

Dear comrades of the Socialist Fightback/La Riposte Socialiste Executive Committee,

We the undersigned are sending this letter as dedicated female & trans members of the organization who believe in the program and methods of Fightback/La Riposte.

We feel that the current processes that are in place for the reporting, investigation & resolution of incidences of harassment, assault and abuse within the organization are inadequate.

We feel that this inadequacy poses a serious threat to Fightback/LRS's ability to recruit, retain & develop female & trans comrades & cadres.

While we recognize and respect the political authority of the Executive Committee, we feel it has been demonstrated that the current reporting system allows victims to fall through the cracks. The EC is a political body made up of comrades who are not trained to support victims. This creates great potential for the seriousness of a situation to be misinterpreted or misevaluated, which in turn may lead to inadequate action being taken.

These issues can be illustrated by the following situations (names redacted for anonymity).

- 1) Comrade A was sexually assaulted by comrade B. A approached an EC comrade to report the assault. The EC comrade had a firm conversation with B, directing B to leave A alone and to stop hosting social events within the organization. The EC comrade regarded the situation as resolved. A regarded the situation as unresolved, felt left in the dark, and was unsure of their right to re-approach the EC. Comrade B went on to host at least one party amongst the membership despite the EC's directive.
- 2) Comrade C was sexually harassed and threatened by CC comrade D, who was a leading member of their branch & running the reading group they were attending. C reported the incident to an EC comrade. Comrade C admits that they downplayed the situation out of discomfort. The result of this report was an unsatisfactory phone call from D to C. After this, D's behaviour towards C became markedly cold & dismissive. C was left feeling that it would've been better for them to stay silent about the incident. C considered leaving the organization due to ongoing contact with D. C later heard allegations that D had harassed multiple other female comrades.

We do not think we need to explain to the EC the serious political dangers that would come from unchecked sexual violence in the organization, in addition to the obvious dangers that would be posed to the membership. We believe in & want to strengthen this organization. We do not want to see talented, committed & promising female & trans comrades dropping out of the work due to feeling unsafe in the organization.

To address what we believe to be inadequacies in the reporting process, we the undersigned would like to propose the following possible measures.

- 1) Reports of sexual harassment, abuse and assault to be directed to a small standing committee composed of EC & CC members, including women drawn from those bodies.

- 2) Members sitting on the committee to receive training from a qualified source (e.g. Toronto Hostels Training) in handling reports of sexual assault, abuse or harassment.
- 3) Proactive follow-up with comrades making reports, to ensure that they feel the report has been adequately handled.
- 4) Publicize the formation of this committee among the membership, with clear instructions on how to contact them (e.g. a dedicated email address). Alongside this announcement, reiterate to the membership that Fightback/La Riposte is a political organization, not a social club or a dating app; that the organization should not under any circumstances be viewed or used as a way to pick up women; that sexual harassment, abuse and assault will not be tolerated, and that reports will be investigated.

We are **not** proposing:

- 1) A “manual”/“guidebook” or a prescriptive approach to reports of sexual assault etc. - reports would still be handled & addressed on a case-by-case basis.
- 2) An identity-based “quota”-formed committee - we are requesting that women sit on the committee to increase the comfort of reporting comrades.

We feel that these measures will increase the willingness of victims within the organization to come forward, and increase the efficacy of investigations into alleged misconduct.

We believe that comrades would feel more comfortable approaching a small, mixed-gender group of comrades who have a dedicated role to play in addressing misconduct, rather than directly approaching the highest body of the organization, which is an intimidating prospect for many rank & file comrades.

These measures will additionally eliminate reliance on individual leading comrades to make all the right calls in these difficult situations.

We recognize that sexual harassment, abuse, and assault are not widespread problems in the organization. However, we do have reason to believe that they are under-reported. It is also worth considering that taking a serious, thorough approach to reports of misconduct the first time a victim comes forward can prevent later cases of misconduct, thus ensuring that sexual harassment, abuse, and assault do not *become* widespread problems in the organization.

The current model that we have in place is a model which was designed, and worked well, for a small organization. However, we are growing, and as we grow we are recruiting more and more young women and LGBTQ people. We feel that, just as we have re-designed and expanded our apparatus to reflect our growth, it is time for these procedures to be updated and professionalized as well.

This letter comes from a place of deep respect, commitment, and care for this organization. We are entirely willing to meet with the EC to discuss the issues and ideas outlined here. We want to do whatever we can do to ensure that the organization is politically healthy and safe for its members.

Thank you for your consideration.

Comradely,

(Redacted)

(Redacted)

Jamie G (TO-R2)

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