

Solidarité

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Many of us bilingual Québeckers have learned to fluidly navigate the often-dickey waters of our motley «national» identities. As we move through various spaces, we assert our linguistic identities, an act that troubles the lines of belonging, magnifying connections while also drawing out divisions. The latest chapter in Québec's social movements did not quell habits of linguistic or political labelling, but it did challenge the clear separations between many spheres: students and non-students, strikers and citizens, union sympathizers and capitalists, the entitled youth and the hard-working establishment. The lines between these categories are conveniently mobile and in many cases are used to paint an easy picture of what is a quite complex set of issues.

Solidarité

Having participated in a dozen or so manifestations come the implementation of Bill 78, I'd yet to know a moment where my feelings of *solidarité* with the movement had been trumped by the forces outside the movement that tried to drive wedges between us. This is why this word *solidarité*, this ultimate measure of union and fraternity between people, drew me to lend many hours to translating the movement's texts, in solidarity with its farther-reaching goals. Through this process, I began to grasp the meaning of this word in a way I felt was not available to someone who hasn't stood up alongside a group of citizens in a shared struggle.

Political rhetoric in our nation has not easily embraced the word. My sense is that it is evocative of syndicalism and socialism to the extent that our mainstream media avoids using it. It is a dangerous word. They might use it when speaking

of it negatively («Cracks start to show in Québec's student solidarity», claimed the Globe and Mail back in April) in order to show solidarity as being this large, shapeless mass that, when inspected more closely, is not as cohesive as it should be to warrant awe, nor as righteous as it ought to be to represent an encompassing purpose. But these journalists weren't on the streets alongside the students in order to write their reports. Had they been, perhaps they would have been awed enough to write elegies in support of the students' and sympathizers' efforts, along with many francophone journalists, teachers, parents, sociologists, philosophers, children, entrepreneurs, doctors and labourers who were dans la rue, avec nous (in the streets, with us; to quote one of the movement's most popular street chants). The rhetoric of the streets came to feel much more real than the rhetoric of most printed words, because it sprang from the moment itself, from the collective

spirit of an interacting community getting to know itself boldly, with few reservations. This exercise was new for many, and so too the experience and meaning of the cohesion, the *solidarité*.

Unlike the English *solidarity*, the French word *solidarité* has an accompanying adjective: *solidaire*. I found myself to be in *solidarity* with, but also I was *solidaire*. We could define ourselves as embodying this spirit, often times physically in a shared collective space, the effect of which tied us in with a greater social construct, a greater sense of history and community, making us feel like a more integral part of the broader narrative. Not only are we shoulder-to-shoulder (in *solidarity*), we are (*solidaire*). I came to believe that it is not only the experience of *solidarity* but also the affirmation of self as *solidaire* that is key to effecting change.

This is Fucking Class War

Beyond a sense of union implied by the word, solidarity yields an acknowledgement of social responsibility, which is essential in getting people out in the streets over the span of many months. The same sense of responsibility was bred through our translation collective. We played a part in democratizing the dissemination of information, a process through which we echoed the appropriation and re-localization of agency enacted by the movement. Such an awakening to these new meanings ensured the vitality of the movement and will help us as we reflect and build upon new and renewed connections, identities, and hopes.