

- being too tired;
- made to feel ashamed about the appearance or scent of our bodies;
- still reeling from a childhood or relational trauma; or
- exhausted from trying to be taken seriously;

it's the pervasive absence of any exploration into the skill of her partner. So maybe instead of a pill, or a medical procedure to tighten her up, lift her bladder or re-boot her genito-urinary glands, would-be partners could be given a diagram of the clitoris' location. And at the top of the one-page précis should be this message:

“You Suck. And not in a good way.”

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SEXUAL ASSAULT IN CANADA: LAW, LEGAL PRACTICE AND WOMEN'S ACTIVISM

Elizabeth A Sheehy, Ed.
Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press,
2012

REVIEWED BY REZA BARMAKI

Sexual Assault in Canada: Law, Legal Practice and Women's Activism takes a comprehensive look at the socio-legal aspects of female sexual assault in

Canada. More specifically, it looks at the variety of cultural myths and legal discourses and techniques that have historically helped with either denying its prevalence, normalizing it, preventing its prosecution, or portraying its harms as insignificant. This is an edited book of a massive proportion (819 pages) and an extensive range. It is divided into two parts that contain a total of 28 articles. Part I, containing the first fifteen articles, examines sexual assault from a variety of points of views: various ways of discrediting (“unfounding”) of its reports by women by the criminal justice system officials, its promotion by the hyper-masculine sporting culture and other male-dominated institutions, the consequences of colonization and racism in its perpetuation in regards to Aboriginal women, and its denial in relation to disabled women. It also looks at various forms of political pressure exerted on activists and sexual-assault centres to abandon feminist politics, and progressive forms of feminist art and literature that aim to subvert the traditional, legal discourses related to sexual assault. As a whole, these articles describe the cultural and legal realities surrounding sexual assault and point to theoretical and practical venues of resistance and change. The two most interesting papers in this part are those of McIntyre and Odette. In “The Supreme Court of Canada's Betrayal of Residential School Survivors: Ignorance is No Excuse” McIntyre discusses the Supreme Court's responses to compensation claims by Aboriginal women and men who were sexually abused as children in residential schools. She argues that the Court ignored the extensive research on residential school abuse – which pointed to the racist social context as the main causes of such abuse – in its decisions and, instead, decided these cases using narrow and formalistic reasoning.

In “Sexual Assault and Disabled Women Ten Years After *Jane Doe*” Odette examines barriers faced by disabled women who wish to resort to the legal system and/or various women's centres.

Part II, containing thirteen articles, focuses more on legal issues. The themes explored include prosecution of sexual assault in relation to racialized women, adjudication of sexual assault and linguistic practices that embody rape myths, sexism, and other systemic obstacles facing women who testify in rape trials, sentencing of males convicted of rape, and issues surrounding compensation for sexually assaulted women. Part II begins with Jane Doe's “Who Benefits From the Sexual Assault Evidence Kit?”. It is based on interviews with women who have undergone Sexual Assault Evidence Kit (SAEK, which is the exam and treatment protocol and directions for evidence collection from sexually-assaulted women), nurses who administer SAEK, hospital counsellors, and sexual-assault crisis centres' workers. Doe points to a gradual shift towards medicalization of sexual assault as an illness and the consequent increase in the power of medical officials as expressed in administration of SAEK. She argues that inconsistent administration of SAEK, combined with its dubious legal utility, has brought sexually-assaulted women little legal benefit and lots of psychological harm. The two most interesting papers in this part are those of Ehrlich and Marriner. Using linguistic analysis in “Perpetuating – and Resisting – Rape Myths in Trial Discourse”, Ehrlich demonstrates how the various forms of questioning techniques—for example, those demanding a yes/no answer, and those based on assumptions that the witness cannot reject if she answers the question—allow lawyers to control the kind of information

derived from the complainant and to exploit prevailing rape myths and victim-blaming presuppositions. In “Questioning ‘Experts’ Knowledges” Marriner analyzes the practices of expert assessments by courts, the male biases permeating psy-disciplines, and the results of the distortion of women’s experiences by such disciplines. She shows the profound inadequacy of the use of such forms of expertise in sexual assault matters and calls on feminists to resist it through various forms of sociopolitical activities. She argues that such resistance also prevents cooptation of women’s grassroots practices by the expert industry.

This is a well-edited volume that is cohesive and comprehensive. Articles are well-written, well-documented, impassioned, critical, and highly accessible to the reader. Although they mostly provide grim assessments of the criminal justice system in relation to women’s freedoms and rights, however, they also contain many optimistic and practical strategies for improving the system and changing the general culture that informs it. As such, the book offers a unique contribution to earlier assessments of the Canadian criminal justice system. It is an important book well-suited to the needs of a variety of readers. Undergraduate and graduate students of women’s studies and socio-legal studies, in particular, can immensely benefit from it.

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GLOBAL COLONIALITY OF POWER IN GUATEMALA: RACISM, GENOCIDE, CITIZENSHIP

Egla Martínez Salazar
Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2012

REVIEWED BY CAREN WEISBART

The legacies of colonialism continue today as marginalized women, men, and children throughout the world are subject to displacement, violence, and discrimination at the hands of an elite minority who seek increased power and profit. Egla Martínez Salazar’s *Global Coloniality of Power in Guatemala: Racism, Genocide, Citizenship* provides an in-depth look into the roots of power, and how it has been wielded to suppress any form of resistance to it. Martínez Salazar’s work offers a comprehensive interlocking analysis of oppression and resistance that will serve scholars and activists as they endeavour to ‘decolonize’ their own work. It also provides a timely analytical approach to understanding the geopolitics of knowledge and to debunking Euro-North American-centric epistemologies of development, progress, and democracy.

In the preliminary chapters, the author introduces the key arguments of her book and provides a fascinating genealogy of power struggles. She asserts that power struggles, such as the war on terror, share common ‘patterns’ as they are the result of modern, colonial, and global processes. Political agendas, pursued not only by corrupt governments in the Global South but also by powers in the Global North, have violently disrupted the lives of millions of people through the ‘thingification’ and

‘Othering’ of those who challenge the hetero-patriarchal nationalist agenda. Martínez Salazar thus argues that through interlocking processes of oppression and subjugation, state and corporate discourses and policies have attempted to ‘dehumanize’ these Others by erasing their histories and foreclosing on their political participation.

As an affront to this systematic process of erasure, the author briefly alludes to the socio-political and legal forms of organizing that pre-existed Spanish conquest in Guatemala. Although at times verging on an essentialized depiction of indigenous organization and Mayan cosmovision, she astutely asserts the importance of uncovering the historically silenced and appropriated knowledge of Mayan people. Such work, she argues, can contribute to efforts to challenge the racialized, ‘tribal,’ and ‘folkloric’ conceptualizations of Indigenous people that have been spun by those in positions of power since the arrival of the land-grabbing Spanish colonizers to the present-day race for mineral-rich territory led by the Otto Pérez Molina government and Canadian mining companies. While the book only briefly touches on the impact of this latter issue and the ensuing processes of criminalization against *campesinos/las*, it does offer important theoretical considerations for connecting racism, the Guatemalan genocide, and notions of citizenship to the present-day conflicts exploding in and around large-scale development projects.

Martínez Salazar brilliantly adapts the work of Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben to demonstrate how violence, including genocidal violence in the case of Guatemala, is rationalized through law, religion, education, and economics, and how certain lives become disposable. Drawing from Walter Dignolo’s (2007) work as a way of building