

LEAF *let*

The newsletter of West Coast LEAF
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Sarah Weddington & Her World Changing Case

By M. Salaysay, Chair of the Equality Breakfast Committee

West Coast LEAF is excited to have **Dr. Sarah Weddington** as our keynote speaker for the **Equality Breakfast on March 16, 2007**.

Dr. Weddington is best known as counsel for Roe in *Roe v. Wade*. *Roe* was the landmark American case that established a



Sarah Weddington

woman's right to choose. Based on that decision, numerous laws across the U.S. outlawing or unduly restricting abortions were overturned and a woman's right to choose was established as a constitutional right. That decision was so influential that, in 2003, Time Magazine called it "One of the 80 days that changed the world." Quite the achievement for someone who was just 26 years old and only six years out of law school.

Since *Roe*, Dr. Weddington has continued to be a leader in women's equality. She was elected to the Texas House of Representatives, becoming the first woman to represent her hometown of Austin, Texas. She was also the first woman appointed as General Counsel for the U.S. Department for Agriculture. She later left that post to serve as an Assistant to President Carter.

Dr. Weddington has since been honoured with several awards and honorary degrees. In addition to teaching at the University of Texas, she continues to tour worldwide. This includes speaking at Fortune Magazine's "Most Powerful Women Summit", being a featured speaker at the March for Women's Lives in Washington, D.C. which attracted more than a million participants, and being a keynote speaker for the U.S. China Conference for Women and Leadership held in Beijing and Shanghai.

West Coast LEAF looks forward to having such a notable and dynamic keynote speaker at our 2007 Equality Breakfast. 🌱

EQUALITY BREAKFAST 2007

We invite you to join us and

DR. SARAH WEDDINGTON

at West Coast LEAF's Equality Breakfast

on Friday, March 16, 2007

at the Sheraton Wall Centre Hotel, Vancouver!

WELCOME TO SACHI MURAKAMI

I am pleased to introduce myself as the new Office Coordinator at West Coast LEAF! I received my B.A. in English Literature from UBC in 2004 and my M.A. in English Literature and Creative Writing from Concordia Montreal in 2006. Most of my work experience has been in non profit administration, from community festival planning, to theatre, to magazines. Out of the office I am active in the literary community as an editor at the women's writing magazine *Room of One's Own* and as a poet. My first book, *The Invisibility Exhibit*, due out in 2008 with Talonbooks, was written in the wake of Vancouver's missing women. The poems turn away from the sensationalist news story to examine the unseen issues breeding in the healthy, wealthy city that surrounds the Downtown Eastside and its supposedly self contained problems. I believe that politics are inextricable from cultural production, and that if I choose to do cultural work then I cannot put aside my political concerns in my writing. So too at my day job. It means a great deal to me to work for an organization that transforms troubled discontent for injustice into positive, empowering action. I will do all I can to support and further West Coast LEAF's ambitious mandate.

ACCOUNTING

At Carrall St. she eases into the seat beside me
her bulk of leather and scarves, heavy
with the scent of wet concrete. From her purse's folds
she pulls a pencil and notebook, begin to track

each lurch of metal and flesh, marks the time
against a schedule, tallies passengers, shopping bags,
redheads. There are names that she checks twice
against faces fading into cotton, soaked wool, linen.

She snaps her fingers, licks the eraser tip, but no.
They're all but lost. Her ledger will not balance. The bus turns:
the downtown skyline, visible, and then hidden.

Before we reach Mt. Pleasant and the greener
ascension she reaches her page's end,
packs up, steps down into the streets
and finds her place among them.

– from *The Invisibility Exhibit* by Sachiko Murakami
(Talonbooks, Forthcoming)

FOND FAREWELL TO CHRIS CONROY

West Coast LEAF's former Office Coordinator Chris Conroy is pursuing her Masters Degree at UBC. Chris was a pleasure to work with and she will be missed. We wish her all the best as she moves towards becoming a librarian.



Goodbye Chris, we'll miss you!

Decision in the Marine Golf Club Case Limits Scope of Human Rights Code

By Bev Gallagher, Program Director

West Coast LEAF is disappointed with the BC Court of Appeal's decision released January 11th in the *Marine Golf Club v. Buntain et al and BC. Human Rights Tribunal "Marine Golf Club Case"*. "We are concerned that this case further limits the scope of application of the *Human Rights Code* by taking a narrow view of what kinds of institutions attract *Code* scrutiny," says West Coast LEAF Vice President External, Amy Francis. "In doing so, the number of contexts in which women are protected from discrimination is also limited."

"We are in the process of reviewing the decision but believe that it does not reflect the purpose of the *Human Rights Code*, which is to 'foster a society in British Columbia in which there are no impediments to full and free participation in the economic, social, political and cultural life of British Columbia,'" says West Coast LEAF Executive Director Alison Brewin.

