



# Jack Layton Chair Zine



JACK LAYTON CHAIR  
RYERSON UNIVERSITY



Lareinea Ryan, ReenaTandon, Waubkunii Kwe  
Tara Farahani, Ken Moffatt, Alannah Fricker,  
Danielle Reynolds, Andy Lee.  
Jack Layton Leadership School, 2020

## **Intro Jack Layton Chair Zine**

Welcome to the Jack Layton Chair Zine. The Jack Layton Chair honours the humanitarian legacy of Jack Layton at Ryerson University.

In this issue we focus on some events from 2020. Prior Jack Layton Chairs Doreen Fumia and Myer Siemiatycki, talk about the history of their work, the history of the chair as well as key people who have been associated with Jack Layton Chair. Danielle Reynolds and Marzian Alan, attendees to the Jack Layton Leadership School, one of the many events sponsored by the Jack Layton Chair, share poetry and a reflection on solidarity during the school.

This issue of the Layton Chair Zine was created with the help of Lareinea Ryan,

Ken Moffatt,  
Jack Layton Chair.  
February 2021

## Remarks by Doreen Fumia

### Former Jack Layton Chair

Jack Layton Chair Celebration: Doreen Fumia and Myer Siemiatycki  
January 30, 2020  
Ryerson University



Doreen Fumia, January 30, 2020

It was truly an honour to be appointed to the Jack Layton Chair and work with so many committed activist students, community members, staff and faculty. I am especially lucky to have worked with and learned so much from Olivia Chow and to share this Chair with Drs. Siemiatycki and Moffatt.

Were it not for the strong support of two Ryerson Presidents (Sheldon Levy and Mohamad Lachemi), two Deans (Pamela Sugiman and Lisa Barnoff) as well as my mentors at Ryerson (Alan Sears, Myer

Siemiatycki, Anver Saloojee, and Amina Jamal), I would not have had the skills or the courage to step into the Jack Layton Chair.

I just came from Boston where I was spending time with my 92-year-old mother who has seen radical changes over her lifetime, many of which we discussed. It got me thinking about what brought me to the place of working with you all under the auspices of the Jack Layton Chair.

At the Jack Layton Leadership School, we ask participants to start with their own

stories in an attempt to understand just what motivates them to engage with issues of social justice. On the 10-hour drive back from Boston I wondered ...what motivates me? Allow me to indulge in a brief retrospective over the decades from the 1950s to today. Promise it's brief!

I was born in a small town just outside Boston in 1953, the year *The Second Sex* by French feminist writer Simone De Beauvoir, was published in the United States. This book became a significant breakthrough for 1<sup>st</sup> wave, white women who used it to articulate gender inequality and is used by 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> wave feminists as a steppingstone for more critical, inclusive work on racialized gender inequality.

1953 was also the year The Kinsey report on *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* was published, a study that was based on interviews with 8,000 women's experiences of sex, thus showing that women did indeed have sexual urges and desires independent of men.

Perhaps these two events somehow worked their way into my subconscious since I ended up focusing much of my scholarship and activism on gender and sex identity inequality.

In the decade of the 60s, the social world in the US took a radical turn with the Civil Rights movement taking off and the Vietnam War becoming a constant reality not to be ignored. In 1965 when I was 12, Malcolm X was assassinated and 25,000 demonstrators for civil rights marched from Selma, AL, to the state capitol in Montgomery, challenging the state to end racial discrimination in voting rights and segregation. In this same year, 15,000 students marched in Washington, protesting the war in Vietnam. By the time I reached high school, a hippie and budding activist, I was part of a generation who rallied against President Johnson's move to escalate the Vietnam War. We quickly learned that there was power in numbers. We held sit-ins outside the Principal's office and chanted outside stores that sold goods from South Africa. We were young and believed we could change the world. And that wasn't such a bad thing, even if change is slow. We learned how to organize and that there is power in numbers and in small acts of resistance. Both proved effective and disruptive to an established order.

The decade of the 70s brought the end to the Vietnam War, an oil crisis, economic instability, Watergate, and Roe v Wade that

overturned the ban on abortion in the US. In this decade, at the age of 18, I left the comforts of home and travelled abroad. I ended up in the UK during a time when strikes attempted to defend workers as they struggled with inflation, when citizens attempted to stock their shelves with pricey food basics and when petrol prices were rising at supersonic speed. After moving to New Zealand, *Aotearoa*, a small country that had its own unique struggles with a stressed economy, the environment and Indigenous demands for justice, a new decade had begun and different forms of activism took place.

