author’s Dadi Ji in detail).
Mothers, aunts, other older women in the extended family, and neighbours monitor young girls’ every move. Warnings about being a chaste daughter and virtuous wife are heard in songs on the radio, in storybooks, in lullabies, through neighbourhood gossip, and in the media. By the time I was eight, I witnessed various forms of violence against females. I saw two newborn females thrown on a garbage pile, and, when I was fourteen, I watched a beautiful, educated neighbour be set on fire by her brother because she refused to participate in a marriage arranged by her family. These events further cemented in my mind the reality in India—if girls disobeyed the men in the family, they could be killed. Women were considered the property of men and nothing more. I knew at a young age that girls and women were not valued solely because we were born females. Girls growing up in honour cultures are seen as sources of scandal, shame, and dishonour to the family name. These girls are warned about danger lurking outside the family door. What is seldom discussed is the danger within the family; where uncles, male cousins, and other trusted males have access to the young girls. If the girls are abused or violated by these trusted male relatives, the family stays silent. It is assumed that it is always the girl’s fault, and the men are never held responsible. I innately knew the dangers within the family, even when I did not have the words to explain it.

I witnessed Dadi Ji torment my mother, I heard the neighbours needling Dadi Ji, and I heard my Dadi Ji threatening to do away with her granddaughters because she felt they were a burden on her son. However, no matter what was said, I believed, with every fiber in me, that our father would never allow anyone to harm us. I believed that he loved us. He was a church pastor, and he preached about God’s love, loving our neighbours, and being kind to each other. We all loved our father.

One day I woke up early, anxious to say goodbye to my father who was going away on a tour with missionaries, and I saw my parents kneeling by their bed with my father’s hand on my mother’s head. With tears running down both of their faces, my father prayed: “Dear Jesus, I have dedicated my life to your services, and all I ask in return is a son. You have burdened me with daughters.” I curled back into my bed sheets, and I knew at that moment that Dadi Ji could, in fact, get away with throwing me in the well. Hearing my father beg God for a son made the danger to my life more real. I believed that I would never be loved or valued by my father because I was the wrong gender. I understood his pain and desperation, and I loved my father even more.

The cursing of my Dadi Ji towards my sisters, myself, and our mother now made sense. The tauntings of the neighbours made me realize the shame and humiliation my father must have felt. I did not want to be the source of shame because I loved my father. We began to pray five times per day to Jesus for a baby brother. Sunrise and sunset worship included
beseeching songs, and the mealtime prays begged to have a brother to share our meals, be a blessing to us, and lessen our father’s burdens. Our endless prayers were answered when I was eight years old. My father woke me up crying as he spread the good news that “[t]he savior of our honour and family name was born.”

When I arrived in Canada in 1972, my parents, young siblings, and many other members of the extended family had already immigrated to the country through a church sponsorship. There, father started a church for South Asian Christians, which, by the time I arrived, was growing expeditiously. My small immediate family, my two daughters and their father, were the last to arrive.

In 1981, after being in Canada for some time, I was fortunate enough to find a job at York University in Toronto as a short order cook, where I worked the early morning shift. At noon I went home, did the household chores, waited for the children to return from school, and then I rushed off to my second job as a locker room attendant, also at York. My family felt that because my husband was an educated man, he should have a job where he wore a suit and a tie. He did not have the proper qualifications, however, or Canadian experience, so finding such employment was a challenge for him. Immigrant women in many Western countries often take up menial jobs regardless of their education in order to support their families, but immigrant men often find it difficult to find jobs in their field of expertise or are unable to receive certifications. My bringing home two pay cheques made him feel like less of a man and he blamed me for being a threat to his manhood. He used this as an excuse for his abuse.

One afternoon, I was working in the locker room at York when a woman approached me and asked, “What are you writing? What makes you weep?” Startled and concerned that she might report me to my supervisor, I told her that I was writing about how disappointed I was in how my life turned out in Canada. I explained how I believed what the missionaries told me about Canada being a Christian country and that people in Canada are more blessed than people in heathen countries. I also explained my family life and the abuse I was enduring. I said that I was sure it was somehow my fault for not being a proper Christian.

