



79th Congress of the Socialist
Party

CONTRIBUTION "IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE VERB"

1st Signatory: **Myriam EL YASSA** Secrétaire
nationale à la lutte against
discrimination

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To name things badly," Camus judged, "is to add to the misfortune of the world. Not to name things is to deny our humanity. »

We have often considered the fight against discrimination as a "minor" issue. If racism is unanimously fought, certain "issues" are relegated to the background. Over the last twenty years a neologism has emerged to qualify some of our struggles: "the societal".

What do we mean when we talk about a "societal" debate? It seems that we mean a debate that deals with, and often opposes, not political ideas as such, not scientific facts, but "conceptions" of the

"society" in general. One could also say questions of "morals" or "morality".

"values". Thus, in the scientific, social and political debate that agitates a society, one isolates, in the belief that one is doing the right thing, the divergence of conceptions of society itself and ultimately of human life (of good and evil). Yet Hannah Arendt taught us that we must look far beyond, that the banality of words and actions sometimes have a benevolent attention, of submission to the norm.

Comrades, it is not a bad intention, especially in times of Congress to want to "spare" sensitivities. Yes, isolating the "societal" from social issues could then have peaceful ambitions in our internal debates and with our partners on the left and ecology. However, as we saw in 2013, the isolation of the "societal" is not a pacifying medium-term solution: our society - like our party - is neither peaceful nor mature because it has been infantilized and essentialized for too long.

We often hear these thinkers anointed by omniscience - no doubt fallen from Heaven - consider economic, social or regaliam subjects to be a priority. Comrades, would the zemmourization of minds sprinkled with patriarchy force us to have a hierarchy in our struggles?

Jaures denounced him: **"When men can't change things, they change words."**

1. Social versus societal

The social has thus become "societal" for social issues deemed subordinate by the great feathered chiefs of the established order: unemployment, that would be social; the right of foreigners to vote, "societal".

What can such a distinction be based on? In the social camp, the themes of redistribution, poverty, security and welfare? In the societal camp, gender equality, diversity, the fight against discrimination?

It's up to you to play the great game of the absurd, dear comrades:

- The decree of abolition of slavery in France signed on April 27, 1848? Is it social or "societal"?
- The 1905 law on secularism? - Social or "societal"?
- Divorce? - Social or "societal"?
- The Halimi law? Social or "societal"?
- The Veil law would therefore be exclusively "societal" or social?
- The Badinter law, concerning the abolition of the death penalty? Social or "societal"?
- The Taubira law opening marriage to same-sex couples? Social or "societal"?

2. Yesterday's discrimination is the stigma of today's social body.

The so-called "societal" is the oxygen of the social body, conveyed by our blood, that of the people. It goes through everything that we cannot isolate or oppose it or rank it in relation to economic, social, or regal subjects.

Economic violence, the figures of which show the extent, is a recurring subject in the fight against discrimination: a woman, a migrant, an LGBTI+ person, a young North African has more difficulty finding a job and making a career, we know.

But beyond that, we would agree to know less, sometimes forget, or prefer not to know... that one human being out of two lives on less than two dollars a day, whereas never before has Humanity produced so much wealth.

We would agree to understand the choice of some to flee for a future. And, we would think of the **Durban Declaration pointing out that xenophobia, of which migrants are often the first victims, is one of the great sources of contemporary racism. These discriminations concern sectors as diverse as housing, education, health, work or social security.**

Universalism - so dear to socialism, the very root of socialism - is also thinking of these **children - between 6,000 and 8,000 who die every day for lack of them.**

drinking water. 900 million people are starving.

We have a duty of indignation because it becomes more complex to affirm at the same time that as socialists we are universalist, progressive and open.

Our political thinking in the 20th century focused on the value of work, on the relationship between economic systems and the human condition. The fatigue of being oneself dates back to the second industrial revolution. Today, Alain Ehrenberg denounces the violence of work, the civilization of change stimulating massive attention to psychological suffering. The fatigue of being oneself. Darwinism triumphing over the banality of Being.

According to Jeremy Rifkin, we are now at the fourth revolution, that of digital and ecology. Information revolutionizes everything. It was our opium and our mirror. But today... if we look at the other side of this mirror, the digital revolution and the social networks encourage the confinement in its beliefs, algorithmic bubbles locking us with our fellow men, reinforcing our prejudices. A factory of fake news and planetary morons.

In a multilateral world, where geopolitics teaches us that our democratic gains are threatened for economic and ideological reasons, those committed to the left and ecology have a duty to pass on and fight.

First of all, to proudly transmit our history, and first of all the political heroes who built the edifice of the homeland of the Enlightenment. We are the heirs of Bartholdi, offering Freedom guiding the world. And of the Enlightenment, in the face of obscurantism and religious fanaticism, we have an urgent need that is accessible to all.

Within our party, **we also have a duty to remember and a duty to take stock.** To remember already, all our advances to promote a real equality - equity - between citizens. A duty of inventory, assume in our ranks the colonialist past of France and in responsibility from 2022, propose actions.

But beyond that, we need to be vigilant for the effects of announcements, like the Macron government with plans and priorities announced but not acted upon, to make it a five-year priority.

