

# *Ms. Canadian Reality*

by Leah-Simone Bowen

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## Production History

This piece was written for Wrecking Ball 16 in 2014. Wrecking Ball was created to prove that Canadian political theatre is viable. The Wrecking Ball invites playwrights to write a show that is ripped straight from the current headlines. Written within a short timeframe, the piece is rehearsed the week before the performance only. *Ms. Canadian Reality* was performed at the Theatre Centre in Toronto for the #yesallwomen Wrecking Ball. #yesallwomen was a Twitter hashtag and social media campaign in which women shared examples and stories of misogyny and violence as a response to the 2014 Isla Vista killings.

## About the Playwright

Leah-Simone Bowen is a Toronto-based theatre practitioner. She has worked across Canada as an actor, improviser, playwright, director, and arts administrator. She is the former Artistic Producer of Obsidian Theatre and is originally from Spruce Grove, Alberta.

## Cast List

**Host** Keith Barker  
**Erica** Karen Parker  
**Ellen** Jane Luk  
**Carol** Falen Johnson  
**Marie** Karen Robinson  
**Unpaid Intern** Shannon Currie

## Production Artist

**Director** Leah-Simone Bowen



Shannon Currie as the Unpaid Intern/Ms. Young and Pretty  
 Photo by Fee Gunn

## Characters

**Host**, a male game show host  
**Erica**, Ms. Single Mother  
**Ellen**, Ms. Temporary Foreign Worker  
**Carol**, Ms. First Nations  
**Marie**, Ms. Invisible  
**Unpaid Intern**, Ms. Young and Pretty

(A game show set-up. Four female contestants stand in a row. The **Host** is assisted by a young female **Unpaid Intern**. A cheesy game show theme songs plays as the lights go up. This whole thing should be very over the top.)

**Host:** Welcome back to *Ms. Canadian Reality*! The only pag-eant that the contestants win simply by staying alive!

If you're just tuning in, so far three more contestants have died after the corporate games! Ms. English-as-a-Second-Language, Ms. Pregnant, and Ms. Executive, who was unfortunately killed after being crushed by the glass ceiling! So let's meet our final four. First up, Ms. Single Mother, Erica! (**Unpaid Intern** walks across the stage with a "clap" sign. We hear canned applause.)

**Erica:** Hi, my name is ... (She looks into the darkness.) Mason? Mason!, Parker? Parker!, Olivia Jane? Olivia Jane! Sit down or I'll make you sit down. Sit, Sit, Sit! (She turns back to the **Host**.) Sorry. Hi, I'm Erica.

**Host:** Wow, I'm surprised you would bring your kids to this.

**Erica:** Seriously? You're surprised? Do you know how much daycare per month is for three kids? You really expect me to not bring them? Do you know –

**Host:** Please stop talking! Okay, moving along to Ms. First Nations, Carol!

(**Unpaid Intern** walks across the stage again with a "clap" sign. We hear canned applause.)

**Carol:** I'm actually Shuswap. I don't really want to be up here pretending I represent all First –

**Host:** I think we as Canadians get the idea. Next up, a new one to the competition, Ms. Temporary Foreign Worker, Ellen! Obviously not her real name.

(**Unpaid Intern** walks across the stage with a "clap loudly, she doesn't speak English" sign. We hear canned applause.)

**Ellen:** (In perfect English.) Hi, my name is Ellen.

**Host:** I'll make this easy for you, her name is Ellen, she works at Tim Horton's and McDonald's and is hoping, in the future, to move up to looking after your children!!!

(Sound—canned applause.)

**Ellen:** I'm a certified nurse –

**Host:** Ha ha ha! Okay, thank you, but please remember, since you're temporary you only get half as much time and attention as the other ladies. And next up Ms. Invisible, Marnie!

(**Unpaid Intern** walks across the stage again with a "clap" sign. We hear canned applause.)

**Marie:** Hi, my name is Marie, I am recently divorced and I'm 50 years old.

(As this conversation goes on **Carol** exits without anyone noticing.)

**Host:** What was that? I didn't hear you... Just kidding, thanks Marnie!

**Marie:** It's Marie.

**Host:** Alright then, let's move on to the finals for the question-and-answer challenge. Answer the question correctly and you live, and incorrectly of course you know what happens...

(Sound effect of a woman screaming.)

That's right, you die!!! But before we begin, let's hear what you will be playing for!

(Cheesy music, while the **Unpaid Intern** displays pictures of the "prizes.")

**Voiceover:** Thanks, Bob, the grand prize of *Ms. Canadian Reality* covers body, mind, and soul! The body portion includes a personal alarm, a lifetime guarantee of a female gynecologist, and a home rape kit! (Applause.)