Elspeth Hayworth, the woman who approached me in the locker room, was the Community Liaison Officer at York. She told me that the apartment buildings surrounding the University were full of new immigrants from South Asian countries and that there was a high incidence of domestic violence in this population. She also indicated that social services were unable to help them to the full extent because many South

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8 Id. at 7.
Asian women refused to press charges against their husbands. Even if a woman did press charges, she often did not show up in court. Most of the women recanted their stories and denied the abuse had ever taken place. There was little that the police or social services agencies could do to help them prevent or stop the abuse they were enduring. The various outreach projects aimed at this community failed for those same reasons.

Elspeth invited me to attend seminars hosted by women on the campus. At the seminars, I witnessed something I had never seen before: women arguing, debating, and yelling passionately about finding an inclusive terminology, a lexicon, for violence against women. They were determined to find terminology that could serve as a blanket under which all women who had experienced violence—regardless of race, ethnicity, caste, class, or cultural background—could feel included, similar to a sisterhood of domestic violence victims. Some of the terms suggested included “domestic violence,” “conjugal violence,” “spouse abuse,” “intimate partner violence,” and “wife abuse.” To me, the list seemed to grow longer each time they met. In their desire to be inclusive, however, they did not realize that they were excluding me due to their lack of understanding of my experience living as an immigrant in an abusive relationship. By not considering my ethnicity, race, and culture, they were refuting my identity. I felt that these women were determined to teach me to forget who I was and become one of them. I did not have the language or the skill to explain myself at the time, so I remained silent and listened. This feeling of being excluded generated a passion in me to develop and present Cultural Competency Workshops to frontline service providers working in the area of violence prevention.

While at York, I also feared that my family, church members, or people from my community would find out that I was associating with women and listening to deliberations which were contrary to the teachings of my parents, the church, my community, and my culture. The women participating in the debates called themselves Feminists, a term meant to empower women. However, I soon learned that their form of empowerment for women would not be appreciated in my social environment. While concepts differ from region to region and even within classes, religions, and ethnicities throughout South Asian countries, what remains constant is that a woman is defined in terms of her reproduction ability, in order to produce sons, and her subordination to men. This monolithic view cuts across all class, caste, and religious groups. Women are expected to sacrifice their individual identity, desires, and wishes to the demands of their fathers, husbands, brothers, in-laws, and their community. What they were saying

challenged everything I knew and practiced. I knew how dangerous this new learning was, but it was also magnetic. I wanted to learn more, and this threw me into turmoil.

Feminism made me question my whole upbringing, encouraged me to be judgmental about patriarchy, and challenged my loyalty to the men in my life. Feminism told me I had to be strong, forthright, and autonomous. On one hand, what they suggested felt enticing, and, on the other hand, it was clearly dangerous.

While I understood and appreciated their efforts in trying to generate equality in our experiences of abuse, I also witnessed their determination to deny or ignore the dimensions of my cultural constraints and how my experience of abuse was different than their experiences. By refusing to see me as a product of my cultural context, they assumed I would experience equity, but, in fact, what I felt was their need to ignore my identity and pretend that we were all the same just because we happened to be women dealing with male violence. It felt very much like tokenism.

At the time, I could not participate in the Feminist debates; I was trying to understand the magnitude of the problem they were discussing. Within the Canadian societal context, it was difficult for me to fathom that women in this country were also victims of domestic violence. As a new immigrant, uneducated, and unable to read English, I arrived believing what my father and the missionaries told me as a child during Bible classes. The missionaries taught me that in heaven there are mansions for the believers, rivers of milk, and no one goes hungry. They told me Canada was a Christian country and the people were blessed because they believed in the living God. The people in Canada were Christians, unlike the heathens of India, and because it was a Christian country blessed by God it was prosperous. I thought that when we were in Canada we would all have big homes and cars and no one would go hungry. After all, we were Christians, and we made it to the Christian country. We were entitled to the good life God gave to people who believed in him. I was told Canada was the closest place on earth to heaven. I believed it; why wouldn’t I? God said so, missionaries said so, and dad said so, so it must be true. However, the conviction I witnessed among the women advocates and the Feminists as I heard stories of abused white women forced me to believe that the missionaries might have overlooked a few details in their approval of the big picture.

At the same time, multiculturalism became an equally prominent philosophy that Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau decreed
would be Canada's guiding principle for a just society. Multiculturalism taught that judging the behavior of people from cultures, other than western Christian cultures, was patronizing and elitist.

