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To cite this article: Lynne Gouliquer, Carmen Poulin & Jennifer Moore (2018) A threat to Canadian national security: a lesbian soldier’s story, Qualitative Research in Psychology, 15:2-3, 323-335, DOI: 10.1080/14780887.2018.1430206

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2018.1430206
A threat to Canadian national security: a lesbian soldier’s story

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ABSTRACT

Before 1992, lesbians and gay soldiers were purged and discharged from the Canadian military for “reasons of homosexuality.” Those caught or suspected of homosexuality were subject to lengthy, humiliating, and degrading interrogations. This short story sheds light on this painful past. It is based on findings of a nationally funded pan-Canadian longitudinal study examining how Canadian military policies and practices influenced the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender soldiers and their partners. In total, 126 people were interviewed. While in the military, countless soldiers were investigated, numerous interrogated, many lost their careers, some committed suicide and others survived. Personal details have been changed to ensure the anonymity of the people, but it is their voices that tell this story. An official state apology was delivered November 28, 2017. Due to an impending class action court case, an agreement for compensation was also reached. Compensation and memorials will be forthcoming to those who were affected by the LGBTQI2+ purge campaign. To this day, no evidence exists that these soldiers were “ever” a threat to national security.

KEYWORDS

Canadian military; discharged soldiers; homosexuality; interrogations; justice; LGBT; national security; purge campaign

Cheryl’s journey

I’ve never told anyone the whole story. Not even my partner, Sonia, and we’ve been together for almost 20 years. She knows some facts—that I was discharged from the military because I am a lesbian—but I’ve never really told her all the details. Most people don’t know how gays and lesbians were treated in the military. If they do, they assume that the stories are exaggerations (in reality, they are anything but). I try not to think about it, but I would be lying if I said that those experiences don’t haunt me to this day. After I was discharged, I was close to committing suicide several times. It is only now that I have been getting help to deal with all that happened... Even today, it is hard to feel safe after having everything taken away from you just because of who you are: a lesbian. It is always there in the back of my mind that it could happen again. Before joining the military, I didn’t think...
anything would happen to me. I was young. I was naïve. I was totally unprepared for what I was going to face. So, you may ask, “Why did I join the military?”

After high school, I was feeling lost. I wanted to do something special with my life, but I didn’t know what. Then I ran into an old girlfriend, Angela, who told me that she was joining the military. She said she knew a woman who had joined a couple of years earlier and was now working in Germany. I got excited and started to think that the military might also be for me, that I could be doing something different than the whole “marriage and kid thing.” Also, having seen that my uncle had travelled all over Canada and the world while in the military, I thought, why not? It peaked my interest. Angela and I actually ended up joining together.

I was 19 years old when I signed up in 1981. Back then, they were recruiting women at a feverish pace. I don’t remember much about the recruitment process, just that I wrote tests, had a physical exam, and then eventually, was called for an interview. I didn’t make too much of it at the time, but I do recall something strange. The officer asked me questions, mostly about drugs and whether I’d ever taken them. But then, he asked me if I ever had sex with a woman. That’s exactly what he said! I remember being shocked. We never talked about sex at home, let alone two women doing it! I can remember to this day the embarrassment—I got all red-faced and my body got hot. He must have noticed the shock because he then said that it was a routine question which they asked everyone. So, I told him, “no,” which was the truth—I hadn’t had sex with anyone. After that, I just forgot about it. Now I know they were trying to determine if I was a lesbian. Before 1992, if you were “homosexual,” you couldn’t serve in the military. If he had asked me whether or not I was a lesbian, I probably would have said no. When I eventually learned about the military law (Canadian Forces Administrative Order 19-20), I remember thinking that it didn’t apply to me, and maybe, I sort of agreed with it. Like, “Oh, yes! We don’t want those people here!” [Laughs]

Basic training

I left for basic training in Cornwallis, Nova Scotia, in the spring (my first big trip away from home). Back then, the military trained the women separately from the men. There were close to 60 women in my group. I was in platoon 13. Picture three platoons of 60 women each, and 10–15 platoons of men. That adds up to about 1 000 new recruits. The women were literally surrounded by a sea of men. I guess that is still the same today.