For the mind, we include free education for you and any daughters you might have, and a non-discrimination clause if you choose to go into engineering or sciences!! And for the soul we have a lifetime subscription to *Oprah* magazine!!!

(Huge applause.)

**Host:** Alright, let's begin!

**Ellen:** Carol? (She looks around.)

**Host:** Oh, where did Ms. First Nations go?

**Marie:** She was here one minute and now's she disappeared.

**Host:** Bizarre, it seems like Ms. First Nations has gone missing! But ah, let's not try and worry too much, this is Canada after all, I'm sure we will find her eventually.

**Erica:** Shouldn't we look for her?

**Host:** Um, it, it isn't really high on our radar, to be honest...<sup>1</sup>

(The women begin to protest.)

**Host:** This is *Ms. Canadian Reality*, we can't stop now.

(**Unpaid Intern** walks over and places a large sign over the microphone of **Carol** that reads "MS. FIRST NATIONS IS MISSING!")

**Host:** Let's keep going! Alright, we are down to the last three contestants, and here is our first question. Ms. Single Mother, you are up first.

A man is walking down the street toward you, it's three in the morning, and as he picks up his pace, it is clear to you he is ready to attack. All you have in your bag is (**Unpaid Intern** displays the items.) your wallet, a pair of keys, a can of soup, a plastic shopping bag, and a bottle of hairspray. What will you use as a weapon to protect yourself?

**Erica:** That sounds terrifying.

**Host:** Just answer the question.

**Erica:** I'm allowed to be scared!

**Host:** Are you?

**Erica:** Yeah, what the fuck?

**Host:** No swearing, answer the question.

**Erica:** Okay, I would say, I would use the hairspray in his eyes and run.

(Sound effect—buzzer.)

**Host:** I'm sorry that is incorrect. As it isn't an aerosol, it would not spray with enough force to blind him. I'm sorry to tell you this, but you die!

*(Unpaid Intern walks on with a "clap" sign as loud cheesy music plays. She escorts Erica offstage.)*

**Erica:** Parker, Mason, Olivia, look after yourselves!!!

**Host:** They'll have to! All right, next up, Ms. Temporary Foreign Worker!

**Ellen:** Ellen.

**Host:** Whatever. Which of these will you use *when* a terrifying rapist is chasing you down the street?

**Ellen:** You mean *if* a rapist is chasing me.

**Host:** Oh no, I heard you live in public housing, so I'm pretty sure it's *when*.

**Ellen:** Okay... I would use the keys between my fingers to poke out his eyes and injure him.

*(Sound effect—buzzer.)*

**Ellen:** What! Why?

**Host:** I'm sorry I forgot to tell you the rules are different for you. We have a clause that states that if you are not a real Canadian, we can just arbitrarily kick you out of the game. But thanks for playing so hard.

**Ellen:** So I have to go back to my country then?

**Host:** Ha ha! Oh no, you're going to die!

*(Loud cheesy music plays as Ellen is escorted off by the Unpaid Intern. She screams at the Host in her own language.)*

**Host:** Whatever she said was so adorable! By the way, let's thank our unpaid intern for escorting all the women to their deaths! (Applause.)

Thanks, and that concludes our *Ms. Canadian Reality* pageant!

*(Outro theme music plays.)*

**Marie:** Wait, I'm still here.

*(Outro theme music stops.)*

**Host:** Oh my goodness, I forgot Ms. Invisible. I'm so sorry, they just blend into the background after 40, don't they?

**Marie:** Fuck you.

**Host:** Well, well, you get to that age and just say whatever you want to. So Ms. Invisible, which of these items, the wallet, the plastic bag, or the soup can would you use and how?

**Marie:** I would take the soup can, put it in the plastic bag, and twist the bag, like this (She demonstrates and turns it into a sling.), until it becomes a deadly weapon. Then I would bludgeon him to death with it.

*(She starts walking toward the Host swinging the can. The buzzer sounds.)*

**Host:** I'm sorry, that is incorrect. The answer we were looking for was, stop and look him in the eye! There is no weapon more crazy scary than a confrontational woman, am I right!?

*(Wild applause as she is escorted off.)*

Bye, Ms. Invisible! So the winner is our unpaid intern, also known as Ms. Young and Pretty!

*(Unpaid Intern enters and waves.)*

**Host:** Although she was out after the first life experience competition, she apologized and we forgave her. Now she works for us for free! So for the 100th year in a row Ms. Young and Pretty wins *Ms. Canadian Reality*! Tune in next year!!

*(Cheesy music swells. Blackout.)*

## THE END

### Note

- 1 This was Stephen Harper's response to a question about a national inquiry on missing and murdered Indigenous women.