Multiculturalism told me I should continue to live exactly as I always had because the inequality of value between men and women was part of my culture, and all cultures were deemed to be of equal value. What a paradox it all was. My educators, professors, colleagues, and the women debaters all provided me with the critical tools to compare my life with women's lives from other cultures, evaluate the differences, and pass judgment on my past experiences. It seemed quite ironic to me that those more educated than I was were telling me, on the one hand, to throw off the shackles of my past, and, on the other, advocates of multiculturalism wanted me to accept my patriarchal cultural chains with composure and, even, pride.

If I only had myself to think of, I would have found it easier to accept my kismet and remain silent. I thought that I could be both a strong Feminist at York and a submissive daughter and wife at home, and nobody would judge my duality. But I had two young daughters. I did not want them to accept their cultural kismets, but to claim the opportunities Canada had to offer. I wanted my daughters to know that they were as important and valued as any man. For them, I could not remain silent.

One day Elspeth asked me if I would consider giving up my current jobs at York University and work with her to develop an outreach project aimed at South Asian women who were victims of domestic violence. Elspeth also informed me that since I would be a full-time employee I could attend classes without having to pay tuition. Elspeth then recruited student volunteers to help me improve my English skills.

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10 See House of Commons Debates, 28th Parl., 3rd sess., Vol. 3 No. 187 (8 October 1971) at 8545-46 (Right Hon. P.E. Trudeau) (outlining the 1971 Multiculturalism Policy, which denounces the traditional view of Canada as a “bicultural country” and embraces an official policy of multiculturalism within a bilingual framework) (Can.). Prime Minister Trudeau stated:

I wish to emphasize the view of the government that a policy of multiculturalism within a bilingual framework is basically the conscious support of individual freedom of choice. We are free to be ourselves. But this cannot be left to chance. It must be fostered and pursued actively. If freedom of choice is in danger for some ethnic groups, it is in danger for all. It is the policy of this government to eliminate any such danger and to ‘safeguard’ this freedom. Id.

11 See id.

12 Id.

13 PAPP WITH KAY, supra note 3, at 133-45.
We met with several religious and community leaders to discuss the problem of domestic violence within the South Asian immigrant community. When South Asian immigrants come to Western countries, the patriarchal culture ideals follow, and this ideology is perpetuated in the home. As girls and women are influenced by Western culture, however, cultural conflict often arises between them and their families. This can lead to various types of domestic violence against these girls and women, including honour killings. Despite this, the leaders in the South Asian community denied that there was a domestic violence problem. The community leaders felt that to single out a particular community in this way was racist and perpetuating negative stereotyping. Additionally, since the women denied the abuse occurred, there was no credible documentation to support what we were alleging. These self-appointed leaders of the community felt that the media portrayed the South Asian community in a positive light and labeled it a “model immigrant community.” The leaders were concerned that if advocating on behalf of abused women would bring attention to the well-hidden issue of domestic violence, it would bring dishonour and shame to the community. It was very important to those leaders that the Canadian host community viewed the South Asian immigrants in a positive light; therefore, the issue of domestic violence could not be exposed. Threats followed, demanding silence on this topic. I, however, refused to join the conspiracy of silence.

For the past thirty years I have worked predominantly with South Asian clients, and my research is focused on culturally-driven violence within the South Asian community. I have worked with thousands of victims, and I have written extensively on violence in the South Asian immigrant community. I also founded three organizations, which assist immigrant families dealing with problems related to domestic violence and settlement. Now, hardly anyone can deny that domestic violence exists within this community.

Today, however, there is a new debate raging amongst those for whom stopping violence against women is a preoccupation. Throughout this country and globally—in coffee shops, on campuses, in the media, and

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14 Those organizations—Toronto Asian Community Centre, South Asian Family Support Services, and Gordon Ridge Family Resource Centre—are all located in the Toronto area.

in homes—concern is mounting about women who are being abused and killed in the name of family honour.  

Few people in the West understand what the term "honour killing" really means. These killings challenge the Western commitment to the multiculturalism ideal for, clearly, there is a cultural component to these crimes. Frontline service providers do not know what stance to adopt in reaction to violence embedded in culture. The focus of this debate is what to name and how to categorize crimes committed in the name of family honour. There are those who wish to deflect attention from the word honour—as in "honour killing" and "honour-based violence"—and insist that these acts are nothing more than normative domestic violence, partner-abuse violence, or abuse committed in a fit of passion. They further argue, "The term 'honour killing' must stop being used. It needs to be called what it is: murder, femicide, wrong.


17 An honour killing can be defined as:

[T]he murder of a woman for her allegedly dishonorable behavior. Male relatives deliberately kill a female member of their family for the purpose of absolving the family's honor, which has been marred by the woman's immoral conduct. In some cultures, this immoral misconduct, whether perceived or actual, is believed to shame the woman's family and community. The killings allegedly wash away the shame with blood and restore the tarnished honor. The scope of acts that can trigger an honor killing is vast, and a woman may be killed for acts ranging from engaging in adultery to refusing to dress modestly or cover her hair in public. Susanne J. Prochazka, There Is No Honor in Honor Killings: Why Women at Risk for Defying Sociosexual Norms Must Be Considered A "Particular Social Group" Under Asylum Law, 34 T. JEFFERSON L. REV. 445, 447-48 (2012) (footnotes omitted).

18 See id. at 488-49.

19 See, e.g., Rochelle L. Terman, To Specify or Single Out: Should We Use the Term "Honor Killing"?, 7 MUSLIM WORLD J. HUM. RTS. 1, 1-3 (2010) (noting some scholars and communities find the phrase “honor killing” controversial, racist, and misleading; arguing it is “used to promote violent stereotypes of particular communities, particularly Muslim minorities in North America and Europe”); see also Purna Sen, ‘Crimes of Honour,’ Value and Meaning, in ‘HONOUR’: CRIMES, PARADIGMS, AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN 42, 50-51 (Lynn Welchman & Sara Hossain eds., 2005) (describing “fit of fury” killings, where the brother, husband or father is simply overwhelmed by anger, fury or passion and in the heat of the moment kills his sister, wife or daughter).
Attaching the term ‘honour’ to these crimes empowers the perpetrators, allowing them to justify their thinking and actions.\(^{20}\)

Cultural defenders insist that domestic violence occurs in all cultures, so why place murders of immigrant women in a different category?\(^{21}\) Their concern is that if we highlight honour-related crimes, it will perpetuate racism and stereotype certain communities.\(^{22}\) The murders of young daughters in immigrant families will be viewed as exotic or foreign, with roots in ancient traditions.\(^{23}\) They feel it will bring shame and humiliation to the communities where these types of crimes occur.\(^{24}\)

However, Dr. Shahrzad Mojab, a professor at the University of Toronto who has appeared as expert witness for issues relating to honour killings on several occasions, stated that honour killings have “been recognized as a particular form of violence against women.”\(^{25}\) Additionally, Dr. Purna Sen, former Head of Human Rights Common Secretariat, suggests six key factors, which distinguish honour-based violence from other forms of violence:

1. gender relations that problematise and control women’s behaviour, shaping and controlling women’s sexuality in particular;
2. the role of women in policing and monitoring women’s behaviour;
3. collective decisions regarding punishment, or in upholding the actions considered appropriate, for transgressions of these boundaries;
4. the potential for women’s participation in killings;
5. the ability to reclaim honour through enforced compliance or killings;
6. state sanction of such killings through recognition of honour as motivation and mitigation.\(^{26}\)

Violence against women is a global phenomenon that is rooted in patriarchy; however, the manifestation of patriarchy is rooted in cultural


\(^{21}\) See Terman, *supra* note 19, at 6.

\(^{22}\) See id. at 15-22.

\(^{23}\) See id. at 10-11, 17-18.

\(^{24}\) See id. at 14-15.


\(^{26}\) Sen, *supra* note 19, at 50.
There are certain forms of violence against women that are embedded in specific cultural values and beliefs. There are cultural ideologies that support and sustain social structures, which permit and condone specific forms of violence against women. Women are trained from birth to remain silent about their lot in life, because they were born the wrong gender.

Violence against women in Western societies differs from the violence perpetrated in communities where the ideology of family honour is the norm. Culturally driven violence includes the preference for sons, forced marriages, dowry deaths, child marriages, and female genital mutilation, just to name a few. These forms of violence against women are not only particular to many immigrant societies, but they are also condoned by the societies. There is a great deal of cultural variation in patterns and manifestations of violence in honour-based societies, and the consequences to transgressions are also very different. It is culture that provides the script for gender roles and the repercussion for any deviation from these ascribed roles. These patriarchal, honour-based cultures serve not only to maintain honour-based violence as a norm, but also to silence the victim through collective shame. The self-appointed religious and community leaders demand this silence.

