

WE ARE CANADIAN

Britney Trieu
Old Scona Academic,
Edmonton, AB

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Royal Bank

In the words of Vera Nazarian, “A woman is human. She is not better, wiser, stronger, more intelligent, more creative, or more responsible than a man. Likewise, she is never less.” With the contributions from our predecessors, such as Rosemary Brown, roles of Canadian women have evolved over the past centuries. No longer are they trapped in the confines of a domestic institution, forced to do as they are told; they receive the recognition they deserve. We are objective, we are righteous, and we are Canadian.

And yet, only “8.5% of Canada’s top jobs” are held by women . At work, a woman may retain an identical position as a man, but the discrepancy between paychecks indicates otherwise, as the average Canadian woman earns “\$8000 less than men... double the global average of \$4000” . Though her presence is tolerated in the institutions that fuel our economy, she fails to receive equitable recognition to her male counterparts. We confess to our daughters that despite their equal work ethic, education, and skill set, they cannot anticipate the same pay as their brothers, simply because they are female. Young girls are chided by their mothers, told never to walk alone at night — let alone in an alleyway — for fear of ‘a fate worse than death’. I know these warnings too well; their immortality is reflected in my every thought, action, word. What is a society that warns its daughters from going at night alone, rather than teaching its sons respect? In the routine establishment of victim-blaming, slut-shaming, and rape culture, we have educated and practicing judges asking a rape victim why she “couldn’t keep her knees together”, or stating “sex and pain sometimes go [simultaneously]” .

It is for these reasons that Rosemary Brown devoted her life towards eliminating sexism and creating a society which encouraged the advancement of women socially, economically, and politically. Born in Jamaica in June of 1930, she was raised in a household of politically active, strong-minded women. She was faced with both racism and sexism, however, when she moved to Canada for her studies. As the Ombudswoman and founding representative of the Vancouver Status of Women Council (VSW), she strived to progress the roles of women in society. Through her position, she promoted social justice and engaged in feminist community building, coupling significant communication between women and the VSW. She served as the essential component needed to foster a community in which women could confront society with a self-assurance that they would otherwise lack. Unifying women with women, she assisted in the establishment of an association that could address the needs cried from previously silenced voices.

Brown then ran as a candidate for the New Democratic Party in 1972. She entered provincial government as Canada’s first black, female MLA. Brown held the position for 14 years, during which she founded a committee with the purpose of eradicating sexism in curriculum textbooks. This was crucial to the fostering of young minds, as the early teachings of equality between men and women dispelled the myths of gender stereotypes from a young age, thus propelling the future towards gender equality. Her endeavors resulted in an increase of women represented on “boards, commissions, and directorates” , and built a foundation upon which they could confidently access such positions. Faced with blatant racism and sexism, Brown nevertheless inspired women to fight for their rights, even when confronted with adversity. As Canadians, we are responsible for leading the movement towards gender equality rather than lagging in the wake of the world. It is crucial that Canada seal it’s pay gap, fostering a community which respects the rights of women and enables them to rise to leadership positions. Unacceptable are the distasteful remarks of public judges who are meant to uphold and reflect the rights of the people. Canadians deserve better; nevertheless, we are responsible for creating this ‘better’.

Brown left a legacy that demands exceptional action from our generation, striving towards a society in which both males and females are valued, appreciated, and respected. Through her contributions, she promoted the advancement of women, creating an environment in which we benefit from today; one where women have innumerable opportunities and a greater respect compared to those before us. As the leaders of tomorrow, it is essential we raise aspirations of young women, evolve perspectives of gender, and create a society in which women are treated as equals to men. We are responsible for the progress of women’s rights; we are Canadians.



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