CENTREPIECE

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Robbing from the Poor: An investigation into Gosselin v. Quebec and its implications in the fight against poverty

By: Brian Palmer

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Guest Opinion

Poverty. It is a simple word, yet it evokes so many different thoughts and emotional responses. Poverty has continued to plague societies from the earliest ages to today's modern world; virtually no country has been able to escape its grasp, and Canada is no exception. The Supreme Court of Canada has dealt with many cases relating to the struggle against poverty with respect to equality rights in the past, yet few in recent memory have had as large an implication as the *Gosselin v. Quebec* case of 2002. Louise Gosselin, a twenty-something female welfare recipient, challenged Section 29(a) of the *Social Aid Act* in Quebec as violating s.7 and s.15 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. She was unsuccessful right through to the Supreme Court of Canada. This case demonstrates how poverty needs be treated as a fundamental human rights issue rather than a policy issue before the courts.

Poverty Defined

Although there is no one absolute definition of poverty, most societies adopt an arbitrary economic line which distinguishes the gap between 'poor' individuals and their fellow citizens. Statistics Canada publishes data each year on 'Low Income Cut-offs' (LICOs), which describes a low-income household as one that'"spends 20% more of its income on necessities (i.e., food, shelter, clothing) than does the average family." (K. Steel "Poverty Redefined" (1997) 24 Alberta Report/Newsmagazine*)*. According to the Fraser Institute, "no one is poor if they can meet their basic needs", however, "the basic needs poverty line is not absolute…To be meaningful, a poverty line has to be connected to the society in which people live."("Defining and re-defining poverty: A CCSD perspective""http://www.ccsd.ca/pubs/2001/povertypp.htm [CCSD]. Thus, poverty in Canada is defined in relative terms rather than absolute terms; although those individuals who fall below the LICO in Canada are considered "poor", they are fairly well off compared to those individuals in Africa and Southeast Asia who deal with extreme starvation each and every day. The true definition of poverty is best encapsulated in the words of Adam Smith: "What defines being poor is not just being without a shirt (any shirt), but being without the means to be minimally respected in a particular society at a particular time." (CCSD).

Canada and the Poverty Problem

There were 4.4 million Canadians living in poverty in 2001, putting the national poverty rate at 14.4%; of this group, almost 500,000 unattached individuals under 65 lived on incomes of less than half the poverty line (National Council of Welfare Reports. (2004). *Poverty Profile 2001*. p. 4 [Poverty Profile]. Two of the most important determinants of poverty in Canada are family type and level of education. Women occupy the three highest poverty rates by family type, and also have higher poverty rates than men in every single age group. Although unattached women under 65 are clearly one of the groups in dire need of aid (at least statistically speaking), they receive the least amount transfer payments from the government. They mainly have to rely on welfare as a primary source of income, which often barely covers the necessities. In fact, unattached women under 65 had an average depth of poverty $8,546 below the poverty line in 2001 (Poverty Profile, p. 58). In the

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Staff and Volunteers

We have been busy these past few month. **Lisa Ellis** has joined us for a four month article. **Kaitlyn Hatch** has just finished working on the Safety under the Rainbow Project. We wish her luck in her future endeavours. We continue to work on our joint project with the **Canadian Institute of Resources Law** on human rights and resource development. We have two summer law students: **Asad Chaudhary** and **Michael Lipton**. We are also working on a joint Anti-Racism Education project with the Committee on Race Relations and Cross Cultural Understanding: **Pamela Dos Ramos, Vilma Dawson and Brenda Johnston** are working on this.

We are fortunate to be working with excellent volunteers for the last few months—including **Maricar Castillo, Brenda Kwan, Paul Harden** and **others.** Thanks!! *-Linda McKay-Panos*

Video Review

by Kaitlyn Hatch

It's a Girls World: A Documentaray about Social Bullying, NFB, 67 min, 2004

Bullying has become one of society's most prominent concerns since the tragedy of Columbine, Springfield and Taber. The focus on youth who may become a threat to their classmates has created a world of metal detectors and security guards in school. However, this is focusing too strongly on the bullied lashing out. People are stunned that youth could do such a thing, that peer pressure and every day torment could cause them to bring a gun to school...but it's no different than when children choose to take their own lives, instead of the lives of those who torment them. Largely these violent acts have been carried out by males, who are most outwardly reactionary to any assault. Often male bullying is more visible, more physcially violent. 'It's a Girls World' strays away from the big schoolyard bully who steals your lunch money into a far more malicious place of psychological abuse and torment.

