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Against Islamophobia, Against Hatred

- Call -



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The following speech was given by Michèle Sibony at the manifestation contre l'islamophobie (Demonstration against Islamophobia) in Paris, 10 November 2019.

Sibony was speaking as a member and spokesperson for the Union juive française pour la paix (the French Jewish Union for Peace) - a 'Jewish antiracist and anti-Zionist organization', as another [member explained recently to Jacobin](#).

Attended by more than 40,000 people, the manifestation was 'the biggest anti-racism demonstration led by those most concerned since the 1983 March for Equality', according to the UJFP.



"For years now, children have every day gone to the Republic's schools, only to fall under suspicion, only to suffer lies about what they are ; to suffer a supervision over, a humiliation of their religion, of their families, of the just causes they defend.

Let us recall that the first document on the prevention of radicalisation in schools was published in 2014, by the académie de Poitiers [a regional education board] - it was withdrawn after, but many others followed, most recently on the radicalisation of Cergy University.

As has been said many times, this 'vigilance' from by the state is in fact, a call to denounce neighbours, colleagues, children ; children who see on the television yet more humiliation of their families, of their mother and father, their sisters, their brothers. [1]

Their fathers and brothers are monitored in their workplaces and in public, subject to racial-profiling.

Their mothers leave in the morning, a fear in their stomach, accompanying their children to school - going to work, looking for work ; going to the post-office, the bank, or the hospital - never knowing when the next verbal aggression, even physical assault will come.

This is the everyday insecurity for these women and men, for millions of women, men, and children. This is the tutelage to which these children of the Republic submit ; this is how today we build citizens in this country. What

shame !

This is the new laïque school : this is what the other children learn, sat at their desks - that they who are not Muslims are protected, that they are sheltered from suspicion, that discrimination and segregation are entirely normal. Bravo !

We are a Jewish group ; lamentably, the only Jewish group represented here.

We recognise though that a great number of Jews are present, as union activists, members of associations and political parties, and that they are here because they remember their family history.

We in the UJFP, we also have a memory ; it is one we use.

This memory compels certain obligations - first, and before all else, to be on the side always of the oppressed, on the side of the victims of racism. To listen to them before all others, to respect what they say, to struggle by their side.

In the 1930s, the Jews of Europe understood the atmosphere of antisemitism. The literature of the époque is full of its trace. It was a society impregnated with racism, a society which allowed the worst to happen. It's for this reason - not only because we are Jews, but because we are human beings - that we are involved in the struggle against racism, in all its forms.

Against Islamophobia, this racism coming from above - from the highest levels of the state - that a complacent media spreads throughout society, one now saturated by this hate ; against anti-black racism [nérophobie] which kills young black people in silence, with 'blunder' after 'blunder' from the police never making the papers, nor meriting political discussion, nor resulting in any sanctions of justice's own crimes ; against anti-Roma racism, and the pogroms under the obliging eyes of the police, who don't intervene ; against anti-Asian racism, still less visible, still more silent ; and against antisemitism, which still kills, in its criminal, sordid way, and which unites - without qualms - politicians from the extreme right to the extreme left.

And so, from these numerous associations, from all these racialised groups, aware of governmental instrumentalisations, are born coalitions to struggle together against racism of every type.

This racism, which so well serves the interests of the ultra-liberal state, sowing division as it pauperises the population, as it destroys all the gains of their social struggles, in work, in health, education, unemployment, pensions, taxation - sowing this division for its profits and its benefit, posing as that which restores order, just as it did previously in the colonies.

We Jews who remember, we put this memory in the service of all the victims of racism, and we struggle with them for their rights, rights which are also ours ; for their security, security which is also ours ; and for their liberty, which too is ours.

And against any 'competition' between victims - this malevolent and repugnant concept, one of a savage capitalism which breaks us systematically, and which cannot become part of our vocabulary - we oppose our solidarity and our fraternity. We participated in the great Marches for Dignity [organised by anti-racist groups from racialised, working-class areas], since they are for all our dignity, just as we participated in Gay Pride marches.

We are organising for a space for anti-racism that is breathable, which is to say an anti-racism free of all

instrumentalisation. We cannot, we Jews, with all our political partners, countenance demonstrating against racism with the Rassemblement National [as the National Front was recently renamed], and with those who themselves organise and propagate racism across the country. [1]

We participated in the organisation of the Rosa Parks strike and demonstration [anti-racist actions in November 2018].

We work with the Collectif contre l'islamophobie en France (CCIF), the Brigade Anti-Nérophobie (BAN), Voix des Roms, and others, to build an anti-racism platform able to help all victims : Muslims, black people, Asian people, Roma, Jews. To build our links of solidarity, because together, we are still stronger.

And, against the 'vigilance' - the denouncing - promoted by Macron, we oppose our own vigilance over, our own responsibility for one another.

Today, we must rise, all of us, to halt the banalisation of evil, to halt the victory of this savage neo-liberalism. Defeating this regime implies, will imply, a huge mobilisation against Islamophobic racism, and against racism in all its forms.

We will be present on the 8 December with the mères du Mantois [group formed following the infamous detaining of schoolchildren in Mante-la-Jolie, December 2018] to say - the humiliation of our children, enough ! The police violence in the banlieues - the only state presence there - enough ! Racism, enough !

Fraternity is not some vain word - and it's from the base, together, that we will prove it !"