

Lesson Five: Backgrounder

We Demand an Apology

Over the past several decades, scholars and journalists have investigated the LGBT Purge. John Sawatsky wrote a book called *Men in the Shadows*, which addressed the RCMP's role. Journalist Dean Beeby published articles exposing the hunt for gays in the civil service. Historians Gary Kinsman and Patrizia Gentile authored a major book called *The Canadian War on Queers*. This research fueled demands for redress by Purge survivors and their allies.



Class action members at the LGBT Purge settlement, Federal Court, Ottawa, 2018. Photo: Mitchel Raphael

In 2015, Purge survivors and their allies organized the We Demand an Apology Network. They issued a press release in 2016. It read: "An apology for the wrongs committed by the Government of Canada against LGBT people is the least that is required to begin to right these wrongs."

The Government Apologizes

Purge survivors and their allies sought redress from the government. One of the first calls for an apology came from Gary Kinsman and Patrizia Gentile in 1998. Queer activists kept up pressure on the Canadian government. Eventually, in 2017, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau delivered a formal apology. He said the government was sorry for the oppression of 2SLGBTQI+ people. Purge survivors and activists were present for the apology they had waited so long to hear.

Mixed Reactions

The apology drew mixed reactions, from joy to bitterness. Many people who had been purged were no longer alive to hear it. Prior to the apology, a class action was also brought against the government.

The Settlement

In 2016, survivors of the LGBT Purge launched a nation-wide class action lawsuit against the Canadian government. The three representative plaintiffs were Todd Ross, Martine Roy and Alida Satalic. These brave Purge survivors led the class action on behalf of the class members.

A historic settlement was reached in June 2018. It included a global settlement amount of \$145 million. Up to \$110 million was set aside for the payment of damages to LGBT Purge victims.

The settlement allocated around \$23.5 million for "reconciliation and memorialization measures." These funds are a gift from LGBT Purge victims for these measures. Indeed, the funds symbolically represent compensation for the suffering of victims of the LGBT Purge who did not live long enough to be eligible to receive individual compensation under the LGBT Purge settlement.

Profile:

Wayne Davis



Wayne Davis was born in Drumheller, Alberta, in 1947. He joined the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in 1967. Davis's RCMP service included postings in British Columbia and Ontario. Davis worked in the administration and finance fields and reached the rank of Staff Sergeant. In 1986, he was forced to resign from the RCMP as part of Canada's LGBT Purge. For the next three decades, Davis pursued a managerial career in the federal public service and then at the University of British Columbia until he retired in 2015. He is currently one of the directors of the LGBT Purge Fund.

Photo: Allen Gammie

Profile:

Steven Deschamps



Steven Deschamps was born in Cornwall, Ontario, in 1956. In 1979, he became a pilot in the Canadian Armed Forces. He was purged in 1982, after five months of interrogation by the Special Investigations Unit. But he successfully fought to restore his career in 1992. His return to duty followed Michelle Douglas's landmark case that forced the military to end its LGBT Purge. Deschamps went on to serve 31 years in the Regular and Reserve Forces. He was appointed an Honorary Colonel by the Minister of National Defense in 2022.

Photo: Daniel Rutley

Profile:

Michelle Douglas



Michelle Douglas was born in Ottawa, Ontario, in 1963. She joined the Canadian Armed Forces (Air Force) in 1986. Douglas trained to be an officer, but she was discharged from the CAF in 1989 as part of Canada's LGBT Purge. She challenged her dismissal in court and in 1992 settled her case against the CAF, which reversed its discriminatory policies based on sexual orientation. Douglas moved on to work for the federal public service and retired from the Department of Justice in 2019. She remains an activist for 2SLGBTQI+ rights and is currently the Executive Director of the LGBT Purge Fund and an Honorary Colonel in the Canadian Armed Forces.

Photo: Department of National Defence, supplied by Michelle Douglas

Profile:

Douglas Elliott



Douglas Elliott was born in Toronto, Ontario, in 1956. Elliott studied law at the University of Toronto and was called to the bar in 1984. His law practice has focused on class action work on constitutional cases concerning same-sex partners and 2SLGBTQI+ rights. This includes serving as lead counsel in the 2016 LGBT Purge class action. In 2023, Elliott received the Carl Mitchell Community Impact Award, which recognizes University of Toronto alumni who advance the principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion through their volunteer contributions. He currently lives in Elliot Lake, Ontario, and is one of the directors of the LGBT Purge Fund.

Photo: Ian McCausland, CMHR

Profile:

Patricia (Patti) Gray



Patricia (Patti) Gray was born in Windsor, Ontario, in 1959. She joined the Canadian Armed Forces (Air Force) in 1979 and worked as a supply technician in Chatham, New Brunswick. Her career was cut short when

Gray was discharged from the CAF in 1981 as part of Canada's LGBT Purge. Gray returned to Windsor and later moved to Hamilton, Ontario, to work for Bell. After retiring in 2012, she moved to Toronto and worked for the Blue Jays organization. In 2017, Gray joined the class-action lawsuit by LGBT Purge survivors against the Government of Canada.

Photo: Canadian Armed Forces, supplied by Patti Gray

Profile:

Kareth Huber



Kareth Huber was born in Red Deer, Alberta, in 1957. Following in the footsteps of her father, grandfathers, and uncles, she joined the Canadian Armed Forces (Air Force) in

1975. Huber was stationed in Borden, Ontario, working as a safety systems technician. Her career lasted only about 18 months because the CAF discharged her in 1976 as part of LGBT Purge. In the early 1980s, Huber moved to Toronto and became active in gay and lesbian rights organizations. Currently, she lives in Ottawa and is one of the directors of Rainbow Veterans of Canada.