In a compare and contrast format, this video invites us into a group of close-knit elementary girls who are already learning the sneakiest ways to inflict punishment on those they simply do not like. Then we are introduced to another group of girls who probably grew up very similarly to the first group. These girls, however, have learned about the impact 'bullying' can have when a close friend commits suicide and shows them that words often hurt the most.

This video can be borrowed from the Research Centre, or to order your own copy, call the National Film Board, at 1-800-267-7710.

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context of *Gosselin*, it is also significant to note that adults under the age of 25 are at the highest risk of poverty of any age group (Poverty Profile, p. 47).

Poverty rates fall as the level of education rises. This is rather intuitive, as education often affords an individual greater opportunity to find higher-paying employment. The 2001 poverty rate for unattached women under 65 without a high school diploma was 67%, as compared to 33% for those from the same group with a high school diploma (Poverty Profile, p. 50). This figure continues to drop if the individual successfully completed post-secondary education. Not only are people without a high school diploma more likely to fall below the LICO cutoff, but they are also likely to be poorer for longer periods of time.

Poverty-Related Claims and the Charter

The Courts have remained notoriously aloof when dealing with poverty-related Charter claims, often asserting that there is no constitutional right to be protected from poverty. A claim to protection against a no-grounds eviction from public housing, a claim for access to expensive subsidized HIV medication, and a claim to protection from a significant reduction in social assistance levels are just a few of the many poverty-related claims which have been rejected by the courts (D. Wiseman "The Charter and Poverty: Beyond Injusticiability" (2001) 51(4) *University of Toronto Law Journal* 425 [Wiseman]). These actions (or in many cases, failures to take action) are in direct contravention of the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,* which Canada has ratified. The Covenant states that our nation has "obligations to respect, protect, promote, and fulfill the rights it guarantees, including the right to an adequate standard of living, which, in turn, includes a right to adequate housing, food, and so on." (Wiseman) Thus, according to international human rights standards, Canada is obligated to provide some form of protection against severe poverty; more importantly, the courts should not feel justified in taking a static view of their capacity when it comes to poverty-related claims (Wiseman).

***Gosselin v. Quebec* (Supreme Court of Canada, 2002)**

In 1984, the Quebec government made an amendment to the *Social Aid Act* under Section 29(a) of the regulation, impacting social aid with the goal of combating the rapidly rising unemployment rate among young adults. Under the newly adopted scheme, social aid recipients under the age of 30 were to receive a base amount of a third of what was being given to those individuals over 30 years of age ($170 compared to $466). An individual in the under-30 age group was entitled to receive the entire $466 base amount on the condition that he/she participate in one of three programs: community work, on the job training, or remedial education. The program proved to be disastrous for young individuals, who were already struggling to meet their basic needs: there were only 30,000 places in the program, and a mere 11.2% of persons under 30 eligible for the incentives were able to increase their benefits to the subsistence level provided as a base amount to persons over 30.

Louise Gosselin, a female welfare recipient in her twenties, participated in all three programs only to discontinue each one due to ongoing psychiatric and related health problems. Ms. Gosselin filed a class action lawsuit for all welfare recipients under the age of 30 "on the grounds that the inferior base amount payable to recipients under 30 violated ss. 7 and 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and s. 45 of the [Quebec] Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms." The claims were dismissed by the trial judge and the Supreme Court of Canada (five votes to four).

According to the majority in the Supreme Court decision: "Section 7 does not include economic rights and there is nothing in the case law indicating that it imposes on the state a positive obligation to guarantee each person's life, liberty and security." In other words, the judges felt that the court only had a duty not to intervene on an individual's rights, and was not compelled to act in order to protect Ms. Gosselin from drifting below the subsistence poverty level. The majority also found that the new social aid scheme did not violate Section 15 of the Charter (on the basis of age discrimination). The judges noted that distinctions were common and necessary in order to maintain order in society, that the program was appropriate considering the circumstances at the time (i.e., large unemployment numbers in young adults due to economic recession), that the goal was to provide a remedial education for the young adults' long-term benefit, and that the evidence did not support the view that the program undermined the group's human dignity.

Analyzing the Majority's Arguments

While I agree with several points in the majority judges' decision in *Gosselin*, I side with the dissenting view in the judgment for a number of important reasons. One of the issues that immediately comes to mind is the majority's treatment of the appeal based on the guarantee to each person's life, liberty and security under Section 7 of the Charter. As noted in the previous section, the court felt as though it did not have any positive obligation to guarantee adequate living standards. Not only do I find this a weak argument, but it is also particularly distressing; if the Supreme Court of Canada is unwilling to tackle the truly difficult issues present in our society, such as what appears to be the violation of a basic human right in this case, then who will step up and truly fight for equality?

By refusing to take action, the Supreme Court sent another message: that it was not the State's fault, but rather Ms. Gosselin's fault that she was unable to receive the full base assistance payments due to her failure to complete one of the three program requirements (S. Grover, "The Equality and Liberty Rights of the Destitute: A Canadian Charter Case Example" (2005), 12 International Journal on Minority and Group Rights 43 [Grover]). Nevertheless, dissenting Judge Bastarache noted that "any reading of the evidence indicates that it was highly improbable that a person under 30, with the best intentions, could at all times until he or she was 30 years old be registered in a program and therefore receive the full subsistence amount." (*Gosselin*, para. 254) This clearly does not sound like a program which would allow those receiving a level of assistance below the subsistence amount a chance to participate fully in society and to be

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treated as an equal member, as is stated in Section 15 of the Charter. Another statement which I took exception to can be found in paragraph 64 of the case, where the majority states: "there is no evidence to support this claim…even if we are prepared to accept that some young people must have been pushed well below the poverty line, we do not know how many, nor for how long (*Gosselin*). The need to follow-up and investigate the results of the new social aid program was an area which both the provincial government of Quebec and the courts failed to address. This is a critical failure, which undermines the entire logic of the majority's decision; had they followed up with the under-30 group, the government would have realized that the low welfare rates were causing recipients unwarranted stress from facing homelessness and malnutrition each and every day, while some even attempted suicide (*Gosselin*, para. 165).

The majority in *Gosselin* also decided to support the new social assistance program because it recognized the potential of under-30 welfare recipients and would help them integrate into the work force. Although I am fully in support of the desired effects of the scheme (i.e., greater self-sufficiency), the ends do not justify the means. By coercing individuals with the threat of extreme poverty as an incentive to attend education programs, the message was loud and clear: subsistence welfare would not be an entitlement based on need, but rather a privilege requiring program participation (Grover). While achieving long-term self-reliance in welfare participants is definitely a worthy goal, I think it is an inherently flawed way of handling a social assistance program if it comes with serious short-term consequences. After all, those individuals who are unable to meet the stated program requirements for personal reasons, such as in the case of Ms. Gosselin, are only concerned about meeting their short-term needs in the first place.

Evaluation and Interpretation

The majority's central thesis in this case is twofold: there is nothing under s. 7 of the Charter which obligates the state to guarantee life, liberty and security as they relate to economic rights, and secondly, the evidence did not support the conclusion that young adults were at a disadvantage as a result of their age. Instead, the new program recognized the group's potential for success on the basis of further education. Although I have already examined both of these issues in detail in the previous section, I feel that some of the assumptions the Quebec government and the majority judges deserve further investigation because they shed light on a number of pre-conceived notions surrounding poverty in Canada.

As you will recall, the courts blamed the individuals themselves, rather than the government, for failing to meet the specified standards of the remedial program in order to be awarded the full assistance amount. The majority stated: "[I]t is difficult to infer from this that the program failed to correspond to the actual needs of under-30s. I find no basis to interfere with the trial judge's conclusion that the record here simply does not support the contention of adverse effect on younger welfare recipients. This makes it difficult to conclude that the effect of the program did not correspond to the actual situation of welfare recipients under 30." (*Gosselin*, para. 54). True, no one program will be able to meet the particular needs of each and every individual, and also support the concern over the dramatic increase in unemployed under-30 welfare recipients. However, within the context of having a mere 11.2% of eligible individuals under 30 being able to increase their benefits to the subsistence level, this is a dangerous assumption to make.

