



## What impressions do we have of our video testimonials?

### Two compilations aim to foster reflection and discussion



From top to bottom: *Hookers on Davie*, 1984; *Des gens comme nous*, 2010; *Not a Love Story: A Film About Pornography*, 1981; *Je sais pas si vous êtes comme moi*, 2006.

Excitement is mounting for the upcoming launch of two video compilations created thanks to the hard work of several partners and collaborators over the last year.

After identifying hundreds of Canadian audiovisual documents, working committees viewed and selected extracts according to several criteria (language, author, date, testimonial type, etc.).

The result? Two compilations: one featuring testimonials from people living with HIV from productions filmed between 2000 and 2012 and a second showing the vari-

ous uses of testimonials since 1981 by people with an experience in sex work.

The launch will take place in Montreal on Thursday, May 23<sup>rd</sup> (5:30 pm – 8:00 pm), at the acclaimed bar *L'Alizé*. In addition to presenting the two compilations (60 min.), a panel of individuals who have given testimonials will discuss the personal and social implications of putting their stories on film or video.

We expect a lively discussion of several topics including the diversity of approaches to testimonials, comparisons of differ-

ent techniques, issues of inclusion and exclusion, disclosure of stigmatized identities, criminalization, education, activism, and the creative process.

The compilations will be available in DVD format and on the Internet for use in a variety of educational, research, training, and public awareness activities.

We look forward to seeing you at the launch! ■

## Ethical issues raised by testimonials

### An interdisciplinary workshop to share our expertise



Our project raises numerous ethical questions to which we must respond.

As researchers, journalists, social workers, and community partners, what are our responsibilities regarding the protection of confidential information? Why and how should we enact the principle of “shared authority”? What does it mean

to obtain informed consent while respecting the privacy of a criminalized person? How can we minimize the risks associated with publicly disclosing a personal account or sexual history? How should we handle testimonials presented to under-age youth and in schools?

These and other questions will be discussed

during a day-long workshop on ethical issues to be held on Monday, June 17<sup>th</sup> (11:00 am – 4:00 pm), at UQAM (room J-2805, the beautiful *Salle des Boiseries*).

The workshop will be led by Maria Nengeh Mensah in collaboration with Concordia University's Centre For Oral History and Digital Storytelling. This will

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April 2013

### Upcoming activities

#### Launch of video compilations

Thursday, May 23  
5:30 – 8:00 pm  
L'Alizé  
900 Ontario St. E  
<http://lalize.net>  
(Berri-UQAM metro)

#### Workshop on ethical issues

Monday, June 17  
11:00 am – 4:00 pm  
UQAM, room J-2805  
Judith-Jasmin Pavilion (J)  
405 St. Catherine E  
[uqam.ca/campus/pavillons/j.htm](http://uqam.ca/campus/pavillons/j.htm)  
(Berri-UQAM metro)

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## Participants needed

**Have you given a public testimonial?** (media, presentation, artistic creation, etc.)

**as a member of a sexual or gender minority** (e.g. a person who identifies as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, queer, two-spirited, intersex)

AND / OR

**as a person with an experience in sex work**

Was the experience of giving a testimonial a good one? Did it leave something to be desired?

**You are invited to participate in a study** whose goal is to better understand the experience of people who have given testimonials.

Our study will provide information on ways to reduce stigmatization.

For more information or to **indicate your interest** in participating:

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be a unique opportunity to share perspectives and experiences related to undertaking social research involving human subjects, as well as

## 2013 work plan

**General assembly (January 28):** Study day participant evaluations were presented. A “Digital Story Day” was proposed as a follow-up activity, taking inspiration from participative methods such as the “story wheel” used at the Museum of the Person in Brazil. The idea of mounting an exhibition was re-discussed and it was decided that this should be a long-term goal (2015-2016). Next steps include taking a guided tour of the *Nous sommes ici* exhibition at the Centre d’histoire de Montréal (April 2, 1:00 pm), establishing a working committee, and preparing a funding proposal. The next meeting of the

the co-production of public testimonials in the context of social work, public awareness, and media coverage.

general assembly will take place in June.

