



U N I V E R S I T É

**Concordia**

U N I V E R S I T Y

**Concordia University  
Research Chair**

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**HIV/AIDS and Sexual Health (Tier 2)**

**Annual Report  
2013-2014  
Dr. Viviane Namaste**

This report offers an overview of some of my main activities with regards to my Research Chair in HIV/AIDS and Sexual Health, 2013-2014. My *curriculum vitae* (attached) provides more extensive information about my research, teaching, and outreach activities.

## Highlights

- Representing the Simone de Beauvoir Institute as Intervener at the Supreme Court of Canada in a Charter Challenge related to Canada's prostitution laws, with counsel Walid Hijazi.
- Recipient of a *Prix Honoris*, Conseil Québécois des Gais et des lesbiennes, October 2013. This prize recognizes my longstanding contributions to sexual minority communities in Québec.
- Four research-creation exhibitions, held in Paris, Montréal and Victoria, BC.
- Organized an international writing workshop, in French, for young scholars working in the field of HIV/AIDS. Attracting participants from Canada, France, Cameroon, and beyond, the event received extremely positive evaluations.
- Extensive media outreach, including a press conference presented live on the airwaves of RDI December 20, 2013. This is the first time that a press conference at Concordia has been shown on live television.

Aside from keynote addresses, and preliminary research I am beginning on a new CIHR grant on the history of HIV in Montréal's Haitian communities, I was active in knowledge transfer related to my different research projects:

- Photo exhibition of the results of my CIHR-funded research on the history of HIV among trans women in Paris. The Paris component included a day-long community forum on HIV and trans women, in addition to the exhibition. The exhibition was also shown in Victoria (March 2014) and Montréal (May 2014). In addition, 700 copies of a catalogue booklet of the exhibition and research were distributed in community organizations.
- Exhibition with the artist centre Dare-Dare (<http://dare-dare.org/fr/evenements/viviane-namaste>), on the transformation of downtown public space in Montréal. Displayed at the St-Laurent metro station over 10 weeks, this project was highly visible: it is estimated that more than 10 000 people pass through the St-Laurent metro station each day.
- Preparation of a book manuscript, *Oversight: Reflections on Feminist Knowledge and Politics*, to be published by Women's Press in 2015.



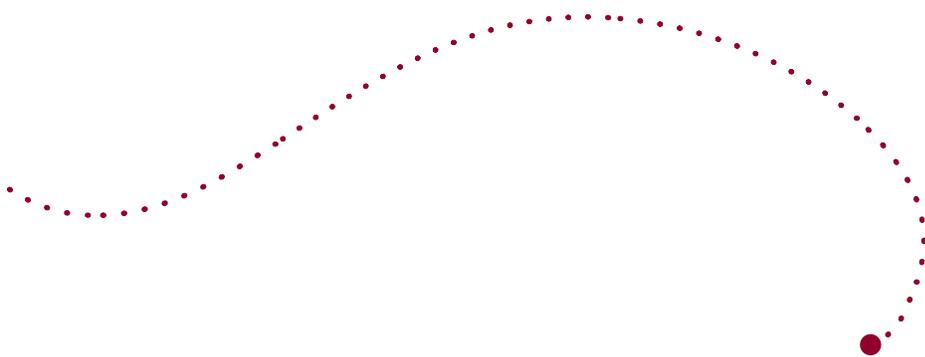
Recipient of a prestigious prize for my longstanding work on behalf of sexual minorities



Four research-creation events held in Paris, Montréal and Victoria to present research results

# Service Contributions

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**L**ike all faculty members, I am involved in service at the departmental and university levels. Indeed, given that my unit (Simone de Beauvoir Institute) has only four full-time faculty, my administrative commitments are heavy – particularly since the CURC requires its own administration (see cv).

In the past academic year, I was involved in two additional service commitments that warrant mention. The first is as a member of the *comité scientifique* for ACFAS, hosted by Concordia in May 2014. The work of *comité scientifique* members is often invisible, and given the fact that the conference is in French, it requires members fluent in that language. The second significant commitment I made in service is as a jury member of the *Prix du Québec*. This distinction is the highest honour accorded to academics in Québec, and my membership among jury members speaks to the recognition of my contributions by my peers.