In the 1980s, I arrived to make a life in Toronto and give birth to Canadian children. The spectre of HIV/AIDS was on the rise and in Toronto, the 1981 Bathhouse raids saw large numbers of LGBTQ+ folks take to the streets in protest. A new level of queer activism ensued.

Also, during this decade, Terry Fox raised awareness for cancer and funds for research. He demonstrated that one person can start a movement that is significant and lasting. Even if we see this particular project as a white man's *privilege* to make change, it

nonetheless demonstrates there is power in passionate conviction.

Small steps in gender equality saw *some* women and women and men of colour enter positions of power previously denied them: Jeanne Sauvé was appointed Canada's first female Governor General and Bertha Wilson was appointed Canada's first female Supreme Court justice. Lincoln Alexander became the first Black person to hold a vice regal position in Canadian history when appointed the Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario.

The 1980s also was the decade that the unjust treatment of First Nation peoples began to be a public discussion.

In the 1990s, these trends grew and Kim Campbell became first female Prime Minister of Canada. In 1999, issues of disability were on the rise and the School of Disability Studies was established at Ryerson.

The 1990s were an incredibly revolutionary decade for digital technology. We still don't know where this is going to lead and there are many social justice projects to be

launched that Jack Layton Chairs will no doubt support.

An apology was offered to First Nations by the Conservative leader, Stephen Harper in 2008, and while significant, once again the lack of action following this apology proves that promises without actions are hollow.

Also in the 1990s, more progress was made for marginalized women and Rosalie Abella, born in 1946 in a displaced persons camp in Stuttgart, Germany, became the first Jewish woman to sit on the Supreme Court of Canada.

In the new millennium, Michaëlle Jean became the first Governor General who was Afro-Caribbean in 2004. In this same decade, a movement that touched my life, the legalization of gay marriage in Canada, was passed in 2005. This was also the year I joined Ryerson and immediately became engaged in activism on campus.

The decade of 2010 gave rise to the Idle No More Movement leaving white colonial Canadians to unquestionably confront the reality that great harm was done in the form of a national genocide and made to understand that reparations are in order.

Schools have begun to integrate this into their curricula, although there is a very long way to go.

In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Published its Final Report that provides a detailed account of the abuse endured by Indigenous people at residential schools. It includes 94 Calls to Action that direct governments to adjust policies in order to repair the legacy of harm. We're still waiting....

In 2016, Black Lives Matter Toronto brought the Pride Parade on Yonge Street to a halt making demands for the end to police violence and racism enacted upon racialized bodies.

After 9/11, Islamophobia took hold in ways unimagined. In 2017, thousands turned out in Toronto to protest at the US Consulate following Trump's 'Muslim Ban' and to end racist, anti-refugee, anti-Black, Islamophobic exclusions of migrants and refugees.

It is this history, I only briefly mention here, that backgrounds the work I have joined with others to strive to make Ryerson and Toronto a better place.

Here we are, a new decade, the 2020s. We continue to be asked to be active in our commitment to social justice: to respond to the challenge of ‘how dare you!’ destroy the planet for future generations, challenged to vote for morally & ethically healthy governing heads of state – and TO GET OUT and VOTE!!, challenged to demand adequate housing and wages for all, fight inequality as it relates to women, racialized people, people with disabilities, to stop class wars, step up for Indigenous rights, and continue to fight for gender and sex identity equity. The Jack Layton legacy is evident in this room, a clear testimony to the many people who have worked to encourage, be

leaders, and guide folks to find ways to fight for social justice and to make the world a better place. A different world IS possible!

Thank you for this enormous privilege of being part of that fight and may the new student award launched tonight be a tangible contribution to help students in small or big ways to generate projects that will address inequities in their world.

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

— **Margaret Mead**

## Remarks by Myer Siemiatycki

### Founding Jack Layton Chair

Jack Layton Chair Celebration: Doreen Fumia and Myer Siemiatycki

January 30, 2020

Ryerson University



Myer Siemiatycki, January 30, 2020

Well, Wow – what an amazing evening this has been. Like Doreen Fumia, I'm really overwhelmed and humbled by tonight's tribute. Before reminiscing a bit about my time as Layton Chair, I need to express some words of tribute of my own.

First, to Ken Moffat our current Jack Layton Chair. Who else, but someone so creative, thoughtful and dedicated as Ken could conceive and carry off an event like this? With such panache? Ken, I thank you, and want you to know that tonight is a highlight reel moment in my Ryerson memory bank.

