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Switzerland

An exemplary feminist mobilization

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Female school students, with the support of feminist collectives, are mobilizing against sexist punishments put in place by their school management for wearing outfits deemed provocative. It all started during the orientation cycle at Pinchat [in the commune of Veyrier (canton of Geneva)], where the management forced ten girls and two boys to wear a very large "t-shirt of shame" because their clothes were considered indecent and "not correct". When they arrived at the school, the students had to march past a line of judges formed by the administration who divided the students into two categories: outfits deemed "correct" and "incorrect".

This practice has existed for many years in different forms in the school cycles of the canton. Social media stirred, mothers of schoolchildren wrote about their outrage and the Feminist Strike Collective was called on by students, alumni and a mother who came to share their anger and call for support. #BalanceTon?cole has collected a multitude of testimonies on Instagram revealing painful experiences of sexism in schools.

Strong reactions and strong media coverage

The collective immediately reacted and brought together several feminist groups of school students, university students (including the Meufx) and people in education. After a small meeting, it was decided to go and form a guard of honour, solidarity and anger at the cycle concerned in the morning when the students arrived. All the Geneva press was there. Very quickly, the girls who were victims of the sanctions and all their friends came to testify and joined the ranks of this gathering which became larger and more combative.

After very good media coverage, all of Geneva was talking about these humiliating and sexist T-shirts. Outrage spread widely in feminist and progressive circles. On Monday, 5 October, the mobilization begins to bear fruit: the canton of Vaud decreed the prohibition of "t-shirts of shame" in its schools and, finally, the Geneva DIP (Public Education Department) announced the suspension of this infamous punishment and the opening of a "rethinking". Better late than never! This is a first victory for feminists and their allies and a first setback for DIP head Ms. Emery-Torracinta, a breach in her retrograde rigidity.

Battle not over

The battle does not end there. A bill is in preparation. It seeks the repeal of paragraph 5 of Art. 115 of the LIP (Law on Public Education) saying that students must "wear correct and appropriate clothing". In addition, a lawyer appointed by a group of students, parents and citizens noted the unconstitutional nature of stigmatizing measures concerning clothing in schools. Ms. Emery-Torracinta will have to respond.

The fight continues for the removal of all sanctions concerning student uniforms. A general reflection, integrating feminist points of view, is necessary in order to develop gender equality in schools, to combat sexism, homophobia and transphobia there. Students need tools, means and spaces to speak out against sexist, hypersexualizing and humiliating words, behaviours and actions by teachers or peers. The testimonies of student victims must be heard, listened to, taken into consideration and respected. Concrete and immediate measures must be put in place to put an end to discriminatory and intolerable acts and comments.

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OnLâcheRien, the fight against sexism in schools continues!

PS:

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