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## Book Notes: Poverty: Rights, Social Citizenship and Legal Activism, by Magot Young, Susan B. Boyd, Gwen Brodsky and Shelagh Day (eds)

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Book Note

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POVERTY: RIGHTS, SOCIAL CITIZENSHIP AND LEGAL ACTIVISM, EDITED BY MAGOT YOUNG, SUSAN B. BOYD, GWEN BRODSKY & SHELAGH DAY. VANCOUVER: UBC PRESS, 2007. Pp. 389. CDN \$85.00 hardcover.

BY MAIJA MARTIN

*Poverty* is dedicated to Louise Gosselin, who brought the first poverty law case under the *Charter*<sup>1</sup> to the Supreme Court of Canada. The case challenged Quebec legislation that provided insufficient social assistance for people under thirty. The *Gosselin*<sup>2</sup> decision represented a disappointment for anti-poverty activists seeking to use the *Charter* to protect economic and social rights. It was against this backdrop of narrow *Charter* interpretation and the growth of poverty in Canada that a Colloquium on Social and Economic Rights was held in Vancouver in 2003, generating the works included in this volume.

The articles are divided into five sections, with the authors debating the challenges of litigating poverty issues. The first section, "Reading *Gosselin*," opens with an essay by Martha Jackman arguing that the rejection of contextual evidence is fatal to *Charter* welfare cases such as *Gosselin*. The next section, "Social Citizenship and the State," includes an essay by Janet E. Mosher examining the second-class citizenship status of welfare recipients and the ways in which their exclusion can be dismantled. The third section, "Social Citizenship and International Contexts," includes an article pertaining to the litigation of socio-economic rights in South Africa by Karrisha Pillay. In the fourth section, "Legal Theory After Gosselin," Denise G. Réaume argues that section 15 should be interpreted as enhancing human dignity, and not just as protecting individuals from prejudice or stereotype. In the final section, "Legal Activism Revisited," Margot Young rethinks legal activism and *Charter* scepticism, looking at the shift from substantive to formal equality in the late twentieth century. The collection concludes with an essay by Shelagh Day in which she argues that the *Charter* must be read as protecting an adequate standard of living, reinforced by Canada's treaty obligations relating to international human rights.

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<sup>1</sup> *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, Part I of the *Constitution Act, 1982*, being Schedule B to the *Canada Act 1982 (U.K.)*, 1982, c. 11.

<sup>2</sup> *Gosselin v. Quebec (Attorney General)*, [2002] 4 S.C.R. 429.

