

McClung tainted by eugenics beliefs

BY ELLEN TARSHIS, TIMES COLONIST MAY 25, 2010

I'd like to add my voice to those who oppose honouring Nellie McClung with a statue at the Manitoba legislature. Yes, McClung fought for women's rights. However, through her high profile and vociferous support for eugenics, she also fought to deny the rights of women with intellectual disabilities.

Even during the 1920s, when eugenics was introduced in Alberta, it was highly controversial. Today, it's recognized as a violent invasion of the most basic of human rights. In 1986, the Supreme Court of Canada in the Eve decision ruled that no third party has the right to forcibly sterilize a person with an intellectual disability.

In 1996, Leilani Muir successfully sued the Alberta government for wrongful sterilization and was awarded significant damages for the violation of her human rights. About 700 other claimants were also awarded undisclosed damages as a result of a class action suit that arose out of the Muir decision.

Having a developmental disability does not necessarily preclude anyone from being a successful parent. At Community Living Victoria, we believe everyone has the right to a full range of life choices, including access to education, affordable and appropriate housing, leisure options, gainful employment and participation in the community.

Our parent support program helps ensure parents with developmental disabilities have the resources they need to successfully raise their children.

Community Living Victoria believes in preserving people's rights rather than taking them away. Instead of celebrating someone who sought to forcibly sterilize people with intellectual disabilities, I believe we should focus on providing all people with the support they need to reach their potential.

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