A number of women who are members of the Marine Golf Club in Vancouver filed a human rights complaint with the BC Human Rights Tribunal against the Club based on a Club policy that restricts women's access to a "men's only" lounge. The women were successful in

their complaint, but the BC Supreme Court decided the Tribunal did not have jurisdiction to hear the arguments. That decision was appealed and the result is the decision that the Club is a private place and therefore the *Code* does not apply.

LEAF NATIONAL AT SUPREME COURT OF CANADA

LEAF appeared before the Supreme Court of Canada in *Dickie v. Dickie* on Wednesday, January 17. *Dickie* is a family law case that deal with the recourses and remedies available when parties, overwhelmingly men, are in breach of family court orders. LEAF argued that inherent in the issue of support, as in much of family law, are fundamental sex equality issues. In the majority of support cases women are owed support by men and when they do not receive it, women and children are disadvantaged. "When spouses are allowed to abuse the family justice system, for example, by willfully breaching court orders, the power of abusive men gets perpetuated and women are disadvantaged as a result," says Llana Nakonechny, lead counsel for LEAF.

LEAF's factum is available at www.leaf.ca/legal facta.html. 

WOMEN'S EQUALITY AND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM PROJECT


The Women's Equality and Religious Freedom Multi faith Advisory committee has completed its discussions. Harsha Walia, who facilitated the Committee's discussions, has compiled a report which will serve to further guide West Coast LEAF. Thank you to the women who participated in the Advisory committee and to Harsha Walia for coordinating this stage of the Project. The report is available on our website at: www.westcoastleaf.org/pdfs/Multi_faithAdvisory_CommitteeReport.pdf.

TRANSFORMING OUR FUTURE TRAINING SESSION A HUGE SUCCESS!

By Bev Gallagher, Program Director

On January 20, West Coast LEAF conducted its first training session for volunteer lawyers interested in facilitating Transforming Our Future courses for advocates in the Lower Mainland and Victoria. "We didn't know what the response was going to be," said Alison Brewin, Executive Director and Trainer for the session, "but the interest was overwhelming. It is really encouraging to see so many lawyers interested in volunteering their time to assist with this

initiative. Now we have a pool of trained volunteers who we can call upon to conduct the two day course!"

This course empowers community service providers by providing tools for identifying systemic discrimination, assessing legal avenues for change, and developing strategies that are meaningful to their communities. Thank you to all our new volunteer facilitators for your time and commitment! We look forward to a transformative year! 

Investing in Women's Equality...

West Coast LEAF is grateful for the support that we receive from our donors and members. Your valued support ensures that we can fulfill our mission to advance women's equality in the law.

Thank you for your investment in West Coast LEAF that makes our litigation, law reform and education work possible.

SUPPORTER SPOTLIGHT:

We would like to recognize the Vancity Community Foundation who recently awarded a capacity building grant to West Coast LEAF. We are grateful for the longstanding support we have received from the Vancity Community Foundation and are pleased to accept this important funding to support our organizational growth and development.

SPECIAL THANKS:



West Coast LEAF is supported by the Law Foundation of BC and we are grateful for their ongoing core funding.



We would like to acknowledge BC Gaming for providing valuable funding to our education programs.



Thank you to the Health Sciences Association of BC for their recent grant to support Youth in the Workplace, our newest education program, being piloted this spring.



OTHER SUPPORTERS: Thank you to the Ethical Bean Coffee Company for their support in generously providing our office with coffee. We are pleased to partner with such a socially responsible company. Please visit www.ethicalbean.com.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

▪ **2007 Equality Breakfast – March 16, 2007, 7:00 am**
Sheraton Wall Centre Hotel, Vancouver.

West Coast LEAF is pleased to announce the 20th Equality Breakfast with keynote speaker **Dr. Sarah Weddington, counsel in Roe v. Wade.**

Partner Sponsor: Vancity

Tickets are \$60 each & table sales are also available. They are selling quickly, so order yours today! Please see order form for more details.

Special Note: The Nanaimo Equality Event has been postponed until later this year. *Date and further details to come.*

We value your support and invite any questions or comments you may have. Please feel free to contact us at 604-684-8772 or toll free in BC at 1-866-737-7716.

Thank You!

THEMIS CLUB

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Monthly Giving is the best way to support West Coast LEAF. It provides sustainable revenue, reduces administrative costs, and helps us to plan for the future. Please Contact Natasha Shields at 604 684 8772 ext. 113 for more details.



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LEAFlet is the newsletter of the BC branch of the Women's Legal Education and Action Fund.

Editing & Writing:

West Coast LEAF staff

West Coast LEAF is a provincial organization committed to promoting women's equality before Canadian courts, government agencies and human rights commissions; and to providing public legal education on the issue of equality rights for women.

West Coast LEAF is supported by:

