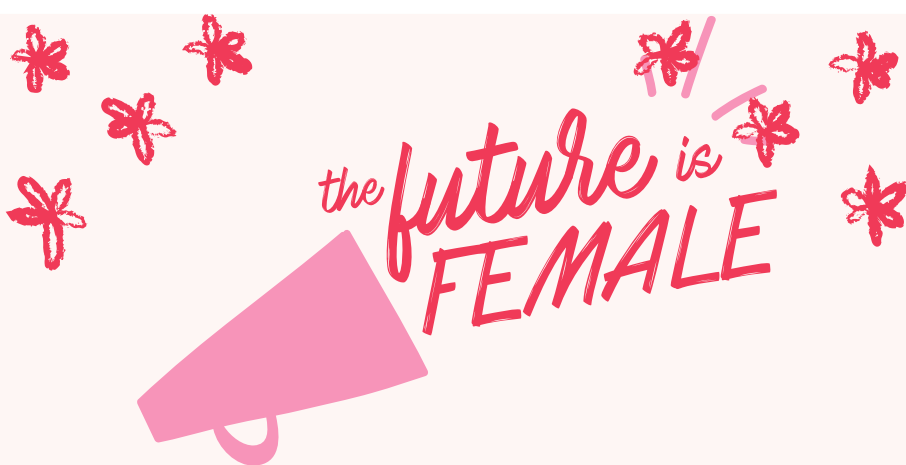


Redefining Canada's Past: Sex, Drugs, and Feminism

- In the early 20th century, Canada grappled with complex societal issues deeply rooted in racism, sexism, and national identity formation.
- The era was marked by profound racism, moral conservatism, and exclusionary policies, shaping the nation's trajectory in profound ways.
- Racism permeated all aspects of society, influencing policies, social attitudes, and immigration practices, resulting in the marginalization and discrimination of Indigenous peoples and racialized peoples.
- Moral panics surrounding drug use targeted marginalized communities, notably Chinese immigrants, perpetuating harmful stereotypes and leading to the enactment of stringent drug laws fueled by anti-Chinese sentiment.
- First-wave feminism, while advocating for women's rights, was entangled with ethnocentric beliefs, perpetuating discriminatory practices and excluding marginalized voices.
- The enduring legacy of early 20th-century racism continues to impact marginalized communities today, highlighting the importance of addressing systemic inequalities and injustices.
- This factsheet endeavours to critically dissect historical narratives surrounding sex, drugs, and first-wave feminism, to provoke introspection and advocate for social justice.
- Confronting racism, sexism, and discrimination is essential in building a future rooted in justice, equality, and inclusion, fostering a society where all individuals are valued, respected, and afforded equal opportunities for growth and prosperity.



Feminism and Ethnocentric Ideals:

- First-wave feminism, while advocating for women's rights, was entangled with ethnocentric beliefs about sexuality and civilization. Some white feminists like Nellie McClung and Emily Murphy perpetuated racist narratives, excluding marginalized voices and reinforcing discriminatory practices.
- Influenced by Christian chauvinism and moral conservatism, feminist activism often reflected societal prejudices, particularly regarding immigration, sexuality, and social reform.
- Their aspirations for revolution were obstructed by their own racial biases, which became intertwined with the very revolution they sought. These biases hindered the movement's capacity to confront intersecting forms of oppression, thereby perpetuating systemic inequalities within feminist circles.



The Profound Racism of Anglo-Saxon Canadians:

- Racist ideologies permeated every facet of Canadian society, dictating policies and societal perceptions. Anglo-Saxon Protestant Canadians, who considered themselves superior, perpetuated discriminatory practices against Indigenous peoples and people of colour.
- Indigenous peoples and racialized peoples faced marginalization, and exclusion and were subjected to discriminatory laws and practices that reinforced racial hierarchies.
- The concept of "race" was exploited to justify exclusionary immigration policies, framing racialized groups as threats to the nation's moral and social fabric, and highlighting how racial categorizations perpetuated systemic inequalities and oppression within society.



