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AUTHORS

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Pat Armstrong is a Professor of Sociology and Women's Studies at York University, CHSRF/CIHR Chair in Health Services and Nursing Research, and a CCPA Board member and Research Associate.

Sheila Copps is a former Liberal MP, serving as a cabinet minister and as Canada's first woman Deputy Prime Minister. She has long been an advocate for women's and minority rights.

Eve-Lyne Couturier, chercheure à l'Institut de recherche et d'information socio-économique et co-auteure de l'étude *Qui s'enrichit, qui s'appauvrit* – 1976-2006.

Shelagh Day is an expert on women's human rights, with many years of experience working with governments and non-governmental organizations. Currently, she is a Director of the Poverty and Human Rights Centre, whose central goal is to strengthen the human rights of the poorest women.

Jane Doe is the woman who successfully sued the Toronto Police for negligence and gender discrimination in the investigation of her rape: *Jane Doe v the Metropolitan Toronto Commissioners of Police* (1998). She is a writer: *The Story of Jane Doe* (Random House), researcher, and feminist activist.

Martha Friendly founded and is coordinator of the Childcare Resource and Research Unit. She has authored numerous articles, chapters, and reports on child care and a book on child care policy, and participates in several child care advocacy groups.

Josephine Grey is a human rights activist and mother of four who has been active in the struggle for economic and social justice. She is a founder of *Low Income Families Together (LIFT)* in Toronto, a resource centre run by and for low-income people.

Michele Landsberg is an award-winning journalist and author who is working on a book for the Feminist History Society, <http://feministhistories.ca>.

Heather Mallick is a Toronto author and journalist.

Alexa McDonough is the former leader of the federal New Democratic Party.

Chi Nguyen has a lifelong affair with the feminist movement in Canada, and spends her days as Director of Participation and Process for MASS LBP in Toronto.

Lana Payne is President of the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour.

Shannon Phillips is a research associate with the Parkland Institute and a policy analyst with the Alberta Federation of Labour.

Elizabeth Quinlan was one of the first graduates of the Interdisciplinary Studies Doctoral Program at the University of Saskatchewan, where she now teaches and researches in the Department of Sociology. Her research interests include work, gender, and health.

Qianru She is a Masters student in the Department of Sociology, University of Saskatchewan. Her research interests focus on the internationalization of post-secondary education and the labour market needs for knowledge workers. She has presented her work at several academic conferences. Her research is motivated by her experience working in an employment service agency in China. After graduation, she plans to find employment as a social science researcher.

Judy Rebick is a life-long activist and feminist. She was a leader of the pro-choice movement in the 1980s when abortion was legalized in Canada.

Heather-jane Robertson is National Vice-President and Treasurer of the CCPA.

Laurel Rothman is national coordinator of Campaign 2000.

Paulette Senior is CEO of YWCA Canada, the nation's oldest and largest women's multi-service organization.

Priscilla Settee, Ph.D. is an Associate Professor at the Department of Native Studies, University of Saskatchewan. She is also a member of the Board of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

Uzma Shakir is a community activist and Atkinson Economic Justice Fellow.

Elizabeth Sheehy is a law professor at the University of Ottawa Faculty of Law. Drawing from Canadian trial transcripts, she is currently writing a book on battered women who kill their abusive male partners.

Marit Stiles is a displaced Newfoundlander, living and working in Toronto. She is Director of Research at ACTRA, the national union representing more than 21,000 performers working in English-language recorded media.

Armine Yalnizyan is a Senior Economist with the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

Jessica Yee is Executive Director of the Native Youth Sexual Health Network, and Chair of the National Aboriginal Youth Council and Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network.

Nancy Ruth is a Canadian senator, a United Church minister by training, and an activist by choice. She has been a leading advocate of incorporating Canada's constitutional equality rights into our public policy and institutions.

EDITORS

Trish Hennessy directs the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives' growing gap project and also advises Canadian progressives on communication strategy. She is a former newspaper journalist.

Ed Finn is the editor of The CCPA Monitor, the monthly journal of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. Formerly, as a journalist, he worked for two years at The Montreal Gazette and for 14 years wrote a column on labour relations for The Toronto Star. He also served for three decades with several labour organizations, including the Canadian Labour Congress and the Canadian Union of Public Employees.

