

Barbara Kay: One woman's journey from social-justice warrior to free-speech champion

[National Post](#) - Tuesday July 10th, 2018

When my son's family took up residency in Toronto's Riverdale neighbourhood, previously unknown to me, I discovered a continually gentrifying urban paradise, rich in cultural diversity. In particular, families with homes bordering beautiful Withrow Park seemed to me to have hit the real estate jackpot. But in 1972, when my new friend Sarina Singh's father bought a house on Withrow Avenue (for \$27,000, a gift from his grandfather in Singapore), the neighbourhood, made up — apart from a Greek enclave — of working-class heritage Canadians, was no “jackpot” for immigrants from Punjab. In an interview with me, Sarina recalled checkered lumberjack style shirts on men drinking beer on front porches. She also remembers daily chants of “paki” on the street and at school. The family car was so frequently vandalized that her father took to parking blocks away. One of the first men in Canada to wear the now-commonplace Sikh turban, Sarina's father was easy race-baiting prey. Sarina “suffered from self-hatred” and a desire to be white, because being white meant being safe. (--image--)

Free-speech advocate Sarina Singh speaks at Canada Christian College in Toronto on Nov. 11, 2017.

YouTube

Just when the disheartened Singhs were considering moving back to India, though, luck broke their way. Maclean's magazine got wind of their troubles and featured them in a cover story. Sarina remembers the Maclean's staff in their home as “the first white people who spoke to us nicely.” When the story appeared, they received letters from all over Canada expressing sorrow and shame for their marginalization. One family even offered them employment and a home on their farm. They stayed. Things got better. They moved to Mississauga, where “people were friendly, kind and welcoming.” Sarina never heard “paki” again. Her years as a fully integrated student at diverse Thomas L. Kennedy high school were, she says, happy and normal. “Finally,” she wrote me, “life was peaceful. For the first time in my life, I didn't have to feel afraid.” Sarina marvels at how much Canada has changed over the past 40 years. When activists denounce Canada as a racist country, she tells them, “You don't know what racism is.” Which doesn't mean she ever forgot the sorrows of her childhood, when she felt, daily, she was being punished for some unfathomable sin having to do with the colour of her skin. Sarina 'suffered from self-hatred' and a desire to be white, because being white meant being safe (--image--)

(--image--)

Why am I telling you all this? Because Sarina's life mirrors the story of Canada's maturity into a nation that is friendly to the world, but more importantly because of the unpredictable and (to me) inspirational justice-seeking path Sarina took, which resulted in our collaboration, about which more below. Sarina understandably felt a passionate drive to right social wrongs. At first, falling in with dominant progressive narratives, she blamed all white people for her family's suffering, indeed for all the evils of the world. She believed she had to “work with those who felt oppressed, whether it be racism, sexism, mental health, homophobia, classism, poverty or addictions. I was going to be their voice.” As an ardent feminist, social work, a field dominated by feminist premises, seemed a good fit for Sarina. It didn't live up to expectations. After 22 years, a transformative experience in a shelter where she was working produced a political epiphany. Two clients with children, both suffering from bipolar disorder, had decided to go off their meds and take only herbal supplements. Over Sarina's objections, her superiors insisted that, since the medical system was “patriarchal” and it was “empowering” women to self-treat, she should not interfere. It ended badly, with psychotic episodes putting Sarina at risk, the children needing to be removed from their mothers, and Sarina leaving the profession in a state of guilt over her professional impotence in the face of an irrational ideology. Sarina's resulting break with feminism turned into a refusal thenceforth to see the world through the lens of ideology, identity politics or political correctness (--image--)

(--image--)

Sarina's resulting break with feminism turned into a refusal thenceforth to see the world through the lens of ideology, identity politics or political correctness. Sarina stopped vilifying the white race; she stopped seeing the world as a zero-sum game between oppressors and oppressed. Today Sarina is one of Canada's most ardent free-speech warriors. She is

particularly incensed by Bill C-16, known as the Transgender Rights Bill, and the “compelled speech” it endorses in support of alleged feelings-based rights. Next Wednesday, July 18, I will be speaking in Toronto on a public panel Sarina has organized at her own expense: “Bill C-16: One Year Later: Sex, Ideology and Compelled Speech in Canada,” along with neuroscientist and journalist Dr. Debra Soh, lawyer Jared Brown and Wilfrid Laurier University graduate student Lindsay Shepherd. If travel constraints permit, Jordan Peterson says he will be present to cheer us on. He explains why he thinks our event is important in this video. Do join us for what promises to be a provocative and lively event. Information and tickets are available at: brownpapertickets.com/event/3430264. • Email: kaybarb@gmail.com | Twitter: [BarbaraRKay](https://twitter.com/BarbaraRKay) Event Announcement: July 18: Bill C16: One year later: Sex, ideology and compelled speech in Canada: <https://t.co/q5rZQvgvx6> pic.twitter.com/7QDUKc4KhI— Jordan B Peterson (@jordanbpeterson) July 9, 2018 Barbara Kay: Suggestions for the new Ontario sex-ed curriculum Barbara Kay: UBC had a #MeToo bloodletting. It was a disaster for everyone Barbara Kay: The Yazidis are in danger of extinction and Ottawa’s stopped helping