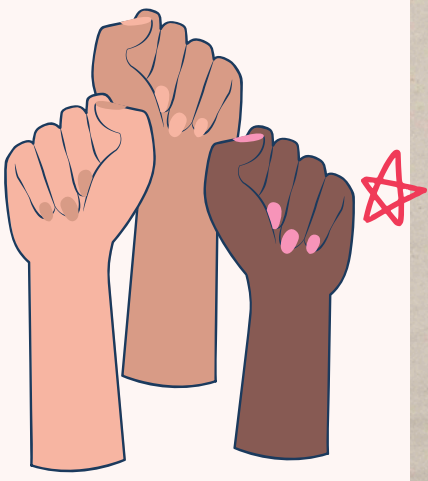
Eugenics:

- Eugenics is a pseudo-scientific ideology that advocates for the selective breeding of humans to improve the genetic quality of the population, often resulting in discriminatory practices such as forced sterilization and immigration restrictions based on perceived racial superiority.
- Leilani Muir was one of the tragic victims of Canada's eugenics policies, highlighting the profound racism prevalent in Canadian society.
- Muir was sterilized without consent under the Alberta Sexual Sterilization Act.



Leilani Muir:

- Leilani Muir, a young woman from Alberta, Canada, was unjustly deemed "mentally defective" by the province's Eugenics Board. At the age of 14 in 1959, she was forcibly sterilized under Alberta's Sexual Sterilization Act.
- Under the *Alberta Sexual Sterilization Act* of 1928, which aimed to prevent the reproduction of individuals deemed "unfit" or "undesirable," Muir was forcibly sterilized without her consent.
- Muir's case gained significant attention in the 1990s when she filed a lawsuit against the Alberta government, leading to the landmark ruling that declared Alberta's sterilization laws unconstitutional and awarded her significant compensation for the harm done to her. Although, no amount of money could take away what was done to her.
- Muir's case highlighted the grave injustices perpetuated by eugenics policies, shedding light on the lasting trauma inflicted upon individuals and families targeted by such laws.



A young photograph of Velma Demerson
<https://www.cbc.ca/radio/asithappens/as-it-happens-wednesday-edition-1.5154357/remembering-velma-demerson-the-woman-jailed-in-toronto-for-living-with-her-chinese-fianc%C3%A9-1.5154359>

Velma Demerson:

- Velma Demerson, a Canadian woman, was arrested in 1939 under Ontario's Female Refuges Act for her relationship with a Chinese Canadian man, which was deemed unlawful due to racial segregation laws. Pregnant at the time of her arrest, Demerson was forcibly sterilized while in detention, under the pretext of protecting the "purity of the white race." She gave birth while incarcerated and was separated from her child, but managed to take her baby from jail. Demerson's subsequent activism sought justice and acknowledgment of the harm inflicted upon her and others by eugenics policies in Canada.
- Demerson's case underscores the intersecting forms of oppression she encountered, including gender discrimination compounded by the loss of citizenship, which is particularly significant given the discriminatory nature of the Female Refuges Act under which she was arrested.
- The plight of Demerson sheds light on the targeted nature of oppressive laws, particularly impacting Indigenous women, emphasizing the imperative to rectify systemic injustices and amplify the marginalized voices within historical discourse.



Moral Panic, Drug Laws, and Racism:

- Moral panics surrounding drug use disproportionately targeted marginalized communities, notably Chinese Canadians, exacerbating anti-Chinese sentiment by portraying drug use as a moral failing, which in turn led to the enactment of stringent drug laws. Catherine Carstairs defines moral panic as a state of heightened public anxiety or fear over perceived threats to societal values and norms, often fuelled by sensationalized media coverage and moral crusades.
- Anti-Chinese sentiment played a pivotal role in the passage of laws perpetuating harmful stereotypes and curtailing human rights by framing drug use as a moral failing, exacerbating racial tensions. Catherine Carstairs' research elucidates how this sentiment contributed to the enactment of stringent drug laws, disproportionately impacting racial minorities and reinforcing systemic racism within the criminal justice system.
- Racialization, as outlined by Catherine Carstairs, refers to the process through which social meanings and categories of race are assigned to particular groups, shaping perceptions and treatment within society. In the context of drug policy, racism intertwined with this process, leading to legal precedents that disproportionately impacted racialized minorities. Carstairs' research emphasizes how drug policies, framed within a context of racial prejudice, curtailed the civil liberties of all Canadians while exacerbating racial inequality by disproportionately targeting and stigmatizing marginalized communities.

Legacy and Reflection:

- The enduring legacy of early 20th-century racism continues to affect marginalized communities today, perpetuating systemic inequalities and injustices.
- By acknowledging this history and its intersections with sex, drugs, and feminism, we can work towards dismantling systemic injustices and fostering a more equitable society.
- Confronting and addressing racism, sexism, and discrimination is imperative in building a future rooted in justice, equality, and inclusion, ensuring that the mistakes of the past are not repeated.

GIRLS JUST
WANNA HAVE
FUNDAMENTAL
HUMAN RIGHTS

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