**Sexual and Gender Minorities’ Testimonials Working Committee (February 25):** The committee welcomed a new member, Mathieu-Joël Gervais, representing the ATQ (*Aide aux transsexuels et transsexuelles du Québec*). Numerous suggestions were made on how to maximize inclusion during the recruitment of people to participate in individual interviews. Committee members reiterated their interest in working with other partners in a transversal manner to create cooperative activities designed to stimu-

late conversation about different techniques and perspectives, the repercussions of giving a testimonial, and issues of inclusion and exclusion. One or two additional meetings are planned for 2013.

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**Executive Committee (February 26):** Project researchers and the coordination team reviewed the key points discussed by the working committees and during the general assembly in order to make decisions about the project’s next steps and activities for 2013. ■

### TESTIMONIAL CULTURES - 2013 calendar of activities

Report on the 2012 study day	Jan-May
Database archive of testimonial examples	Jan- Dec
Project website and VIHSIBILITE testimonial support guide	March-May
Article on ethical issues and political challenges raised by the project	March-Dec
Launch of video compilations	May
Interviews (sexual and gender minorities; people with an experience in sex work)	May-Dec
Workshop on ethical issues raised by testimonials	June
Working committee / funding proposal for exhibition project	June-Dec
Digital Story Day	Fall
Development of media training for people with an experience in sex work	2013-14

## Research presentations in Vancouver and Quebec City

At the Annual Canadian Conference on HIV/AIDS Research in Vancouver this April, a *Testimonial Cultures* poster will present results from “**VIHSIBILITÉ training**: addressing ethical questions in solidarity with people living with HIV who give public testi-

monials about their experience”. The poster will provide an overview of educational tools developed over the course of this project and of feedback from participants.

During the ACFAS (*Association francophone pour le savoir*)

conference at Université Laval in Quebec City in May, **GRIS-Montréal** will be presenting results of research on the mid-term impact of its programs for high school students.

The research aims to provide an overview of what students

retain from this program as well as the evolution of perspectives on homosexuality

and bisexuality three months after the initial intervention. Results were compiled from

an analysis of 200 questionnaire responses and 20 interviews. ■

## GRIS-Montréal : reaching youth using testimonials and art

GRIS-Montréal has two new projects underway: “*Milieus défavorisés: déconstruire l’homophobie, ça commence à l’école*” (“Disadvantaged Environments: Deconstructing homophobia starts at school”) and “*Pour des milieux jeunesse libres d’homopho-*

*bie*” (“For Homophobia-Free Youth Environments”).

After listening to testimonials from GRIS members, high school students and youth from various backgrounds will be invited to create art projects to fight homophobia and

make an impact in their personal contexts. A selection of the best pieces will be exhibited at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts in May. An impact evaluation questionnaire will also be distributed. For more information, contact [info@gris.ca](mailto:info@gris.ca). ■

## Trending: testimonials around the world

### Making our testimonial archive accessible

Following recent discussions about how to archive our collection of testimonial examples, we have decided to create an accessible and simple-to-use database to support the preparation of special projects (such as an exhibition). We are working to set up a beta version (on the Zotero platform) with approximately fifty examples by the summer of 2013.

### The Interface Project : Nthabiseng Mokoena

The goal of *The Interface Project* is to share testimonials given by people who are intersex or living with differences in their sexual development. With the help of this website, a community too long silent has a new way to increase its visibility. Among the many videos is an inspirational testimonial from South Africa by Nthabiseng Mokoena, who explains that it is possible to be both intersex and happy without surgical or hormonal

intervention.

[www.interfaceproject.org](http://www.interfaceproject.org)

### An award for *Les invisibles*

*Les Invisibles* (2012, directed by S. Lifshitz and B. Nahon) has won a César for best documentary film. Lyric in tone, it presents men and women born between the world wars discussing their experiences of living openly homosexual lives at a time marked by social rejection. Trailer: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZoGUWpgF9dY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZoGUWpgF9dY)

### RÉZO launches resource on coming out

RÉZO ([rezosante.org](http://rezosante.org)) has launched a new resource for parents and families of men (youth and adults) in the process of coming out (accepting and affirming their sexual orientation). Neat and uncluttered, MONFILSGAI.org provides information and raises awareness with the help of nine touching testimonials from parents, gay men, and social workers who offer insights