Moreover, the majority did not view the connection between health and psychological problems suffered by under-30 welfare recipients, such as Ms. Gosselin, and the below subsistence levels of social assistance. A former Minister of Community and Social Services stated "we must continue to take steps to ensure that welfare is there for those honest folks who are upgrading their education, improving their job skills or making the transition from welfare to work." (Grover) This implies that any individual who was unwilling or unable to participate in the government-designed programs did not deserve to receive the subsistence amount. Such a statement only perpetuates the stereotype of the poor being lazy, and even worse, of poor women as "mentally fragile individuals who are prone to prostitution" (K. Kinch and E. Arbel, Seeing red about Gosselin v. Quebec'. *Ultra Vires*, Retrieved from http://ultravires.ca/feb_03/legal_gosselin.htm)

Yet the court notes about Ms. Gosselin that "from time to time she has tried to work, attempting jobs such as cook, waitress, salesperson, and nurse's assistant, among many. But work would wear her down or cause her stress, and she would quit." (*Gosselin*, para. 1) Does this not seem like an honest individual who has tried her best to find and retain employment despite her unfortunate circumstances? Is it right to punish a person for not meeting a standard whenshe is incapable of achieving it?

Conclusion

The *Gosselin* case has important implications, particularly with respect to an individual's right to be given sufficient social assistance to provide for his/her basic needs. We must begin to treat poverty issues as more than simple policy issues; the Charter is based on fundamentals of inclusiveness, equality, and dignity for all individuals. As a result, it was wrong for the Quebec government to rely on an economic recession to justify offering below subsistence welfare levels to those under-30 individuals without dependants.

There is no denying the controversial nature of poverty-related claims. The very fact that Ms. Gosselin's appeal was dismissed by a vote of five to four shows there was no definite consensus on the issue of social assistance programs as they relate to life, liberty and security, as well as distinctions based on age. However, the Quebec government and the courts did not properly examine the effects of the new scheme once it was implemented, instead relying on Section 45 of the Quebec Charter (which does not require government to defend the wisdom of its measures) as a safeguard against the inevitable negative reaction from under-30 welfare recipients.

There is an old Chinese proverb which says if you give a man a fish, you feed him for a day. If you teach that man how to fish, you feed him for a lifetime. Sonja Grover feels as though "the difficulty is that it is not possible to teach him how to fish and learn how to feed himself for a lifetime if he is unable to get to the water in the first place." The solution to this dilemma lies in the hands of the Canadian government and the Supreme Court of Canada. It is the government's responsibility to design social assistance programs which not only allow welfare recipients to meet their needs, but also enhance their dignity as fully-fledged members of society. Perhaps then, when we have given these individuals a roadmap and the necessary tools to realize their true potential, they will join us on the waterfront and fish beside us.

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Safety Under the Rainbow: A project working toward ending violence in Alberta

by Melissa Luhtanen

Legal equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans-identified ("LGBT") communities is not just about same-sex marriage. In addition to the myriad of relationship rights necessary to live a dignified and egalitarian life, there are other equality rights, such as freedom from discrimination and harassment at work, school, and home. Even these rights fall short of providing LGBT communities with complete equality to heterosexual communities. Opening a newspaper or watching television and seeing depictions of only straight couples just re-emphasizes the shortcomings of strictly legal equality. While Canada may be approaching a version of legal equality, we still have a long way to go to achieve social equality for LGBT communities.

Safety Under the Rainbow ("SUTR") is a group of like-minded community organizations which came together in early 2005 to discuss how to address one of the pressing issues of equality for LGBT youth and couples – violence. SUTR, co-chaired by Jane Oxenbury and me, includes members ranging from the police to psychologists to community organizations. Presently our affiliates are:

Action Committee Against Violence
Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre
Calgary Communities Against Sexual Abuse
Calgary Distress Centre
Calgary Police Service
Edan Counselling Associates
Gay and Lesbian Community Services Association
Independent Living Resource Centre
Outlooks Newspaper
Peer Support Services for Abused Women

These and other agencies decided to embark on a project to end violence within and against LGBT communities. Organizations within these groups had already begun this type of work, but the time had come to take their work to the next step.