The training was physically and emotionally exhausting. Many people don’t realise that the training is not just about making you strong. They prepare you to be a soldier and train you to fit into the culture. You are
confined to the base and the instructors make it clear that the military is your new life; your new family. Every minute of the day and night, they are training you to obey, obey every order, every rule! If you did something, anything wrong, they yelled at you and punished you for every little thing—you were made to do extra sit-ups, push-ups, chin-ups. I hurt just thinking about it! Every muscle in my body was sore. We were up at 5 AM every morning. We ran, did strength training and obstacle courses, you name it! In addition, we had classes every day to learn about things like using small arms and nuclear-biological warfare. Our dorms and uniforms...“with Our dorms and uniforms had to be perfect, and I mean “perrrrfect”! You had to be able to bounce a quarter off your bed sheets, and your boots had to shine like a mirror. We crawled to our pillow for a few hours at night, only to have to get up to do it all over again the next day. It was so exhausting! Unfortunately, not everyone graduated. Nearly half either dropped out or were injured. It was tough. Eventually, I realised they only wanted the ones they could mold into the soldier they wanted; I was one of them.

As difficult as the training was at first, I was grateful because by the end I was thriving. I was actually given the top recruit award at graduation. The women in my platoon were great. We bonded and helped each other out. I remember feeling comfortable with those women. I didn’t get romantic with anyone, if that’s what you’re wondering. I definitely wasn’t thinking that way at that time. There wasn’t time [laughs].

**Occupational training**

After basic military training, I was sent to Canadian Forces Base (CFB) Borden for my medical assistant education. Of course, you had no choice but to live in military barracks. The base is huge. It’s spread across 36 kilometers, and at that time Borden had two McDonalds, one golf course, a movie theatre, and two gyms—essentially a small town. The barracks were gender-segregated, not co-ed, and the rooms were small. I shared one with three other women. There was partying all the time and lots of drinking at the mess, which is a military entertainment club (they still exist today). We were young. I studied during the week and kept my partying for the weekends. I did well. I really liked it. I loved it, actually.

One of the guys in our group really liked me, but I wasn’t interested in him. It was then that I started to understand that it wasn’t just that I didn’t want to be with him; I didn’t want to be with any guy. I just...I mean, I hadn’t been with a woman, but I just knew. He continually asked me out, even after I said no. Some of the women thought that I should go out with him, particularly my roommate, Annette. I just was not interested. I had to keep telling him, “We’re just friends! Why don’t you go for Annette? She
likes you!!” [Laughs] Annette didn’t get it, and badgered me about him a bit. Maybe she might’ve been suspicious about me!

Around that time, I started hearing rumours about gays. I remember hearing that a woman, who lived in our barracks had been discharged for being with another woman. I didn’t know her. My roommate, Annette, was extremely difficult to be around. She was vehement with disgust about this woman. She used to say things like, “How can they be together like that? It just makes me sick.” After having heard all that negative talk and rumours about those who were discharged—oh, there were definitely many—you learn that you have to keep your head down. I recall having mixed feelings about these people. I thought that there must have been something more to it, like they must have been doing drugs. We were always being checked for drugs and anyone caught got kicked out. But, I didn’t really believe they would kick women out because they slept with women. Was I ever naïve!

**Posting**

During the following winter, I was posted to CFB Comox, British Columbia. I loved it! I was living in barracks again as it was cheaper and convenient; I was saving money. I immediately joined the military women’s softball team. I had fun that first summer and I met many great women. After most games, we went to the mess and had a few drinks. Some of the women lived off-base, so sometimes we had barbeques at somebody’s house. It was through softball that I met my first girlfriend, Sarah. After one particular game early in the season, there was a party at someone’s place…oh yes, Carla’s place. I got a bit too drunk and ended up spending the night. That was the night that I ended up getting together with Sarah. She was also in the military and, a friend of Carla’s. I’d been noticing her for some time because she didn’t play ball, but she sometimes watched our games and had also been at a few other team social events. She kept smiling at me—she had a great smile—and it finally dawned on me that she was checking me out. I was pretty slow to catch on back then. I thought that she was cute, but I was so shy and nervous that I didn’t approach her. I fell in love hard. We were inseparable after that…until another team member and soldier, Anna, warned us about the SIU, the military police Special Investigative Unit.