You may know that Ken's signature contribution as Layton Chair, has been emphasizing cultural performance and creation as a force for social justice. Jack Layton would have loved that. He was moved by artistic – especially musical – calls for change.

I also want to thank Reena Tandon from the Faculty of Arts, for her generous introduction. One of my joys at Ryerson, Reena, has been working with you on several student engagement projects over the years.



It's such a treat to look out and see so many people I admire, so many of whom I've been lucky to work with over the years. Thank you for being here. Thank you to everyone who has spoken kind words and brought back great memories. Thank you also, to all the amazing performers who shared your talents and messages with us. You'll understand if I give a special shout-out to Leigh Bursey – Brockville City Councilor, musical rocker, and participant in the very first program of the Jack Layton Leadership school in the summer of 2014.

And it is so special for me to share this occasion with Doreen Fumia. We first connected, about 15 years ago, teaching in the Immigration Studies graduate program. Doreen's integrity, smarts, commitment and good humour, have so enriched Ryerson – and the Layton Chair.

And then there is of course, more to say about Jack. He is here with us in spirit. Jack was so amazing – how much he gave to Ryerson as a Professor, to Toronto as a City Councilor, and to the country as leader of the NDP. Jack loved Ryerson – its distinct applied education mission; its deep ties to its downtown neighborhood; and most of all Jack loved the classroom, teaching and his students.

I should say too that Ryerson played a big part propelling Jack into public life. His interest in city politics developed at Ryerson. And he always said he owed his first upset election victory onto Toronto city council in 1982, to landslide support in the student apartments near campus. Jack's campaign really worked those buildings.

Jack also benefitted a lot from the mentoring and advice of two colleagues in his Politics Department – the late Professor Solly Patel, and Terry Grier, past NDP MP and past President of Ryerson University. Terry wishes he could be here tonight, but is away.

When Jack died in 2011, Olivia Chow and the Layton family met with then-Ryerson President Sheldon Levy to discuss how Jack's legacy could be honoured by the university. That's how the Layton Chair was born. Winnie Ng did early, heavy-lifting fundraising to provide the Chair with resources from the get-go. Later, large donations from two unions (The United Steelworkers Union and the United Food and Commercial Workers Union) solidified the Chair.

I was so lucky & honoured to serve as the Layton Chair, from its launch in 2012 to 2015. For me, everything about those years was rewarding – except for the tragic

circumstance giving rise to the Chair – Jack’s death.

The mandate of the Layton Chair is to carry Jack’s values and flame forward at Ryerson. There was so much that could be done – Jack’s own range of commitments, interests and achievements so extensive. Basically, I saw the Chair as a platform to promote progressive capacity-building among Ryerson students. Jack believed in students, and youth as change agents. I hoped the Layton Chair could sustain that.

In my term as Layton Chair, we organized a keynote annual Jack Layton Lecture, we created a Jack Layton Book Club, and perhaps most notable, we launched the Jack Layton Leadership School, aimed at nurturing a next generation of social justice leaders.

It was also very special for us to host at Ryerson the third city-wide memorial of Jack’s passing in August 2014. Titled ‘Living Jack’s Legacy’, a full house audience heard five young Canadians speak about how Jack Layton had inspired their commitment to be Change-Makers. One of the speakers was Leigh Bursey. You left that session knowing how right Jack was to say to young people in his *Letter to Canadians*:

“Young people have been a great source of inspiration for me. I believe in you.”

I need to emphasize that The Layton Chair was never a one-person operation. A Dream Team of Ryerson colleagues collaborated in planning and carrying off every Layton Chair event held during my tenure. That included Reena Tandon, Doreen Fumia, Cathy Crowe, Winnie Ng, and Olivia Chow – once she joined Ryerson.

And over at the Ryerson Archives, Curtis Sassur curated wonderful exhibits and web materials of Jack’s life. One of my favourite items on display was an early 1970s correspondence between Jack and his celebrated McGill University mentor, the great political theorist Charles Taylor who deeply influenced Jack, and was a lifelong friend.

Jack wrote Taylor from Toronto, where he had just arrived for PhD studies at York. Jack was barely into his 20s, Taylor was already recognized as a world-leading political theorist. The ostensible reason for the letter is Jack asking Taylor for a reference for a scholarship application. That ask takes up the last sentence of the letter. The two preceding, densely typed pages are Jack’s unsolicited critique of Taylor’s latest published article.

Jack was an egalitarian. He didn't hold to differences of rank and status. His letter respectfully invites Taylor to consider the errors of his ways. It is a letter from one citizen to another citizen on a political matter. Taylor replies by saying he will reflect on Jack's comments -- and the reference letter is in the mail. Charles Taylor would be an honorary pallbearer at Jack's funeral, and he delivered the inaugural Jack Layton Lecture at Ryerson in 2012.

