

To Step Aside is Human: Women and Democracy

BY: KYRSTEN BOER & AMANDA HICKS

Democracy dates back thousands of years to ancient Greece, but since the beginning, there have always been disputes. One of these has been that of the Woman Question. For years, women fought for their

rights while the men continued to push their ideas through. The collection of short stories *Sister Woman* by J.G. Sime explores the views of these women during one of the most important social revolutions in Canada's history.

Women were considered one of the lowest members of so-

ciety whose role was to clean, cook, and raise the family. They were not allowed to vote and their opinion was considered less than desirable. With the approach of the 1920's, women's views on their position in society grew in anger as they reached the point where they finally took action against the injustice in society. Women wanted a vote and a say in Canada without limits. They wouldn't gain these rights until almost ten years after *Sister Woman* was written through the efforts of the Group of Five.

Throughout this collection of short stories *Sister Woman*, we witness the growth of the women revolution when we are able to see into the minds of women of all different nationalities and class as they adjust to life in a growing ur-

ban environment. This book tells the stories of women from all classes; from seamstresses and secretaries, to factory workers and prostitutes and their views and opinions on life and love in a patriarchal society.

One of the big turning points for women in history was the work that women did in factories. During the industrial revolution and World War I, women were finally considered an option as workers. From this time on women have worked alongside men, despite man's many attempts to "put women back in their place". Because of this women were more confident, they knew they had a larger place in society than just as a man's property.

J. G. Sime's collection of short stories is an excellent account

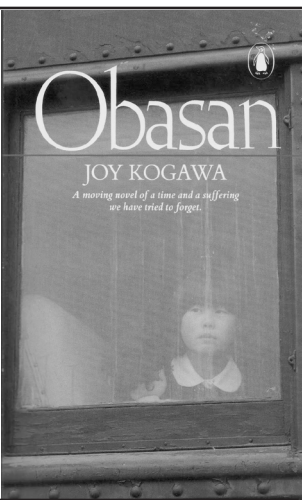


of the trials and struggles that women of the time went through. It questions the ridiculous standards and expectations men put on women, through the eyes of the average woman in the early 1920's. Despite being written almost a hundred years ago, the

challenges presented in this book are still relevant in modern society. For more information on the life of J.G. Sime and the themes in her work, go to [http://cinema2.arts.ubc.ca/units/canlit/pdfs/articles/canlit133-Gently\(Campbell\).pdf](http://cinema2.arts.ubc.ca/units/canlit/pdfs/articles/canlit133-Gently(Campbell).pdf).



Racism: A Dark Shadow



BY: CHELSEA BONNEAU & ANITA SCHAAFMSA

Many people view Canada as a free and accepting country; however, even in developed democracies like Canada, racism is a serious problem.

Racism is prevalent in society today, and casts a dark shadow over Canadian history. While many races have been discriminated against, one of Canada's darkest moments was the internment of

Japanese Canadians during WWII.

Japanese citizens, like people from all around the world, immigrated to Canada with dreams of a better life. Many were business owners, or worked on local fishing boats, and although they faced racism from politicians and other Canadians, they worked together to make their communities thrive. Unfortunately, the bombing of Pearl Harbor changed Canadians' outlook on their Japanese neighbours.

Fear ran rampant as Japan went to war with the Allied forces. White Canadians worried that people of Japanese descent were working as spies, despite the fact that many of these people were born in Canada and had never even vis-

ited Japan.

Japanese Canadians wanted to help their country, but were met with mistrust and outright hatred. They were prevented from working as fishermen, they were given a curfew, their property was taken by the government, and they were eventually displaced into internment camps. The War Measures Act was used to prevent Japanese Canadians from living within 160 km of the Pacific Coast of Canada (families had to leave their homes, even though they had done nothing wrong and had nowhere to go). This happened simply because they were of Japanese heritage. Interestingly, Canadians of German heritage faced no discrimination under the law.

Thousands of Japanese Canadians were moved to intern-

ment camps. These camps were not fit to hold such a large amount of people, and many women and children were forced to live in livestock buildings. It was a terrible time to be a Canadian citizen, as these people were indeed citizens of Canada, just like everyone else.

If this is a topic that interests you, the novel *Obasan* by Joy Kogawa illuminates the subject in a way



that will connect you to fellow Canadians that were forced to suffer. Racism is not a problem that only happened in the past. Canadian citizens today still find themselves the targets of discrimination and

hatred. If everyone educated themselves on this topic, we could stop fear-based racism from occurring, and help ensure that a crisis like this will never happen again.