Anna had been questioned by the SIU. As far as I knew she was straight, but they had asked her questions about all the women on the team. You know, asking about which members of the team were lesbians, who was sleeping with whom, and who shared rooms when we went away on tournaments. It was enough to make me feel uneasy. Even though Sarah and I were careful, we were scared. When I say “careful,” I mean that we made sure to avoid suspicion at all costs. For one thing, I never talked to her or about her at work. We both made sure to hang around with men and be seen with.
them. I used to go to the mess with one guy, Jonathan. He was a huge flirt. There was a little bit of fooling around, and then I had sex with him! I never told Sarah. I felt so bad, but I just did it, you know, to avoid suspicion. All this hiding was stressful on our relationship, but there were no other options, except to quit the military. I loved the life and work too much to quit, and besides it paid well.

**Interrogation 1**

Then one day late in fall 1983, I was at work and my boss told me there were two officers to see me. I didn’t know what he was talking about, but I went to his office to meet them. There was a man and a woman dressed in civvies (our jargon for nonmilitary civilian clothing). I said, “Hi,” and they showed me their badges and said something like, “We’re from the Special Investigative Unit and we want to talk to you.” I said, “I am working. I can’t leave.” They said that I had to go with them and my boss also told me I had to go with them. I was terrified they had found out about Sarah and me. They ended up escorting me—one on either side of me—out of the MIR, the military medical clinic where I was working, right past all my colleagues, and put me into a K-car—an unmarked police car parked outside. They put me in the backseat and locked me in like a criminal. During the entire drive, my heart and mind were racing. Was Sarah okay? Was I going to be okay? What did my colleagues think? Where were they taking me? I fought back my tears. I felt so alone. I had nowhere or no one to turn to for help for anything.

They drove me to this little house somewhere on base. I had never noticed it before, and I had no idea where I was. My fear and anxiety skyrocketed as they brought me into the building and into this near-empty room. It had nothing in it but a desk, three chairs, and a big bright overhead light—just like in some terrible movie where they torture people for information. I waited with nothing but my thoughts to keep me company for at least half an hour. Finally, they came back in, all polite and friendly. I was terrified. There were three of them now, two men and a woman. For the life of me, I cannot remember their names or even if they introduced themselves. One man did all of the talking, and the other two just sat there staring and taking notes.

The first question he asked me about was to do with one of my softball teammates. He asked me if I knew Rachel Morrison. I said, “Yeah, she plays softball and she’s my friend.” He said, “Well, we’ve been told that she’s more than your friend.” I said, “We play sports together. That is all.” But, I thought to myself, “What are they talking about? And where did they get this information?” They accused me of being a lesbian, a homosexual. The words sounded so disgusting when they pronounced them. I felt naked and like I...I was dirty. They grilled me for hours and hours, and the questions
were horrible and humiliating. They asked where we went to have sex: did we rent a hotel room, did we go to her place, or were we doing it in the barracks? They even asked about positions and how many times I climaxed. It lasted for hours. They asked me the same things over and over again. They'd rephrase their questions and ask them again, all to catch me in a lie. They also lied to me, saying that Rachael had told them everything, that they had evidence. They kept repeating those humiliating sexual questions. I can still hear their voices. They even tried to trick me, saying that if I told them about other women, if I named names, they would let me go. I refused. They kept saying, “If you tell us the truth, we’re going to let you go. Nothing bad is going to happen to you.” And the interrogation continued. It lasted for five or so hours. I had one break to pee and that was it. They never left me alone again. It was so exhausting! At the end when they stopped, I was shaking, and I was so tired. I...I remember being so confused and scared. But it finally stopped. When they drove me back, it was dark out. I remember walking into the office and being grateful that no one was there to see me. I was a wreck. I started to cry. I quickly grabbed my things and went back to my barracks. I ran to find Sarah, told her what had happened, and she tried to console me. She said, “If you don’t say anything—what can they do?” But I was so tired, scared, and worried...