The work I did as part of my CURC included significant involvement in a legal case brought before the Supreme Court of Canada. The case concerned the question of prostitution and the criminal laws surrounding it, and was heard by the Court in June 2013. I took a leadership role at the Simone de Beauvoir Institute on this dossier, and specifically worked to petition the Supreme Court for the Institute to outline its position on this question before the Court. I worked both internally with Institute colleagues, as well as with a lawyer (Maître Walid Hijazi) who had agreed to take this issue on pro bono, and we made an official application for Intervener status at the Court. Happily, our request for Intervener status was granted by the Court, and we were able both to submit a written brief, as well as to present it orally before the Court. The brief is available (in French only) on the website of the Supreme Court, [http://www.scc-csc.gc.ca/factums-memoires/34788/FM070\\_Intervenant\\_Beauvoir.pdf](http://www.scc-csc.gc.ca/factums-memoires/34788/FM070_Intervenant_Beauvoir.pdf).

Although the brief itself is not lengthy, it is the result of a great deal of labour and deep reflection: the Court only accepts Interveners who will advance a fresh argument for the Court to consider. As such, it was necessary to review the entire history of Canadian jurisprudence on prostitution, obscenity and consent law (the latter particularly with regards to sexual assault) in order to outline the Institute's position.

This work represented a unique and rare occasion to showcase the excellence of scholarship, research, and community engagement at the Simone de Beauvoir Institute, and at Concordia more generally. Indeed, the case allowed us to bring the expertise of the Simone de Beauvoir Institute to the highest Court in the land.

## Intervener at Supreme Court of Canada, on behalf of the Simone de Beauvoir Institute, in a constitutional case on prostitution laws.

In December 2013, the decision of the Supreme Court was rendered: all nine judges unanimously agreed with the position articulated by the Simone de Beauvoir Institute that the existing provisions of the Criminal Code increase violence against sex workers, and as such violate their Charter rights.

I did a significant amount of media representation in relation to this case, both when the case was heard (June 2013) as well as when the decision was rendered (December 2013). Indeed, I worked with Media Relations to organize a press conference in conjunction with the release of the Supreme Court's decision. Despite being held December 20th (a Friday afternoon before the holiday break), the press conference was attended by all major media in Montréal. The conference was also broadcast live on the airwaves of RDI, the first time that a press conference at Concordia received a live broadcast.

**M**y community engagement included sponsoring a workshop with the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network on the Criminalization of HIV Non-Disclosure and Sexual Assault Law (April 2014).

Moreover, one of my main teaching activities was working with three undergraduate students to help them prepare a documentary theatre piece on the history of a local community-based HIV/AIDS organization, ACCM (AIDS Community Care Montréal). This agency has hosted Concordia students as interns since 1994, and thus has made a tremendous contribution to the university. Training students to be able to gather the history of this organization, and eventually to give it back to the agency in the form of a theatre piece, is thus fundamentally related to matters of community engagement.

Work with students to create a documentary theatre piece on the history of a local AIDS community organization

Extensive media relations with regards to the work at the Supreme Court of Canada

**F**inally, the work done at the Supreme Court of Canada represents an important instance of community engagement. I played a leadership role so that the Simone de Beauvoir Institute could share its expertise with the Supreme Court. This represents a practice wherein feminist knowledge is not only produced for academic journals, but is used in the legal and policy arena as well. As such, I was active in promoting the profile of the Simone de Beauvoir Institute as an excellent site of community engaged inquiry.

I was busy with a number of different teaching duties and commitments. Aside from my regular, undergraduate teaching, the following elements warrant consideration with regards to evaluation of my teaching:

- Ongoing supervision of 8 graduate students and 2 postdoctoral scholars
- Three of my students were accepted into a national training programme, *Universities Without Walls*, for young scholars working in HIV/AIDS in Canada (see [www.universitieswithoutwalls.ca](http://www.universitieswithoutwalls.ca)). This is an extremely competitive national programme (14 scholars were accepted for all of Canada). The fact that I had a number of students accepted into this programme is exceptional, as generally the programme does not accept more than one student working with the same supervisor.
- Four Directed Reading courses. Two of these courses were with Theatre students, to help them prepare a documentary theatre piece on the history of a local community-based HIV/AIDS organization (ACCM – AIDS Community Care Montréal).
- External examination of a doctoral thesis from Australia.
- Coordination with graduate students and postdoctoral scholars to attend ASSHH conference (Association for the Social Sciences and Humanities in HIV). This is the most important conference for social scientists working in HIV/AIDS, and I organized a large Concordia young scholar contingent to attend.
- Organization of a week-long writing workshop for young francophone scholars working in the field of HIV/AIDS. Drawing participants from Canada,

France, Cameroon and elsewhere, the workshop was a resounding success. It further served to create visibility of this Research Chair within networks of young scholars working in the field of HIV/AIDS.