INTRODUCTION

1

Trish Hennessy



I LIKE A GOOD CURSE WORD.

So, too, does Conservative Senator Nancy Ruth, who dropped the F-bomb in her contentious advice to Canadian feminist leaders, telling them last spring to “shut the fuck up” about our Prime Minister’s announcement that Canada would no longer support abortion as part of its foreign aid focus on maternal health.

“If you push it,” the senator is quoted as saying, “there will be more backlash. This is now a political football. This is not about women’s health in this country.”

That warning shot — the implication that Canadians who fight for women’s right to choose, no matter where they live, could face retribution from our own federal government — reminded me of the troubling fragility of our democracy.

It also roused the feminist in me. It made me want to give voice to women, so they can do what they have long done — speak truth

A READER ON CANADIAN WOMEN’S INEQUALITY

to power, the genesis of this special collection of essays about women, written by women.

You are about to read a powerful collection of provocation and advice that roots the women's struggle in its historical context and ought to make anyone think twice before recommending a strategy of silence within a free, democratic society.

Not on this generation of women's watch. We don't take for granted the advances women have made over the past century: the right to vote, get an education, earn a living, secure legal recourse, the right to lead and the right to choose. There is no turning back *this* clock.

In this reader, you will hear from accomplished, gutsy, smart leaders in their field. Women who inspire us to do more, not less, for the women of this country and for the women who live beyond our own borders. They are no shrinking violets.

There's Sheila Copps, who withstood withering sexism during her career as a former MP, cabinet minister, and deputy prime minister. Recall her famous "I'm nobody's baby" retort in 1985 to former MP John Crosbie's admonition to "just quiet down, baby." She warns us that the soft, silent STFU approach has never put women in good stead.

Paulette Senior, CEO of YWCA Canada, reminds us that "the struggle for women's equality is as old as the country," and that "silence is not our friend." She writes: "In times like these, silence puts the rights of future generations at risk. Silence will not protect us or the next generation. Speaking out and struggling for change can."

Alexa McDonough, former federal New Democratic Party leader, reminds us that, in the 1970s second wave of feminism in Canada, "making our voices heard was not just an individual aspiration... it was the very *raison-d'être*."

Heather-jane Robertson, national vice-president and treasurer of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, flashes back to 1973

and boldly takes us through a personal journey that brings to life the feminist adage: “the personal is political.”

Similarly, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives Senior Economist Armine Yalnizyan gives us a vivid personal account of the evolution of Canada’s women’s movement — and her evolution along with it. She writes: “As a young woman, the women’s movement meant only one thing to me: permission to view myself as nothing less than an equal. I did not have to raise my voice for this permission. I inherited a world in which, thanks to generations of women who had spoken up, my choices — my vote, my health, my sexuality, my career path — were mine, and mine alone, to make.”

It was the ultimate Canadian promise: the right to speak out, the right to be heard, the right to equality. But, as IRIS researcher Eve-Lyne Couturier writes from Quebec, there is more to do (“Encore beaucoup reste à faire”).

The women in this collection of essays make the case for battles still to be fought, rights still to be gained.

Elizabeth Quinlan and Qianru She, from the University of Saskatchewan, show how the labour market is filled with inequities and worry that things will get worse post-recession.

Shannon Phillips, a research associate with the Parkland Institute and a policy analyst with the Alberta Federation of Labour, makes the link between government policies and women’s continued inequality.

Lana Payne, president of the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour, points to the political agenda of Stephen Harper’s government. She writes: “Since 2006, Prime Minister Stephen Harper has served up victory after victory to his supporters, bolstering his base. This has been done through numerous policy measures and in particular by attacking women’s equality, feminists, and the principle of the collective. It has been done through the politics of division, fear and wedge.”

York University professor Pat Armstrong writes: “... The federal government’s principles are showing, and showing in ways that are disturbing for us all, especially for women, and in ways that trickle down throughout the public and para-public sector at all levels.”