Women Hurting Women (WHW) is a training program, for service providers, on same-sex domestic violence in relationships between women. WHW had become a program of Peer Support Services for Abused Women. It had developed training in the area already, and had a well established following for its programs before SUTR came together. *Violence in Gay Male Relationships* (VIG R) addresses same-sex nestic violence in relationships between men.VIG R was on the verge of developing training program. Youthsafe.net is a program which addresses homophobic youth bullying. Youthsafe developed a website, launched in March 2004, which still today provides a list of all the services and resources available for LGBT youth in Alberta. Youthsafe was ready for its next step in implementing a plan to address violence against LGBT youth.

In May 2004 the Alberta government conducted the Roundtable on Family Violence and Bullying. As a result of the Roundtable, the government dedicated financial resources to address family violence issues (See www.child.gov.ab.ca/whatwedo/familyviolence for more information.) SUTR applied for this money and was awarded funding in the summer 2005.

From then until now has been a whirlwind of activity, with the Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre agreeing to be the fiscal agent for the project. We hired a researcher and administrator for the year, Kaitlyn Hatch. Then we began the work of implementing our proposal. SUTR's goals this year included:

1. Developing and augmenting training on same-sex domestic violence and homophobic youth bullying.
2. Administering surveys in the community to gather more statistics on these issues.
3. Developing a booklet and website of services.
4. Gathering community to discuss how to address these issues, further, in the future.

The program has been a huge success. We have implemented a two-day training program, for service providers, which includes one day training on same-sex domestic violence and one day training on homophobic youth bullying. Service providers can take these as a package or isolate the area which represents their clients. Training sessions continue to be held in Calgary and will take place in Lethbridge, Red Deer and Edmonton in September.

Last month during Pride 2006 we launched our website and booklet of services which can be found at www.sutr.ca. We also conducted a survey at many of the Pride events such as the Pride Parade, the Alberta Rockies Gay Rodeo, and the Inside Out Youth Group. We conducted a summit of interested organizations which addressed these issues and examined steps for the future.

As this year's grant comes to an end, the members of SUTR can feel a sense of accomplishment. During the year, there were up to 20 organizations intimately involved in the organizing and planning of this project. These organizations brought in three times that many people who worked on researching, developing and implementing all of the project pieces. This commitment demonstrates how Alberta is ready to address these equality issues for the LGBT communities. The ground-breaking work being done by SUTR has not only been implemented by LGBT organizations, but also by many other leaders of equality work in Alberta.

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United Nations and the Lubicons: New Hope for an Old Issue?

By Linda McKay-Panos

Reprinted from LawNow Vol. 30 No. 5

One of the longest unresolved human rights issues in Alberta is the case of the Lubicon Cree, an Aboriginal First Nation of about 500 people who live in Northern Alberta. The Lubicon were overlooked when Treaty 8 was negotiated with other Aboriginal peoples in the area in 1899. While a reserve was promised to the Lubicon people 40 years later, it was never established. The subject of the dispute is 10,000 square kilometers of oil-rich forested land, which is north of Lesser Slave Lake and east of the Peace River. Traditionally, the Lubicon Cree lived almost entirely off the land (Amnesty International, "'Time is Wasting': Respect for the land rights of the Lubicon Cree long overdue", April 2003 at 2 [Amnesty]). Considerable oil extraction which started in the 1970's in the region, together with extensive logging, have had significant reported impacts on the health, way of life, and culture of the Lubicon Cree. Yet, they have never consented to this development on traditional lands for which they claim to have never surrendered their rights.

Since about 1985, there have been several attempts at negotiations with the federal and provincial governments regarding Lubicon land rights but these talks have broken down. Hopes for a solution were raised in 1990 when the United Nations Human Rights Committee (UNHRC) concluded that this situation endangered the way of life and culture of the Lubicon Cree. Further, the Committee said that "so long as they continue", the threats to the Lubicon way of life are a violation of the Lubicon's fundamental human rights (United Nations Human Rights Committee Communication No. 167/1984: Canada 10/05/90 CCPR/C/38/D/167/1984. *Ominayak and the Lubicon Lake Band v. Canada*.) The UNHRC was assured by the Canadian government that it was negotiating a settlement that would respect the rights of the Lubicon Cree. Despite this, a settlement has never been reached.