Photo: Supplied by Kareth Huber

Profile:

Diane Pitre



Diane Pitre grew up in Campbellton, New Brunswick. She is a longtime advocate for 2SLGBTQI+ veterans. In 1980, she was dismissed from the Canadian Armed Forces

during the LGBT Purge. For almost 40 years, she lobbied the Canadian government to apologize to veterans who were purged before the apology was finally delivered in November 2017. Pitre went on to found the Rainbow Veterans of Canada in 2019.

Photo: Supplied by Diane Pitre

Profile:

Todd Ross



Todd Ross was born in St. Stephen, New Brunswick, in 1969. He identifies as Métis. After being an Army Cadet, Ross joined the Canadian Armed Forces (Navy) in 1987. He was posted in Cornwallis, Nova Scotia, and then served on HMCS Saskatchewan. Ross was discharged by the CAF in 1990. He has since advocated for Indigenous, health, and human rights issues, and he became a lead plaintiff in the class-action lawsuit launched by LGBT Purge survivors in 2016. Ross currently lives in St. Andrews, New Brunswick, and is co-chair of the LGBT Purge Fund.

Photo: Al Corbett Studio, supplied by Todd Ross

Profile:

Martine Roy



Martine Roy (centre) was born in Montréal, Québec, in 1963. Roy joined the Canadian Armed Forces (Army) in 1983 and was stationed in Borden, Ontario. After investigations as part of the LGBT Purge, the CAF still renewed Roy's contract but soon rescinded the offer. They discharged Roy within months of her enlistment. Roy worked various jobs until 1999, when IBM hired her. She authored some of the company's inclusivity policies. In 2016, Roy joined the LGBT Purge survivors' class-action lawsuit against the Government of Canada. Currently, she is co-chair of the Board of Directors of the LGBT Purge Fund.

Photo: Supplied by Martine Roy

Profile:

Simon Thwaites



Simon Thwaites was born in Portsmouth, England, in 1962. Thwaites moved to Canada when he was 13. In 1980, he joined the Canadian Armed Forces (Navy). After almost a decade as a sailor, Thwaites was discharged by the CAF in 1989 because he was HIV-positive. Thwaites fought this dismissal as a case of workplace discrimination based on a disability, and the Federal Court ruled in his favour in 1994. He then continued working with AIDS organizations and supporting people in palliative care. He also became a Christian minister and an artist. Thwaites now lives in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Photo: Aaron Cohen, CMHR

Profile:

Svend Robinson



Svend Robinson (right) was born in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in 1952 and grew up in Burnaby, British Columbia and was the district's Member of Parliament from 1979 to 2004. In 1988, he became the first member of Parliament to openly identify as gay. Robinson helped Michelle Douglas, a survivor of the LGBT Purge, in her discrimination suit against the Canadian Armed Forces. He resigned from politics in 2004. Both within and outside Parliament, Robinson has advocated for 2SLGBTQI+ rights, environmental protection, the right to physician-assisted death, and mental health.

Photo: Thomas Fricke, CMHR

Profiles: Post-LGBT Purge Stories

The LGBT Purge came to a formal end in 1992. But discrimination has continued against 2SLGBTQI+ employees of the Canadian government.

Their personal stories express the need to keep fighting for change.

Profile:

Kathryn Foss

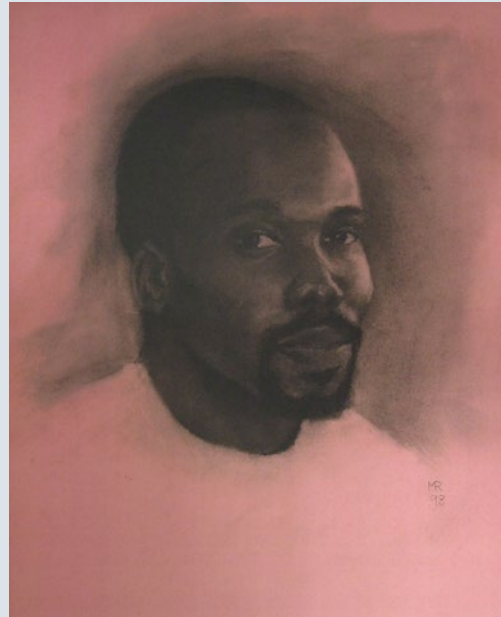


Retired Major Kathryn Foss served in the military from 1987 to 2019. She identified as transgender in the early 1990s despite her fears of being discharged. Foss is now a consultant, coach and mentor with expertise in diversity, gender issues and inclusion.

Photo: Department of National Defence, CAF Ombudsman

Profile:

Douglas Stewart



Douglas Stewart is a founding member of Zami, the first Black queer group in Toronto. His activism challenges racism and exclusion faced by queer people of colour in areas such as government employment.

Photo: The ArQuives: Canada's LGBTQ2+ Archives, National Portrait Collection, portrait by Mark Reid

Profile:

Mark Berlin



Former Department of Justice lawyer Mark Berlin served in various senior posts in the Canadian Department of Justice. Yet, he experienced discrimination and was denied career opportunities. Berlin found a platform to speak out by joining the 2017 class action lawsuit.

Photo: Supplied by Mark Berlin

Profile:

Marco Manna



Former RCMP officer Marco Manna joined the RCMP in 2005 but left just four years later. He was subjected to homophobic behaviour that included offensive language and physical assault. Manna now speaks out about the need for meaningful change in the ranks of the RCMP.

Photo: Supplied by Marco Manna