**Interrogation 2**

The next morning, they were back! They escorted me out of work, again! You should have seen the looks on my colleagues’ faces. The questioning started again. The same sick and disgusting questions, the same lies, the same promises. They wanted me to be a stool pigeon. They wanted me to nark on everyone. They produced a list of names of people whom they said were homosexuals. They just wanted me to look at it and confirm who was gay. I said, “I don’t know, it’d be a surprise to me.” But then, they read the names out loud and told me just to nod my head if they were gay. Every woman from the ball team was on the list, but I wasn’t going to incriminate anyone. I couldn’t understand... for me, it’s nobody’s business who sleeps with who. I don’t know how I got my nerve up, but I remember asking them why they’d care if someone was gay or not. They said this information could be used to blackmail me and make me give up secret information. I said, “Well, they wouldn’t know someone’s gay unless the person told them.” I remember telling him that! He never answered me. He told me that I was a smart-ass or something like that. But I thought, “How would the enemy know?” If I had never met you in my life and I’m your prisoner, how would you know? I didn’t have the word “lesbian” tattooed on my forehead, you know?
When they were done questioning me, they again took me back to work. I probably shouldn’t have been at work after what they had put me through, but I really didn’t have a choice. You cannot just call in sick in the military or be absent, you need to get a “sick chit.” That is a doctor’s note. You had to take it to your boss, otherwise, you would be absent without leave (AWOL), a chargeable offence.

After second interrogation, my colleagues were concerned and asked me, “What happened? What did the SIU want?” To not draw suspicion to myself, I made up a story about how drugs were found in the washroom ceiling in the barracks, and that they were trying to find out whose drugs they were. Everyone laughed about it, because so many of them smoked pot. And if they weren’t smoking it, their friends were. I tried to brush off the SIU as if they were nothing, but I was living in constant fear. Sarah and I covered up our relationship even more by maintaining relationships with guys like Jonathan. I started shutting down. I was so nervous with people—even with people I had previously trusted. I was lying about myself to others. I even went so far as to make up a boyfriend who lived back home. I named him ‘Ed’. The two times that I got time off to visit my folks back home, I came back to work and talked about him. You know, like, “So Cheryl, what did you do on your trip home?” I’d say, “Oh, Ed and I went here and there, and we did this and that. It was great. Blah, blah, blah.”

But one day I arrived at work only to find that I didn’t have access to people’s medical files. My boss had changed the combination on the filing cabinets. I was supposed to be doing medical intakes for the doctors, but I couldn’t do my job. What did he think I was going to do with those files, sell them to the Russians? He said my security clearance had been revoked and I did not have access to secret, restricted, or confidential files any longer. So, he moved me to work in the pharmacy. I was stocking shelves with medications and that kind of thing—not something a fully qualified Medical Assistant would normally do. I started feeling increasingly paranoid and uncomfortable around people. I’m not just talking about the lying and hiding about Sarah that I was doing. I mean that I felt like I was being excluded; No one talked to me anymore, people avoided making eye contact, and they didn’t sit with me at coffee break. When I went for lunch, I often found myself sitting alone. I almost stopped eating. Maybe people were speculating about whether or not I was going to snitch on them about smoking drugs? I guess I should have made up some other story. Maybe they knew about Sarah and me, and were afraid of being investigated too?! It was called guilty-by-association back then and military law said you had to report anyone suspected of being a homosexual. Oh gosh, I remember one day I was going into town and being stuck on the side of the road with a flat tire. I called Evelyn, a close gay friend—well, someone whom I thought was a close friend. She gave me a hundred excuses why she couldn’t come help me. A
total stranger eventually ended up helping me. After that, Evelyn avoided me like the plague. She acted like she didn’t know me. I felt so alone. I...I remember feeling like I didn’t want to live anymore. You cannot believe how hard it was! I was really stressed. Then, on top of that, the SIU started following me around. I would see them parked outside of my workplace, or near the softball diamond in one of their unmarked K-cars. They were watching me and they started questioning other people about me. The Corporal from the pharmacy told me that the SIU had talked to her. She said, “I thought I should tell you that they asked about you, and they wanted to know where you go, who you saw, if you were gay. I want you to know that I didn’t tell them anything.” By that point, I had begun to change where I went and where I typically walked so that I could avoid them. Then, I stopped going out. I’d go to work and that’d be it. It actually got to the point that I was getting concerned about which phones to use. Sarah and I barely saw each other and we lived in the same barracks. We were scared all the time, and it started to really affect us. We were fighting whenever we were together. Sneaking or fighting! Eventually, Sarah was questioned too. She told me about it, broke up with me, slammed the door in my face, and then she never really spoke to me again. I was totally devastated. Just completely emotionally shattered and so alone. I felt hollow and dead inside.