28 See, e.g., PAPP WITH KAY, supra note 3, at vi (citing the author’s own culture as “an honour-based culture, in which, from the day she is born to the day she dies, a female’s every waking moment is consecrated to sustaining family honour” and one in which “gendered inequities flourish” in silence).
29 See id. at iii-iv.
32 See id.
33 See Rucksana Ayyub, The Many Faces of Domestic Violence in the South Asian Muslim Community, in BODY EVIDENCE: INTIMATE VIOLENCE AGAINST SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN IN AMERICA, supra note 4, at 24, 32-33; see also Sen, supra note 19, at 42.
Crimes committed in the name of family honour differ from intimate partner violence, child abuse, crimes of passion, and other forms of violence against women.\textsuperscript{35} In the workshops I conduct for frontline service providers, police officers, and members of the judiciary, I present examples I have collected through my work, which show how honour-based violence differs from other forms of violence against women. There are some similarities, but there are many more differences.\textsuperscript{36}

For example, the majority of the time the victims are young girls between fifteen and twenty-five years of age.\textsuperscript{37} Those victims are in their childbearing years and most of the time the murderers are their fathers, brothers, cousins, and, sometimes, their mothers or other older women in the family.\textsuperscript{38} There is seldom a sexual relationship between the victim and the perpetrator.\textsuperscript{39} Research shows that these killings are premeditated and the action is a collective decision.\textsuperscript{40} The motivation to kill the woman is to wash the stain of dishonour from the family name and to reestablish the family's social status.\textsuperscript{41} Young girls are killed for speaking to boys, dating, wearing make-up and becoming Westernized, refusing a marriage arranged by their family, and more.\textsuperscript{42} None of these factors are present in the Western mode of domestic homicide.\textsuperscript{43} These indicators, and others, are rooted in immigrant cultures, where women are viewed as property and family honour is valued more than women's lives.\textsuperscript{44}

From the time a young girl is born in an honour-based culture, she is trained to believe that she is less valued than a male; she is duty-bound to


\textsuperscript{38} Papp, supra note 35, at 15.


\textsuperscript{40} \textit{Are Honor Killings Simply Domestic Violence?}, supra note 36.

\textsuperscript{41} Papp, supra note 35, at 4.

\textsuperscript{42} See, e.g., Dahl, supra note 39; see also Papp, supra note 35, at 11 (listing examples of why honour killings are committed in Canadian communities).

\textsuperscript{43} Papp, supra note 35, at 4-5, 15.

\textsuperscript{44} Hunjan & Towson, supra note 4, at 53.
sacrifice herself for the family, and she is expected to live a life of servitude.\textsuperscript{45} Women in these cultures are taught that their main role in life is to be chaste, asexual daughters, virtuous wives, and honoured mothers of many sons.\textsuperscript{46} Women can bring honour to the family if they conform to the culture’s collective code and their scripted gender roles, but if they deviate or question their domination and strictly controlled subordinate status, they are punished.\textsuperscript{47} The punishment can include confinement, physical abuse, emotional abuse, threats, forced marriage, and murder.\textsuperscript{48} In honour-based cultures, women are expected to remain pure, meaning chaste, until they are married.\textsuperscript{49} Marriages arranged by the family often lead to a woman being raped by a man deemed to be her protector. This is essentially a rape arranged and sanctioned by the community. This is her \textit{kismet} because she was born a female, the wrong gender.

In Canada, honour killings have been carried out for various reasons: “staying out late, wearing makeup, wearing Western clothes, wanting to leave an abusive husband, refusing an arranged marriage, dating, socializing with someone outside the community, etc.”\textsuperscript{50} “A girl is expected to protect her virginity before marriage as well as protecting her reputation from gossip and rumours after she is married.”\textsuperscript{51} A South Asian woman’s “good reputation is maintained through the segregation of the sexes.”\textsuperscript{52} Additionally, “if a wife’s behaviour with a male invites any breath of suspicion, however innocent the encounter, she brings dishonour and disgrace to the husband and his entire family, and she can expect to be punished even if, as in the case of rape, it is not her fault.”\textsuperscript{53}

It makes committed multiculturalists uneasy when it is suggested that all cultures are not equal.\textsuperscript{54} A recent study found that hundreds of women in Ontario have been forced into marriages by their families, and that “all of the individuals forced into the marriage experience[d] violence.”\textsuperscript{55} The study revealed that 35% of the victims who faced forced