University of Ottawa law professor Elizabeth Sheehy warns that “... women’s equality is not on Harper’s agenda.” She writes: “Far from it. Not only have equality-seeking organizations been systematically de-funded, but the word itself – ‘equality’ – has been banished from government institutions.”

Author and journalist Heather Mallick advises us that women can be silent, try to be liked, but “it won’t work, so best just tell the Tories that Canadians can’t condemn African women to an agonizing death from an attempted abortion, not when we have won a basic level of abortion rights for ourselves.”

Child care expert Martha Friendly chronicles more than 50 years of activism to secure a basic public service – child care. She writes: “In spite of all this, today a new generation of Canadian women – daughters of the second-wave feminists who were the movers who formed and inspired the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (“NAC”) – have embarked on careers in law, medicine, teaching, and science, only to find that they – like we – must still struggle to find and pay for good child care if they become mothers.”

Laurel Rothman, national coordinator of Campaign 2000, reminds us that women still find themselves disproportionately poor, despite their active and full participation in the work force today. She writes: “It’s true that there are now more women in the labour force than ever before – including those with young children. Yet women’s wages still lag far behind those earned by men.”

Josephine Grey, founder of Low Income Families Together, asks: How can we have gone from being the alleged best country in the world to a state where women and their children have to endure abuses of their basic human rights?

Uzma Shakir, a community activist and Atkinson Economic Justice Fellow, warns: “Having bought into the myth that we have achieved equal rights for all, Canadian society is slowly being lulled into a false sense of security.”

Shelagh Day, an expert on women’s human rights, laments that male-led governments are letting women down. “We have been stunned, I think, by the deep inroads into the social foundations of our equality that have been made by the neoliberal project.” She writes: “This is a moment when a new solidarity among women is desperately needed.”

Chi Nguyen, director of Participation and Process for MASS LBP in Toronto, challenges us to imagine a better women’s movement in Canada.

Similarly, award-winning journalist and author Michele Landsberg takes us through the hilly landscape of Canada’s feminist movement, concluding that feminism morphed from a movement to a party of the establishment. She writes: “We have absolutely no need to mourn this stage of our history. We miss the excitement and the camaraderie, and the pleasure of exploding received wisdom and pricking any number of balloons. We miss the spotlight and the cheers of the crowd, and the feeling of power in our righteous anger. We miss those things, but we are wrong to confuse stasis with morbidity... We were always a minority, and we changed the world forever. We’ll do it again. Some day.”

Marit Stiles, director of research for ACTRA, connects the personal choices her daughters will enjoy with the political argument for ensuring that those choices remain. She writes: “While my daughters see no reason why they can’t become scientists or authors or carpenters or chefs, it’s really in spite of our media, not because of it. And it’s in spite of the guys who know that, if they take away child care funding, women will find ways to pick up the pieces (and bear the costs). It’s in spite of CEOs who build

fortunes on the backs of women working in call centres and non-union temp jobs. It's in spite of the fact that we are told to STFU by our own sisters when we are the very ones who must speak the loudest and the most often. And it's because some of us just don't shut the fuck up."

Jessica Yee, an unapologetic young, indigenous feminist, envisions a Canada where young people draw from ancestral female strength and become the resilient, fierce "ain't-gonna-take-any-crap females we've always been."

Speaking of taking no crap, Jane Doe — the woman who successfully sued the Toronto Police for negligence and gender discrimination in the investigation of her rape — names 10 groups she suggests *should* STFU.

Senator Nancy Ruth, the woman at the centre of the STFU controversy, contributed to this keepsake collection, but also, I dare say, breathed new life into Canada's women's movement.

Michele Landsberg writes in this collection: "a movement *moves*." As this series of essays suggests, the women's movement in Canada is, once again, on the move. It is up to us to give it shape, definition, and yes, of course, voice.

Feminist icon Judy Rebick reminds us that women fought for decades to stop injustice in our country; we can do no less for women around the world.

The final word goes to Priscilla Settee, associate professor of Native Studies at the University of Saskatchewan, who writes: "The status quo is not an option. In the spaces that we have carved out for ourselves, each of us must create a sense of hope for humanity... and wake up the sleeping masses... 'No one is a passenger on this Earthship — we are all crew'."