

Resignation of Justice Robin Camp

A watershed moment for women survivors of sexual assault

TORONTO, March 10, 2017 —The Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic and WAVAW Rape Crisis Centre are relieved at the news of Justice Camp’s resignation as a member of the Federal Court of Canada. As the Front Line Interveners in the disciplinary proceeding representing countless women survivors of sexual assault, we agree with the Canadian Judicial Council’s (CJC) comments that Justice Camp’s conduct was “manifestly and profoundly destructive” to the impartiality and integrity of the bench.

The Barbra Schlifer Clinic and WAVAW Rape Crisis Centre were among a small group of women’s organizations granted an exceptional request by the CJC to intervene in the inquiry into the conduct of Justice Robin Camp. Justice Camp, best known for his comment, “why couldn’t you just keep your legs together,” repeatedly exhibited sincere antipathy toward decades of progressive Canadian legislation in place to protect vulnerable witnesses, and revealed stereotypical assumptions about how someone, confronted with sexual assault, should behave.

As interveners, we were successful in having our concerns reflected in the Inquiry Committee Report regarding the recommendation to remove the Honorable Justice Camp from the bench. The final report of the Inquiry quoted directly from our submission that:

“The social significance of a judge, in the highest position of authority, relying on rape myths and being oppositional to four decades of law reform, should be of central concern to the Inquiry Committee.”

The final report of the CJC also concurred with us that when rape myths are relied on by a person with authority and power in our society, such as “judge who should occupy a ‘place apart’, the discriminatory impact is more pronounced and the normalizing effects of those discriminatory views in society are far-reaching.”

As part of the public inquiry, the Front Line Interveners represented the voices of those absent from the hearing room; namely the countless women whose experience with sexual assault and the discrimination that the rape shield laws and other laws intended to protect.

We were particularly concerned with the interaction Judge Camp had with individuals who experience intersecting inequalities, such as race, religious minority status, newcomer status and Indigeneity.

“Though work still needs to be done to ensure women survivors of sexual assault, who are brave enough to bring their case forward, have their rights protected, this moment in history is a step in the right direction to begin to rebuild confidence in the justice system,” said Amanda Dale.



Although Justice Camp had apologized for his behaviour, his continued presence on the bench underscored the reasons sexual assault survivors do not trust the criminal justice system.

“A higher standard of accountability has now been set for judges. Women fully expect this standard to be upheld by the judicial system,” said Irene Tsepnopoulos-Elhaimer, Executive Director of WAVAW Rape Crisis Centre.

About the Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic

The Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic is a specialized clinic for women experiencing violence, established in the memory of Barbra Schlifer – an idealistic young lawyer whose life was cut short by violence on the night of her call to the bar of Ontario on April 11, 1980. In her memory, the Clinic is a multi-disciplinary, front-line service provider that assists nearly 4,000 women a year to build lives free from violence through counselling, legal representation, and language interpretation. Since it was founded in 1985, the Clinic has assisted more than 60,000 women.

About Women Against Violence Against Women Rape Crisis Centre

WAVAW Rape Crisis Centre works to end all forms of violence against women. Guided by a feminist anti-oppression philosophy WAVAW challenges and changes thinking, actions, and systems that contribute to violence against women. WAVAW provides all women who have experienced any form of sexualized violence with support and healing, and engages with youth to develop leadership for prevention of future violence.

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