

Anthem for Liberty's Champions

150 years on, Canadians,
It's time we celebrate Confederation's
Unsung champions, those who dreamt of *Freedoms, Rights,*
To empower the people, raise us up in God's sights!

Freedom! *Liberté!* Freedom! *Liberté!*

We can't name em all, but we can start just the same
With Louis Riel, Manitoba's founder, so game
To campaign for Métis and Indigenous deeds
To land and language: *Twice*, rebelled he for these needs.

Freedom! *Liberté!* Freedom! *Liberté!*

Born rich, but female, forbidden the right to vote,
Thérèse Casgrain, suffragette, marched, rallied, and wrote,
Until *les Québécoises* could troop *en masse* to polls
And elect governments to legislate their goals.

Freedom! *Liberté!* Freedom! *Liberté!*

Entrepreneur Viola Desmond had to fight

Nova Scotian segregation of black and white.

Her struggle was long and hard—a slog, all uphill:

But how her face beautifies our ten-dollar bill.

Freedom! *Liberté!* Freedom! *Liberté!*

A.M. Klein, Irving Layton, and Leonard Cohen—

Three Montreal bards—demanded no more bowin’

To Conformity. And Cohen crooned, truth within—

“That crack in everything is how the light gets in.”

Freedom! *Liberté!* Freedom! *Liberté!*

Ontario’s Norman Bethune sailed overseas

To bring blood-transfusion to Spanish and Chinese,

Peoples wanting to end Oppression, Poverty,

To remain democrats, or win fresh Sovereignty.

Freedom! *Liberté!* Freedom! *Liberté!*

Dr. Henry Morgentaler believed in choice

In motherhood, and gave that creed clarion voice.

Prince Edward Island’s proud poet, Milton Acorn,

Shouted “Love” in Toronto parks: Free Speech got born.

Freedom! *Liberté!* Freedom! *Liberté!*

Pauline Johnson, in Mohawk, “Tekahionwake,”
 Strove for women’s—and *Indigène*—Equality,
 To uphold treaties *and* uplift her gender:
 Her poems declare th’Oppressed must never surrender.

Freedom! *Liberté!* Freedom! *Liberté!*

Madeleine Parent was a triple activist—
 Founding labour unions, a do-right feminist,
 Agitating Pro-Choice or Aboriginal
 Cause, and heading strikes governments called illegal.

Freedom! *Liberté!* Freedom! *Liberté!*

Monsignor Moses Coady of Antigonish
 Imagined a Movement for folks who farm and fish,
 To sell by co-op and save by credit union,
 And feed their families, and keep the communion.

Freedom! *Liberté!* Freedom! *Liberté!*

B.C.-born Joy Kogawa was one of thousands

Of Japanese-Canadians condemned as aliens—
Enemies—during World War II. Her *Obasan*,
That novel, shows, human rights be our full ration.

Freedom! *Liberté!* Freedom! *Liberté!*

Gather round now, all ye True North citizens—
Add your own names to this roll call of denizens
Who equalize Justice in our Strong and Free State:
Patriots, *Liberation's* ours to demonstrate.

Freedom! *Liberté!* Freedom! *Liberté!*

Freedom! *Liberté!* Freedom! *Liberté!*

George Elliott Clarke
Parliamentary Poet Laureate (2016-17)