By this time, all the gay women on the team stopped inviting me to their parties. People knew what was going on, and the rumours were fierce. I couldn’t blame them, I guess, but what a lonely time it was! On top of it all, I kept getting crank phone calls—all men—and they would just yell all kinds of sexual obscenities at me and then hang up. Ugly stuff like, “Watch yourself bitch, cause I know what you need.” That lasted for weeks. Perhaps they were people from the base. I had never really been a big drinker, even when we partied after games, but I started drinking a lot alone, I mean who wouldn’t! I was scared and I wasn’t sleeping. At least the booze helped me fall asleep. Not the greatest coping mechanism, I know, but I didn’t have anyone to whom I could turn. You could not even seek professional help at the time: the doctors, the social workers, the padre—they were all military. I had nowhere and no one to go to. I continued working throughout all of this, but one day, the SIU guys came for me again: the third, and the final time.

Interrogation 3

This time they came and pulled me from a CPR training course, just like before, in front of everyone; it was so humiliating. Of course, I knew what to expect—the car, the little house, the room, the questions, the humiliation, the lies. My mind cringed in fear of what was to come. Everything was the same, except this time there were only the two men. They seemed ruder, cruder, and louder than ever before. What was worse was that they seemed to be
enjoying themselves. They became more impatient. They started yelling, their voices boomed in my head. They kept saying, “We were told that you and Sarah Thompson are lovers. You’re a LESBIAN. You’re a DYKE. You’re a practicing HOMOSEXUAL. We’ve seen you here. We’ve seen you eat there with her.” They had pictures! Can you believe it? This was crazy… and shows how incredibly invasive they were. Months earlier, when Sarah and I were still together, we had gone away for a camping trip to Oregon with a couple of other women. It turns out that the SIU had followed us out of the country! They actually followed us to another country so that they could take pictures! They had photos of all of us everywhere we had stopped. None of them revealed anything, by the way. There was nothing showing us touching or being affectionate or anything like that. But they persisted in asking me about Sarah. “When do you have sex? Where did you have sex? In what motel?” And, then really… He started asking those extremely intimate and humiliating questions about what we did when we were together. He would yell at me. “What position do you use? Who is the man? Who is on top? Do you use dildos, sex toys? Are there animals? Who does what and how?”

They threatened to do a polygraph test. They threatened to tell my family… I remember thinking I am too tired mentally and physically to keep fighting. I caved. I just couldn’t take it anymore. I said, “Okay, okay, I’m a Homosexual! What do you want?” I told them I am gay, but I stopped short of naming names. At least I managed to do that. That was the worst of it—they tried so hard to get me to name names and report on my friends. I’m sure, I think some people did. I think it may have been Sarah who had broken down in the end and implicated me, but I don’t know.