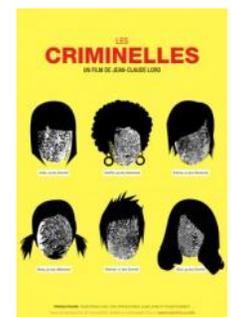
and guidance. The testimonials provide answers to questions that can arise when someone announces their homosexuality. For more information: [communication@rezosante.org](mailto:communication@rezosante.org)

### Les criminelles sparks a controversy

First seen on the big screen at the Abitibi-Témiscamingue International Film Festival this winter, the documentary film *Les criminelles* (2012, directed by J.-C. Lord) includes approximately thirty testimonials given by sex workers. Produced on a very small budget, the film quickly ignited a debate pitting the feminist prohibition viewpoints of CLES and CALACS against the views of STELLA, which supports those who enjoy their profession and courageously speak out in this groundbreaking film. For more information: [www.chestella.org/stella/?q=les-criminelles&PHPSESID=013f9d16f0e01f2baa6c388e4668a6f0](http://www.chestella.org/stella/?q=les-criminelles&PHPSESID=013f9d16f0e01f2baa6c388e4668a6f0) ■



mon fils gai



**From top to bottom:** The Interface Project, testimonial by Nthabiseng Mokoena; *Les invisibles* (screen capture); logo for MONFILSGAI.org; promotional poster for *Les criminelles*.



Cultures du témoignage | Testimonial Cultures

**A cultural study of testimonials as a social intervention strategy for sexual minorities: uses, challenges, issues, and benefits of a renewed practice**  
 ("Testimonial Cultures")

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 Groupe de recherche et d'intervention sociale (GRIS-MONTREAL)  
 PolitiQ – Queer solidaires de Montréal  
 Prostitutes of Ottawa/Gatineau Work, Educate & Resist (POWER)  
 Stella, l'amie de Maimie

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## Staff news

### Congratulations!

Bravo to **Bruno Laprade**, doctoral candidate in semiology and project partner, who was recently awarded a scholarship from UQAM's Department of Literary Studies and the Yvon Charrette Bursary for the study of homophobia. Keep up the excellent work!

### A word of thanks

We would like to thank the two students who came to us from a course offered at Concordia University, *HIV/AIDS: Cultural, Social and Scientific Aspects of the Pandemic*, and will be leaving us at the end of March.

**Kira McLean**, a psychology student doing a minor in Interdisciplinary Studies in Sexuality, helped coordinate VIH-SIBILITÉ training and compile evaluation results.

**Sindi Numa**, who studies biochemistry, took part in several activities, in-

cluding development of a database to archive our collection of testimonials. As her internship draws to a close, Sindi agreed to share her thoughts on the experience.



Markya Henry, research assistant (left) and Sindi Numa (right), staff our information table during an event at UQAM's School of Social Work.

**Sindi Numa : contributing from every angle**  
*I chose an internship with Testimonial Cultures in order to get a better understanding of how the perception of HIV/AIDS differs between socio-cultural and biomedical frameworks. Mission accomplished!*

*This placement allowed me to gain familiarity with community and academic groups involved in the project.*

*From multiple angles, I was able to look at HIV-related issues as well as the ways in which minority groups face similar problems and limitations. The project encourages an interdisciplinarity that blurs boundaries and opens thinking beyond presupposed limitations. I appreciated the opportunity to participate in stimulating discussions and work with caring and dynamic people who were open to my questions and tolerant of the challenges I faced.*

*Through my involvement in meetings, the database project, and special events, I leave with a ton of new skills that I will be able to use in future personal, professional, and academic pursuits. ■*

## 10 Years of Trans Pride

Organized by the ATQ ([www.atq1980.org](http://www.atq1980.org)), the 10<sup>th</sup> annual Trans Pride Day is an opportunity to reflect on the need for government, social, and community networks to adopt non-discriminatory policies inclusive of the full diversity of people who identify as transgender or transsexual.

**When?** Saturday, May 4<sup>th</sup>, beginning at 9:00 am at the Comité social Centre-Sud (1710 Beaudry St.). There is a \$2 entry fee. The event will be followed by a gala at Café Cléopâtre (1230 St. Laurent Boul., 2<sup>nd</sup> floor). Entry costs \$10. For more information: [mathieu.joel.gervais@hotmail.com](mailto:mathieu.joel.gervais@hotmail.com)