It should not be assumed that the lack of settlement demonstrates that the Lubicon Cree are unable or unwilling to negotiate agreements. The Lubicons have recently been able to negotiate agreements with two private oil and gas firms. These agreements give the band a veto over some oil and gas drilling on the claimed land. The Lubicon claim that they were able to negotiate these agreements despite the Alberta government's urging the firms not to negotiate with the band (John Cotter, "UN Wants Ottawa to resume talks with Alta's Lubicon band" 2 November 2005 oneline: http://cnews.canoe.ca/CNEWS/Canada/2005/11/02/pf-1289877.html [Cotter]).

Glenn Luff from Indian Affairs says that the federal government is not willing to pay the amount of financial compensation claimed by the Lubicon. In earlier discussions, the Lubicon asked for $50 million to establish a reserve and a further $120 million in compensation for energy and forestry development that has occurred over the decades (Cotter).

On November 2, 2005, the UNHRC responded to the representations of a delegation from the Lubicon Cree who had appeared before it in Geneva on October 17, 2005 to ask for further comment on the situation. In its report, the UNHRC said:""The Committee is concerned that land-claim negotiations between the Government of Canada and the Lubicon Lake band are currently at an impasse….The state party should make every effort to resume negotiations. It should consult with the band before granting licences for economic exploitation of the disputed land" (United Nations Human Rights Committee, Considerations of Reports Considered Under Article 40, Canada 2005: CCPR/C/CAN/CO/5). These are quite strong statements which have raised the hopes of the Lubicon Cree that the negotiations will resume and will result in an appropriate settlement.

The UNHRC also noted in its November 2, 2005 decision that Canada had not implemented its previous recommendations on other human rights issues and had not established procedures for responding to deficiencies when they were identified by the UNHRC. Many human rights advocates hope that this commentary will "embarrass" the government into action. One of the criticisms of the United Nations system is that remedies available to individuals are "soft" because they cannot be enforced in the same manner as domestic legal cases. The United Nations has relied upon the desire of Canada to maintain its international reputation of being a great respecter of human rights. However, bringing the Lubicon Cree situation to the attention of the international community in 1990 did not seem to produce the desired results.

The Lubicon Cree, however, did not let the initial disappointment deter them and approached the UNHRC once again this year. As noted by Alphonse Ominayak, Lubicon band counsellor,"They have to deal with this as soon as possible so we can get on with our lives before everything is totally destroyed. People are hoping the government will live up to its responsibilities" (Cotter). Perhaps if the federal government established a procedure to respond to deficiencies in human rights noted by the UNHCR, this procedure could be used to finally address the human rights concerns arising from the circumstances of the Lubicon Cree, which have remained unresolved for decades.

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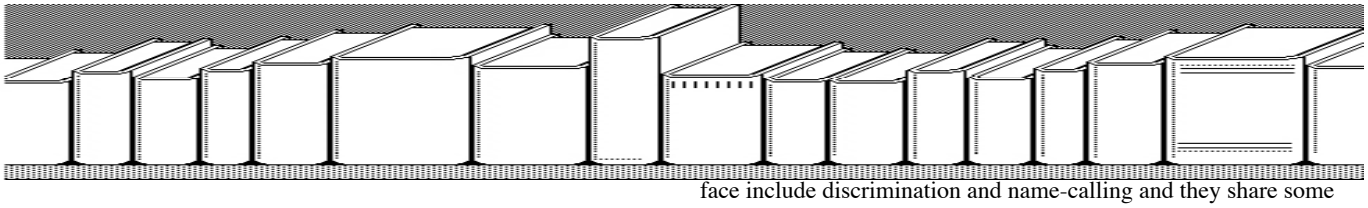

Refugees and Discrimination: Teacher and Student materials. Background information for teachers, and student activities on refugees in Canada. Includes applicable laws; suitable for secondary school students. 190+ pages. 2006. ISBN# 1-896225-43-8 ($35 + $5 s/h).