What stands out for me about my time as Layton Chair?? Lots. I'll close with a few highlights, and the big takeaway.

1. I remember Calgary Mayor Nahed Nenshi delivering the 2015 Layton lecture to a packed audience in the Engineering Building auditorium. It was October. Nenshi began his address with a question: *Why are you all here? Why aren't you out canvassing for Olivia?*

The Toronto municipal election was just days away. Olivia Chow was running for Mayor. This was the only date Mayor Nenshi was available during a short visit to Ontario. His lecture's message about the importance of city governments, struck a chord with the audience.

2. The Jack Layton Book Club was a real treat. Olivia generously donated Jack's

personal book collection to the Ryerson library. They are all separately catalogued and available, complete with Jack's handwritten commentary at the margins of some books.

The Book Club met 3 times each winter, with a different Ryerson faculty member giving a talk on a book in Jack's collection: why the book was significant, what the book may have meant to Jack, and what it means to us today. They were GREAT roundtable sessions held in the Ryerson Archives. Several of the book club presenters are here tonight. They were all informative and inspiring.

One last thing about Jack's books...Many of them had, on the inside cover flap, a rubber-stamped message from Jack. He had the stamp made as a message to anyone he may have loaned the book to. If I'd done that -- the message probably would have read something like: "Don't forget to return this book" Maybe even closing with an ominous "Or else!"

That wasn't Jack's message. What he stamped onto his books really reveals a lot about him. Thanks to Curtis Sassur from Archives for sending me the exact text this morning. Here's how it reads in all CAPS:

“WHEN YOU HAVE FINISHED WITH THIS BOOK, PASS IT ON TO SOMEONE WHO IS INTERESTED IN THE SUBJECT, OR RETURN IT TO JACK LAYTON WHO KNOWS MANY INTERESTED PEOPLE. THANKS.”

What a reflection of Jack. He was not a hoarder. He was a sharer and promoter of knowledge, skills and activism. That was the spirit that inspired us to launch the Jack Layton Leadership School in 2014, and I'm so pleased that it is still going strong.

I think it is the Layton Chair activity that has had the widest and deepest impact. Literally hundreds of Layton School participants dedicated anywhere from 3-5 days to developing the insights, networks, skills and confidence to be change-makers. Sessions were typically led by accomplished leaders of Toronto's social movements, political and cultural life.

Most school participants were Ryerson students. School sessions were held during the summer, and study weeks of the academic year. Participant numbers in each school session ranged from a few dozen during academic term, to a couple hundred

in the summer. Five years on, several Layton School grads hold elected office. Many more are active in a host of social justice issues.

I'm very proud and grateful for what I've been able to collaborate on, and contribute, during my Ryerson career. The encouragement, advice and support of my family over 40 years has made it all possible. To my wife Gail Benick, and to our sons Matti & Elliot, I give love & thanks.

In closing let me share a favourite Layton Chair memory. One closing ritual of every Layton School program is the class photo. I love them all, right up to the most recent program led by current Chair Ken Moffat and Kiké Roach, Ryerson's Gindin Chair in Social Justice and Democracy. In the smiling faces of Layton School participants, you see confidence, commitment and community. They are Jack's legacy. Ryerson has made a mark through the Jack Layton School. Jack & Ryerson – a great combination.

Thank you for this wonderful evening.

# Smiling Pale Faces

(A conversation between two resilient peoples)

By Danielle E. Reynolds, Bachelor of Social Work Student

Jack Layton Leadership School  
February 21, 2020  
Ryerson University



Danielle Reynolds  
Reading at Closing Session Leadership School  
February 21, 2020

They arrived on a ship. A passage of  
discovery.

Smiling. Pale. Faces.

They loved our culture.  
They loved our music.  
They loved *our* feathers.  
They loved *our* kente cloth.

The colors.  
The hair styles.  
The beads.  
The drums.

But what did they really love...

They loved our land, but not our people.

They loved *our* people...wait not people.  
Cargo.

They took our land.  
They took *us* from our land.

Most of us died from illness.  
Most of *us* died on the Atlantic voyage.

They condemned our languages.  
They condemned our culture.  
They cut our hair.

**They cut our hair!**

They think we're savages...  
An uncivilized group.

*So where are you now?*

They've pushed us on to reserves.  
They've pushed *us* into ghettos.

And your men?

**Jail.**

And your women?

