

Demeter Press Call for Submissions !

Expression of interest due November 10, 2024



Voices from the edge: First person voices of mothers who have survived child protection systems

Editors: Brooke Richardson, Laura Kucentry, Nicole Handrigen, Bibi Baksh

“...for it is not difference which immobilized us, but silence. And there are so many silences to be broken.” (Audre Lorde).

The silences that feel too big to break are often the ones that most need broken.

The purpose of this book is breaking silence. No. Shattering it into a million tiny pieces to disrupt a status quo where mothers involved in child protection systems have been left scrambling to survive for decades. It is about giving voice to these mothers – taking back the pen so-to-speak - as their/our stories have far too often been written by someone else. This book is about disrupting a deeply colonized and colonizing child “welfare” system where complacency routinely wreaks havoc on children and family’s lives.

The profound shame, stigma and isolation that comes with being a mother involved in child protection is truly immobilizing. It has kept, and continued to keep, us both quiet and apart. But it will not – it cannot, anymore. Therefore, another key purpose of this book is to start building something generative from the shards of our silences: a community of mothers who not only speak their/our own truths but also stand alongside other mothers to demand a system that truly cares about the humans entrenched in it.

This book builds on an increasing body of academic literature that attempts to centre the voices and experiences of mothers involved in child protection systems (Fong, 2023; Richardson, 2022). And though this book informed and supported by the infrastructure of the, it is not an academic book. It is a storybook – a book of collected stories told by mothers in whatever way feels most true and real to them.

We are so excited to invite mothers who have lived experience in child protection systems to submit their stories to our collection. No experience required! In fact, you do not even need to have your submission ready to submit – we simply want to know who might be interested in telling your story and are happy to work with you to bring your story to life (if you want us to!). You are welcome to publish with your real name or a “pen” name (i.e., a fake name, first name only, initials or whatever else you see fit).

We are hoping to capture a wide variety of voices in the book. We understand the creation of this book to be part of a healing process of everyone involved and ask that interested folks commit themselves to honouring each other, themselves, and the storying process. We appreciate shattering silence is terrifying, but also understand it as a necessary path towards emancipation for ourselves and the thousands of mothers who remain silenced by child protection systems.

“You become strong by doing the thing you need to be strong for” (Audre Lorde)

The practical pieces

Expression of interest due November 15, 2024

What is an “expression of interest”?

An expression of interest is simply an email to mothersvoicesincp@gmail.com with the following information:

- Your name and contact info (even if you publish anonymously, we need to be able to contact you now!)
- A brief overview of who you are and a synopsis of your story (a paragraph or two, a poem, a photo, a drawing, or painting...)
- A couple of sentences about why you are motivated to be a part of this book
- What you are thinking about contributing (a poem, a short or longer narrative, a collage*, a piece of art*, etc....)

*As this is a print book, only photos of the collages or pieces of art can be included.

If you have any further questions, please email mothersvoicesincp@gmail.com.

Final submission requirements:

Final submissions will be due in the spring of 2025. Submissions can be up to a maximum of 2000 words (exceptions will be considered on a case-by-case basis). Submissions may take the form of short stories, poetry, word art, images (photos of art, collages or photographs with reflections or descriptions), letters (sent or unsent), etc.... Please submit an expression of interest if you have another idea that would work in a book format we have not captured here!

All documents must be submitted in Microsoft Word format.

Who are we?

We, the editors, each bring our own lived experiences of being mothers whose lives have been deeply impacted by child protection systems. Each of us has committed our personal and professional lives to changing existing, oppressive, child “welfare” systems.

Brooke Richardson

Brooke is a mother of four children (6 to 16 years-old) whose life was fundamentally altered when her infant daughter was nearly appended in 2018. Already a scholar the time, she went on to become an Assistant Professor in Child and Youth Studies at Mount Saint Vincent University (Halifax). Her teaching, research and writing is embedded within feminist care ethics framework where she explores how democratic societies can care well about, for and with children, mothers and families at both the personal and public policy level.

Laura Kucentry

For the last 25 years Laura has developed much needed support and advocacy services at the Shout Clinic and the Parkdale Queen West Community Health Centres. Laura has also been through the child protection investigation process as a mother. She is motivated to pursue this book both as a homage to the many women she has been inspired by over the years.

Nicole Handrigan

Nicole joins this project as a former child protection worker *and* mother who was investigated by the system. She identifies as neurodivergent herself while also being the mother to a child who has intersecting disabilities. She has recently completed her MSW and now works tirelessly to advocate for child protection and broader social system change.

Bibi Baksh

Bibi is mother to four children, and grandmother to eight grandchildren. She is also an immigrant, a contract academic faculty at Wilfrid Laurier University and emerging child welfare activist and scholar. She first became connected to child protection systems in her role as a foster parent in in Ontario. Bibi’s PhD research explores the experiences of, and advocates with, Muslim families within the child welfare system in Ontario.