Family Law: Don't Get Lost in the Shuffle: Adult Handbook. Answers questions that young people have about separaton and divorce. Intended to assist adults. Can be used alone or with Don't Get Lost in the Shuffle Cards which may be obtained from CLERC at 207-9029. 32 pages. 2005. ISBN# 1-896225-39-X ($7 + $3 s/h)

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Seniors and the Law: A Resource Guide by Anna Pellatt, LL.M. In a question-answer format, provides an overview of issues facing seniors, including abuse, mental health, personal directives, powers of attorney and consumer protection. Includes a glossary and list of Alberta agencies. 160 pages. 2000. ISBN #1-896225- 28-4. ($25 + $5 s/h).

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"One Origin, One Race, One Earth"– November 15 to 17, 2007, University of Calgary

by Brian Seaman

The human genome is our common bloodline and our future. As geneticists continue to explore life at its molecular level, the challenge for geneticists, ethicists, and lawyers is to ensure that ethics and law keep pace. We must also ensure that the fruits of such research are applied without prejudice for the benefit of those who are living and those yet to be born. "One Origin, One Race, One Earth: Genetics, Human Rights and the Next Phase of Human Evolution" is a multi-disciplinary conference that will address legal and ethical issues attendant to genetics — issues that lead us into the heart of what it is to be human.

The *Alberta Civil Liberties Research* Centre is pleased to announce our two keynote speakers, two very articulate thinkers who will speak from two very different perspectives: Dr. Gregory Stock, Ph.D., a leading U.S. expert on genetics who is currently teaching at Princeton University in New Jersey, and renowned Canadian author Margaret Atwood. Dr. Stock will address our opening plenary and reception; he will speak about genetic engineering and its promise for human advancement. Ms. Atwood will speak at our closing banquet and warn where unyoked science can lead without humility, compassion and ethics as its guides.

Of particular interest to Dr. Stock are the implications for society, medicine, and business of the human genome project and associated developments emerging from the revolution in molecular genetics and bioinformatics. A recognized international authority on the impact of new technologies on human society, Dr. Stock's prolific writing has long addressed fundamental issues of human life and values. Perhaps his most famous work is *Redesigning Humans: Our Inevitable Genetic Future* which was published in 2002. Among his other books is the best seller, *The Book of Questions*, which has been translated into seventeen languages, and is now in its fifty-fifth printing. Sequels to the book include *The Book of Questions: Business, Politics, and Ethics* and a new book that will explore how coming technologies will reshape our everyday lives.

Margaret Atwood has been a dominant presence in the Canadian and international literary world for almost 40 years. Her voluminous collection of poems, short stories, literary criticism, and novels have been translated into over 20 languages. She has won many national and international writing awards, including the Governor-General's Award and the coveted Booker Prize. Witty, urbane and provocative, Ms. Atwood will dare us to look inside of "Pandora's Box" with her, Drawing on her best-selling 2003 novel *Oryx and Crake* for inspiration, Ms. Atwood will ask where genetic research could take the human race if we leave our compassion and ethics behind.

Both Dr. Stock and Ms. Atwood will be taking questions from our delegates following their talks. For more information about these speakers and the conference itself, visit the conference site at http://www.aclrc.com/OneOrigin/.

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Notably, the end of this year's work is only the beginning of new goals for SUTR. We are presently working on including more information on our website, as well as putting the survey up so that people can fill it out online. We are in the process of completing a handy wallet card of important numbers. We are also working on gaining more funding to continue to offer the workshops across Alberta. If you are interested in this project we are always looking for new affiliates and members to SUTR. Please contact me at mlluhtan@ucalgary.ca.

To live in fear of physical or emotional abuse, and to feel there is no one that can help with this abuse, is the opposite of equality. Supporting an end to discrimination means not only providing the relationship rights necessary to protect LGBT youth and spouses, but also means providing the infrastructure necessary to address bullying and violence. When service providers are trained to understand homophobic youth bullying and same-sex domestic violence they can be more effective in their work, and we can all feel supported and safe.

Melissa Luhtanen is a Human Rights Educator at the Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre, and the Co-Chair of Safety Under the Rainbow.

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