**Abused and Abandoned.**

And your youth?

**Selling and Using.**

And the babies?  
**In the System.**

*But your ancestors?*

**They fought.**

**They are our strength.**

**They are our pride.**

So maybe we can win the fight?

Yes, we *will* win the fight!

**We'll stand together.**

**With ancestral pride.**

*Hand in hand.*

*Side by side.*



Waubkunii Kwe leading drumming session,  
Jack Layton Leadership School 2020

# On Language and Community: Reflection on the Jack Layton Leadership School

By Marzian Alam, Community Participant Layton School  
Community Organizer



Tara Farahani and Marzian Alam  
Closing session Leadership School  
February 21, 2020

Last week I participated in the Jack Layton Leadership School. It was held at Ryerson University, where the position of Jack Layton Chair hosts social justice related programs to carry on the legacy of the School's namesake. On top of workshops, coaching seminars, and lectures from guest speakers, the second day of the program took us to an event at the Christian Resource Centre in Regent Park. Once a month, the CRC hosts a speaker to discuss contemporary issues in Canadian society. Along with discussion and Q&A, the Centre provides dinner for those in attendance. You

immediately feel a warmth when you enter the space. It is multicultural and multiracial-- I was honestly shocked to see a Muslim man walk by on his way to the prayer hall in his "topi" and "kurta". I learned that the building is so much more than a community centre; it also serves as permanent housing for families struggling under increasing demands from local gentrification. I looked around at the faces of those in attendance: people from different cultures and all walks of life were represented. Although I was new to the space, everyone was greeted with the same

familiarity. I felt a sense of comfort and community as our hosts came around to check in and refill our water.

The event started with an emotional account of the experiences of Wet'suwet'an Land Defenders as the RCMP and Coastal GasLink invaded their sovereign

territory after hereditary chiefs rejected the proposal to build a pipeline on ancestral lands. The story was told to us by Eve Saint, the daughter of one of five hereditary chiefs of Wet'suwet'an nation. The weight of the current and longstanding land defense crisis came crashing down on all of us in the room as we heard her describe how she felt as she ran on to a bus to protect herself from oncoming military personnel.

The painful legacy of genocide struck us the moment she told us that she is pregnant while we watched the video of her violent arrest. She vividly recalled the middle-of-the-night phone call from relatives at the Unist'ot'en camp who got word that RCMP were coming to remove them from the land. "They're coming", she remembered hearing her cousin say on the phone, "They're coming".

In an instant, her words brought flashbacks to hearing chilling war stories from Bangladesh. Just one generation ago, my

parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles endured the tremendous brutality of war during the fight for Bangladeshi liberation and independence from Pakistan. During the years of unrest, when the Pakistani army would routinely raid the homes of

Bangladeshis, my mother and her cousins would be woken up in the middle of the night and told to hide in the attic. "Be very quiet", my grandparents would say, as they hid, "They're coming". Terrified and unable to sleep, the young girls comforted each other as they heard sounds of violence outside. My father will never forget hiding with his family during the war. Being a curious boy, he gathered the courage to look out of the room's small window. He peeked outside for a moment, only long enough to see an innocent shop owner shot at point blank range.

"Get down," my grandparents said, "They're coming".

The following day, my peers and I gathered to talk as we had breakfast and settled in for the last day of the Jack Layton Leadership School. The air was heavy in the room; it was clear we all had a lot on our minds after the previous night's event.

Vulnerability, rage, and motivation coloured our words as we all shared openly about



how we felt and what we were thinking. While listening to stories from peers who attended the event with me, I was struck by the diversity and simultaneously, the universality of our experiences. Different things stood out to us depending on who we were, but the overwhelming feeling of injustice impacted us all.

For another student, it was the moments when Eve spoke about standing unarmed, with nothing but an eagle feather in her hand, facing RCMP with tanks and snipers pointed at her. "Don't shoot", she said as she explained that she and her fellow Land Defenders was unarmed.

The reality of police violence is all too familiar to Black Canadians, who are the

victims in over half of all police shootings in Canada. I was moved by the stories and shared my own personal connection to Eve's words. You could feel it in the room; this is what solidarity looks like. Each of us listened and felt the words Eve shared with us the night before. We saw our own struggles reflected in the struggles of Wet'suwet'an people.

We saw ourselves in every person in the room and committed ourselves to fighting the injustices that keep people from thriving in their communities. I was moved by the way we connected to each other. That is solidarity, and solidarity is the only way we can win.



Cathy Crowe leading walk to CRC, Jack Layton Leadership School, 2020