Discharge

Things happened really fast after that. They moved me to the transient barracks, where people who are visiting from other bases are put up. I had to keep working for a few weeks, but that was awful. I didn’t talk to anyone about what had happened—they were avoiding me anyway—but everybody knew. People talked. They always talked. Then finally, I was discharged. On my discharge papers, they wrote “services no longer needed, not employable—honourable discharge.” That’s it. That was the only explanation on that piece of paper. Yet they told me explicitly over and over that I was being discharged for homosexuality. They said it would be better for finding good jobs in the future as employers would never be able to find out. However, they also made me sign a document stating that I would no longer take part in any organisation that was affiliated with the Canadian Armed Forces. That meant that I couldn’t join the reserves or teach cadets.

I would’ve loved to be able to teach the kids at cadets. Because my discharge papers don’t explain why I was discharged, that paper protects
the military and damned me. Last year, I submitted an access-to-information request to get my military personnel file. It has “homosexuality” written on it in multiple places. My boss detailed how many times I was interrogated for “homosexuality” and wrote that it is why I was discharged. I often wonder, what happens to these papers, my story, once I’m dead. Don’t all military files become available to the public so many years after one’s death? You know, for historical archival research? That is why we know so much about our War veterans!

Anyway, they gave me money, but it was only the vacation pay they owed me. I used part of that to get back home to Quebec, where I lived with my parents for a while. I didn’t know what else to do. I hadn’t told anyone in my family the reason why I had to leave the military. I still wasn’t out to them, and it was Christmas time. My family was all there for Christmas supper—my uncle, the colonel, my parents—and I couldn’t look at them because I didn’t know how to tell them. What was I going to tell them? There were no words. I just lied and told them that I’d broken up with Jonathan. Plausible, right? So, they assumed that’s why I was depressed. A big lie! They still do not know, even today, why I really left.

I moved out and got a place of my own. I got a job for a delivery company. It paid the bills. For the next year or so, I was in a bad place. I was lethargic and just laid around. I felt lost, hurt, humiliated, and worthless. I didn’t see a doctor, but I’m pretty sure I was clinically depressed. For a while, I could barely get off the couch. Of course, that might’ve been due to having lost so much weight. I was smoking too much, drinking too much coffee, drinking way too much alcohol, and I wasn’t eating enough. I remember my family commenting on that. I’m 5’10” and have always been athletic, but I was down to about 110 lbs. I was skin and bones at that point. I continued with the drinking—every evening or every other evening, it helped me sleep. It was horrible. I just really felt...alone. I couldn’t believe that this whole thing had happened to me. I just felt that I didn’t want to be there, you know? I didn’t want this life. My father kept firearms in their home and, although I had never touched his guns, I often thought about taking one and using it. I don’t know what stopped me from killing myself, maybe it was the thought of how much pain it would have caused my family, but I don’t know to this day why I didn’t do it.

Looking back on it, I’m not sure how I managed. I was all alone with this stuff. I eventually started playing some broomball and started getting out a bit with the women on the team. I finally got off the couch! Gradually, I met a couple of women and then a couple more. I expanded my web of friends that way. The broomball helped get me through the initial hard times. Then, about two years later, I eventually got a job as a correctional officer. Then I met Sonia. It was initially casual and long-distance, but eventually it became pretty clear that Sonia and I were interested in each other. And, six months after that, we moved in together. [Laughs] We’re still together some 30-odd years later.
Life now

Things are pretty good now, you know? I’m happy, still living, and still working at Corrections! I’m a supervisor now, and I have thirty people who work for me—they’re excellent people. My boss tells me that I protect them too much. They work hard, and I do defend them, you know? I call them my “troops,” and they refer to me as “Sarge”! [Laughs] Okay, that just happened once, but, I can be really... I’m easygoing, but I can be really serious. You know, like, “This is it! Get to it!” I used to be in the military, can you tell? [Laughs]. Actually, it has nothing to do with the military, it’s just the way I am. But, it is a coincidence.