\textsuperscript{45} See, e.g., PAPP WITH KAY, \textit{supra} note 3, at vi.
\textsuperscript{46} Hunjan & Towson, \textit{supra} note 4, at 54.
\textsuperscript{47} See Hunjan & Towson, \textit{supra} note 4, at 53-67; \textit{see also} Sen, \textit{supra} note 19, at 48-53 (describing “codes of honour”).
\textsuperscript{48} See, e.g., Dahl, \textit{supra} note 39.
\textsuperscript{49} Hunjan & Towson, \textit{supra} note 4, at 54; \textit{see also} Dahl, \textit{supra} note 39 (quoting family expectations).
\textsuperscript{50} Papp, \textit{supra} note 35, at 11.
\textsuperscript{51} \textit{Id.} at 14.
\textsuperscript{52} \textit{Id.} (citation omitted).
\textsuperscript{53} \textit{Id.} (citations omitted).
\textsuperscript{54} See generally PAPP WITH KAY, \textit{supra} note 3, at 145-47 (providing a discussion for the presented issue of Canadian multiculturalist feminist thought).
\textsuperscript{55} Maryum Anis, Shalini Knaur & Deepa Mattoo, \textit{Who, If When to Marry: The Incidence of Forced Marriage in Toronto}, S. ASIAN LEGAL CLINIC ONTARIO 9,
marriages were between the ages of twelve and eighteen, and that more than 80% of the victims were Canadian citizens or permanent residences within immigrant communities. Although Canada is a signatory to such international documents as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, “Canada has not signed or ratified the Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriage and has no domestic legislation specific to Forced Marriage.” However, these are clearly human rights violations and, in Canada, these values and traditions should not be tolerated in the name of multiculturalism.

There is no denying that not all cultures embrace gender equality; therefore, it is not racist to name the practices that deny a woman’s human rights and dignity in the name of family honour. Entire cultures are not being condemned, just the aspects of those cultures that are incompatible with women’s humanity. Not all South Asians support the oppression of women, and where there is no broad-based collusion in crime, the community, as a whole, is not responsible for the actions of a few.

If we continue to deny that that honour killings and honour-based violence are culturally driven ideologies, however, we will commit a great error. We continue to apply resources and policies, which were created to serve the needs of the dominant societies, yet expect the immigrant women to fit the model created for others. As a result, we will not be able to develop the culturally appropriate resources needed to educate families and assist victims of honour-based violence.

We must continue the dialogue and the debates, but we must have no patience for those who insist on acting based on values that contradict

17 (2013), http://www.salc.on.ca/SALCO%20%20Who%20%20f%20When%20to
%20Marry%20%20The%20Incidence%20of%20Forced%20Marriage%20in%20
Ontario%20(Sep%202013).pdf.

56 Id. at 10-11, 13.
57 Id. at 5.
58 See PAPP WITH KAY, supra note 3, at 146-47. See generally Jane Connors, United Nations Approaches to ‘Crimes of Honour’, in ‘HONOUR’: CRIMES, PARADIGMS, AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, supra note 19, at 22, 22-41 (discussing the conceptualization within the United Nations of violence against women as a human rights concern).
59 See Terman, supra note 19, at 15-20; see also Are Honor Killings Simply Domestic Violence?, supra note 36, at 61-69 tbls. 2 & 3 (presenting case study results that show “[t]he common denominator in each case is not culture but religion”).
60 See id. at 23-26.
61 See Papp, supra note 35, at 8; cf Dahl, supra note 39 (citing various statistics and reports on honor killings worldwide).
established Canadian values and legal norms. We should, respectfully, spell out the limits of our patience and accommodation of cultural differences. Our shared values cannot be compromised for diversity’s sake.

Our success in dealing with diversity-related challenges will be measured by our commitment to open and respectful discourse. While we must avoid abusive and emotional outbursts, we should never shy away from leveling fair criticism for fear of causing offence. We can no longer choose to ignore the problems of honour-based violence. We cannot chalk it up to a passing trend. We cannot allow self-appointed community leaders and politicians to browbeat us with charges of racism and stereotyping. Honour killings are just the tip of the iceberg. Honour-based violence is an epidemic, and it is happening in our own backyard. If we choose to sit back and do nothing to prevent young girls from being killed in the name of family honour, then we must take responsibility for their deaths. Keeping silent is the greatest endorsement of these crimes. Please do not endorse the conspiracy of silence.