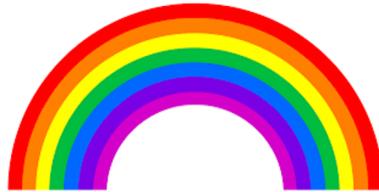


(Dis)honourable Discharge

LGBT MILITARY & CIVIL SERVICE PURGES





Please follow the steps to complete the zone:

- 1) Watch the video
- 2) Read through the booklet contents
- 3) Answer the discussion questions as a group

Content warning

Sexual and gender-based discrimination, PTSD, anxiety, trauma, homophobia, depression



Beginning in the 1950s and up until 1992, people who were perceived as LGBT who served in the military or worked in civil service (government) were investigated, questioned, and fired because of their **sexual orientation**.

The government believed that civil servants and members of the military who were homosexual had moral failings or a weak character, which could make them susceptible to **blackmail**.

Members of the military who were determined to be homosexual were discharged, while those in other government sectors were either fired, transferred, denied promotions, or discriminated against in other ways. There was also a large number of employees who suffered verbal and physical abuse because of their suspected sexual orientation, and who quit because of the treatment.

The purge had traumatic effects on the 2SLGBTQ+ community, as people could not be open about their sexuality or gender expression. Consequently, many people who were investigated and interrogated suffered anxiety, **PTSD**, and **trauma** as a result of discrimination.

Today, many survivors of the purge have spoken out about their experiences and have found healing through sharing their stories.

Hear their stories



Martine Roy joined the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) in 1981 at the age of 19. A few years into her career, she was interrogated for nearly 5 hours about all the details of her sexual history and habits. A few months later, she was asked to see a psychologist who would determine whether she was "normal" or "abnormal." Martine was told she was being discharged for homosexuality in 1984. Martine is a founding member of Pride at Work Canada, a NGO that promotes inclusive workplaces for 2SLGBTQ+ people.



Todd Ross joined the CAF in 1987 at the age of 18. He was brought under investigation by the Military Police beginning in 1989; the 18-month long investigation focused on Todd's sexual orientation. He eventually revealed that he was gay while attached to a **polygraph** machine and was given the choice to either accept a discharge or to perform "general duties" for the rest of his career. Todd was discharged in 1990 at only 21 years old. Todd was one of the lead **plaintiffs** in the case against the government. He has said he is proud to do what he can to ensure that "there's never that belief in a young person's life that they are wrong because of who they are."



Michelle Douglas joined the CAF in 1986 at the age of 23. A few years later, Michelle joined the Special Investigations Unit (SIU), which investigated criminal behaviour within the military. Michelle, a lesbian, kept her private life a secret, but was investigated by the SIU in 1988 because of her close friendship with a suspected lesbian. She eventually admitted to her sexual orientation, and was discharged in 1989. In 1990, Michelle launched a lawsuit against the Canadian military; her case was settled the day before **trial** and the military ended its policy of investigating suspected LGBT individuals.

*"It didn't matter how good you were. It didn't matter how much you were prepared to serve your country and indeed die for your country. It only mattered what your sexual orientation was."
- Michelle Douglas*



The Fruit Machine

In order to identify possible homosexuals, a professor from Carleton University designed the fruit machine in the early 1960s. The machine worked by measuring the reaction of the subject's pupils when they were shown explicit sexual images to determine whether they were gay or lesbian.

The machine was designed and tested, but was never actually used during interrogations. It was ordered and funded by the Ministry of Defense.

The RCMP would later use the polygraph machine on subjects instead.

Apology & Class Action



In 2017, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau apologized to the 2SLGBTQ+ community for the pain and suffering that the Canadian Government caused as a result of the purge. Although the apology happened, there is still ongoing issues as former service-people wait for financial settlements and victims of discrimination who quit their positions fight for any form of compensation.



In 2018, a settlement was reached in a **class action** case that set aside \$145 million for survivors of the purge who experienced discrimination between 1955 and 1996. Victims of the purge will receive compensation and support for education, reconciliation, and the official records of their service will be changed to reflect the nature of their discharge.



Glossary of terms

Sexual Orientation is the romantic and/or sexual attraction one person feels toward another person or other people.

Blackmail is the action of demanding money or another benefit from someone in return for not revealing compromising or damaging information.

PTSD is an acronym for Post Traumatic Stress-Disorder, a mental health disorder that is triggered by experiencing or witnessing a traumatic, distressing event.

Trauma is the lasting emotional response that often results from living through a distressing or disturbing event. Experiencing a traumatic event can harm a person's sense of safety, sense of self, and ability to regulate emotions and navigate relationships (The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health).

Polygraph is another name for a lie detector. It is a machine designed to detect and record changes in psychological characteristics, such as a person's pulse and breathing rates.

Plaintiff is a person who brings a legal case against someone else in a court of law. The person against whom the case is brought is called the **defendant**.

A **trial** is when parties to a legal dispute present evidence and arguments for their legal case to a judge (public official responsible for deciding cases brought to court) or a jury (a group of people who give a decision - verdict- in a legal case).

Class Action lawsuits are when a group of people who have similar experiences and complaints sue a defendant as a group. A class action can be brought to court by one or more plaintiffs on behalf of the group.

Discussion Questions



- 1) What might have been the long-term and short-term consequences experienced by victims of the purge?
- 2) What are some ways that institutions, like the military and the government, can make their workplaces more welcoming and supportive of 2SLGBTQ+ people?
- 3) Why do you feel it is important to hear the stories of 2SLGBTQ+ people who went through the purge?

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