Substantive equality will require real enforceability of the law, with rigorous monitoring by our parliamentarians, a focus on impacts, and beyond that: an accelerated reform of the senior civil service to transform public policy.

One person in ten reported having been discriminated against in France, but only 12% filed a complaint. As we know, twenty-five criteria for discrimination are currently used in France: physical appearance, age, state of health, belonging or not to an alleged race, belonging or not to a nation, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, pregnancy, disability, origin, religion, bank domiciliation, political opinions, philosophical opinions, the

family status, genetic characteristics, morals, patronymic, trade union activities, place of residence, ethnicity, loss of autonomy, ability to express oneself in a foreign language, vulnerability resulting from one's economic situation.

As we know, many of our fellow citizens have been confronted with these injustices. We cannot desire a just order, a universal ideal without making it a priority.

As Bourdieu noted years ago, we do not all have the same cultural capital. **We - committed to the left and to ecology, we are the heirs of Jaurès, not of the capital. And we must prepare the future, and fight discrimination in schools so that we no longer reproduce inequalities with teaching codes that are not favorable to the most disadvantaged classes.** We must raise every child in France with excellence. Children from rural areas, from the political neighborhoods of the city are mostly disadvantaged because of their origin.

Today we must re-enchante the future and claim ourselves from our heroes like Aymé Césaire **who declared** during a meeting at Fort de France that "racism, **at the level of the idea, is stupidity and, from the point of view of morality, a barbarity. For everyone, it is a risk of catastrophe**".

3. In the face of obscurantism, let's not be afraid!

Since 2001, the world has changed and our individual liberties are threatened in the name of security. The Charlie Hebdo attacks were a turning point and unfortunately, society has become more fragmented. Between the attacks and the health crisis, the specter of fear among our fellow citizens is rising.

Committed, let's not let fear dictate our political projects.

The Spring of the Left will fight against all forms of discrimination and we will also take care not to stigmatize believers.

The French specificity of secularism is to leave everyone free to believe or not to believe, and to change their faith.

Only science and education will defeat the obscurantists who drink from the cultural desert.

Yes, the most elementary fear, the most animal fear is the fear of... the unknown. This fear recedes as the real world is known, mastered, intellectualized or as we imagine ourselves knowing it, mastering it.

It is above all cultural oppositions that reveal racism and anti-Semitism. Every culture implies a way of life, a system of reference. Racism and anti-Semitism are rooted in the unconscious for reasons that have to do with the emotional history of the individual.

Let us therefore beware of falling into utopia. Just as much as denying the obvious, it is vain to hope for the disappearance of racism and anti-Semitism. On the contrary, we must count on the constant threat it poses to the world. It is a permanent struggle.

In the face of danger, let's not give up. Not only by denouncing before public opinion all acts of racism, however minor they may be, but also by a mobilization of minds, a vigilance at all times, a continuous personal effort.

4. Let's arbitrate and assume our position

Today, we can choose to avoid the Macron/Le pen duel by proudly displaying a desire for fraternity and openness. To the elements of languages no longer having their effect, let us declare our project.

Three projects are to be developed:

- The first is to **allow researchers in charge of studying the phenomena of discrimination, to** have sufficient funds and tools to denounce discrimination in hiring, salary inequalities, glass ceilings for men and women, religious minorities and LGBTI+ people.

- The second concerns **transversality within our bodies, at every level: just like parity, we must guarantee that all minorities are represented and take responsibility in** our bodies and in assemblies. And to preside, to be in charge of real delegations, not those too often devoid of substance.

- The third is to **allow everyone to participate in democratic life, and to guarantee the vote of foreigners** (outside the European Community) in local elections. In these times, an outstretched hand and trust are the best answers.

3. Defending Europe against discrimination

It was **to combat racism and anti-Semitism that Europe was born after the Second World War** to prevent the return of secular conflicts, particularly between France and Germany, as well as any form of resurgence of fascism and Nazism, and thus to maintain peace.

In 2022, France will preside over the Council of Europe for a period of six months starting January 1. We will not go back on the lack of preparation, the electoral calendar putting in difficulties the success of this mission, but it is for us, committed leftists and ecologists - to demand clear positions beyond the declarations of Ursula Von der Layen to sanction states for having legislation that discriminates against ethnic, religious minorities and LGBTI+ people.

As Socialists, we must also think about encouraging development axes around the Euro-Mediterranean by encouraging cultural collaborations such as Strasbourg-Mediterranean. We must reclaim ourselves from the European Court of Human Rights and the Council of Europe.

Socialists, we must fully invest ourselves within the Party of European Socialists to fight all forms of discrimination and demand the exclusion or sanction of states that do not respect human rights, especially for ethnic minorities and LGBTI+ people.

Finally, Let's dream about the future: the current crises are an opportunity to reinvent ourselves, to re-enchant ourselves. Fighting for a society of real equality will be the software of 21st century socialism.

And proclaim our republican motto:

**FREEDOM EQUALITY EQUALITY
FRATERNITY LAICITY**

Conclusion

In conclusion, the **purpose of this contribution is to affirm principles and open up the debate within our political family.**

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