Maybe you might think, life is good now and everything is okay. It is, but I was released in 1985, and not one day goes by that I don’t think about the ordeal. I haven’t really been able to get over my discharge from the Canadian Armed Forces. I still think about the military, and I sometimes wonder what my life would have been like if it hadn’t happened. I just don’t understand it. The whole experience took years out of my life and there is still this big gaping hole inside of me, you know? It just… I don’t know… I am not sure if this will make sense to you. The discharge left me burnt out, depressed, suicidal, physically emaciated! For a long time after that, I had trouble trusting people, and I am not sure it is back. Maybe it will never fully return.

I didn’t, I don’t understand what I did that was so wrong. I still struggle with this. What did I do that was so horrible? What did any of us do? I loved my job—I was a top soldier and good at it. You should have seen some of the comments in my performance evaluations! I had superior reports and feedback, and I was top recruit in basic training. I loved military life, I still pine away for it. Crazy, after what they did, I know.

Ever since you asked me to do this interview, I’ve been thinking about this stuff. After thirty some years, there’s a lot that I’ve forgotten or chosen not to remember. It is only since you told me about the class action suits against the Canadian government and the help that we can get through Veteran affairs that I have been able to talk about it now. I am seeing a psychologist…I’m angry. Really angry. I realised that I’m still bitter, angry, and that I lost my youth. I mean, they interrogated me repeatedly for four, five, six hours on multiple occasions. I now know that it was stupid and inhumane. And, they made you feel like you were nothing. My identity, my whole being got wrapped up in being military, in being a soldier. That’s what happens when you join. You know, it’s hard to describe. I loved it—I still do and I don’t know why—but then they just took it all away. No matter how well you did your job, they made you feel like…like your country doesn’t want you, like you were worthless. That’s what they made me believe. That I was a threat. How can… little old me be a threat
to this country? I wanted to serve my country, but they just made me feel like I was shameful, unfit, that I was a danger... a criminal. Honestly, they put you through hell and back, and it made me feel like I was... a bad soldier, a shame to my country, a nobody! It stays with you forever, you start believing it, you know, and it always comes back and haunts me. I hope my psychologist can help with that.

I am starting to be a bit more hopeful that the military might do something to make up for what they did to me and the others they wrongly treated. I’m sure that there were many, if not thousands, who were kicked out. I remember wanting an apology and to have my job back, only that my job should be at the rank to which I would have been promoted. I knew that I would have moved up—I was one of their shining stars. Sometimes, I still want that. Weird, huh? They could provide some sort of compensation for the salary, for the career, for the years of anguish! They just let us go and gave us nothing. No help. No nothing. The military, not just the government, should apologise. That’s what I want. They should be made to educate the country about and own up to the wrongs they did. They have all our files. They could, you know, tell us how many they “officially honourably, but unofficially dishonourably discharged for being sexual deviants.” They should be “made” to document, in detail, the hurt they caused and should give all those records back to us before we die. We should have control over them and we should decide what happens to those records, not the military and not the country. We did no wrong!

At the very least, they need to apologise. I’d like the chief of defence staff—the top military solider—to formally and publicly apologize, and acknowledge that what they did was wrong and disgraceful. I’ve always wanted that. It wasn’t right what they did. We were not and we are not criminals. Being gay is not and should never have been against the law. I just... I just think that what they did was horrible. I still don’t understand why it happened. It was... the wrong thing that was done and it should never happen to anyone, never, ever again. If the memory of these disgraceful military actions is remembered in the future, maybe Canadians... we will learn and history will not repeat itself.

**Acknowledgments**

The authors are grateful to all lesbian and gay soldiers who generously volunteered their time and shared their difficult but inspiring stories to further research. We also extend our heartfelt appreciation to our research assistants and volunteers who are part of our Psycho-Social Ethnography of the Commonplace Research Group (www.p-sec.org) for their assistance and commitment to P-SEC research. Finally, we wish to thank the editors and anonymous reviewers for their insightful comments on an earlier version of this story. This story was only possible because of the generous help from everyone.
Funding

Financial support was received from the Canadian Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC Grant #410-2005-1851) and the University of New Brunswick (URF Series 41) for this research.

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