- Organization of a Reading Group to create a sense of community among students working in HIV/AIDS.
- Organization of a retreat with graduate students and postdoctoral scholars.
- Postdoctoral scholars Gabriel Girard and Elhadji Mbaye presented their research in the media on several occasions.
- In terms of recruitment, I held in-depth conversations and consultations with 6 potential postdoctoral scholars. I also worked with three potential graduate students. Two of these students applied to Concordia, were accepted with funding, and have begun to work with me.
- Nomination for a Dean's Award for Teaching Excellence, a dossier initiated, prepared and submitted by my graduate students.

## Nomination for a Dean's Award for Teaching Excellence

# The Budget and Monies

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The monies used to support the activities related to this Research Chair were allocated in a variety of ways: support of postdoctoral scholars; support of graduate students for conference participation and travel; general support of graduate students (RA positions); logistics

and expenses related to a community event organized with the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network (April 2014); administrative fees related to filing at the Supreme Court of Canada for Intervener status; expenses related to the week-long writing workshop organized in May 2014.

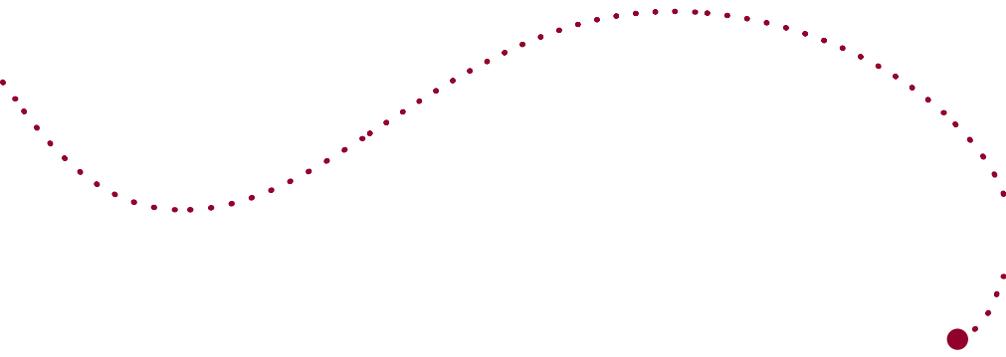
## Impact of research and accomplishments

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- Recipient of a prestigious prize for my research, enhancing the reputation of Concordia.
- Excellence of graduate students working under my supervision, three of whom were awarded a highly competitive national scholarship.
- Pedagogical activities (e.g., francophone writing workshop) increase visibility of my research Chair internationally, facilitate recruitment of top-notch graduate students and postdoctoral scholars, and enhance the reputation of Concordia as a site for scholarly inquiry.
- Numerous research creation exhibitions, offering innovative knowledge transfer and a large audience for the results of my research (more than 10 000 people/day for 10 consecutive weeks).
- Outstanding public relations for Concordia University related to our work at the Supreme Court.

# In Conclusion ...

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**T**he 2013-2014 academic year was extraordinarily busy, at the levels of research, community engagement and teaching. The organization of community events, numerous pedagogical activities, and international knowledge transfer of my research all constituted the daily work. Moreover, the 2013-14 academic year was marked by a unique occasion of intervening at the Supreme Court of Canada on behalf of the Simone de Beauvoir Institute, as well as engaging in media outreach in relation to the case at hand. This legal and media work brought extensive visibility to Concordia University, and enhanced the university's reputation considerably.

In the future, I will continue my empirical research on HIV/AIDS in Montréal's Haitian communities, publish a book with Women's Press, and continue my student supervision. I also plan to apply for a CIHR Foundation grant, which would consolidate Concordia University as an innovative site for graduate studies and postdoctoral research for young scholars working in HIV/AIDS in the humanities and social sciences.