

A feminist urban scholar from Toronto, Canada, Leslie Kern is the author of *Feminist City: Claiming Space in a Man-Made World* and *Gentrification is Inevitable and Other Lies*. She holds a PhD in women's studies from York University. An Associate Professor at Mount Allison University, she also acts as an academic career coach, where she helps academics find meaning and joy in their work.

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In your view, what is a feminist transport system?

A system that gives equal priority to the travel needs, patterns and experiences of women and girls in terms of the design of the system, physical infrastructure, timing of the services, cost, reliability, information provided to passengers, and accessibility. It pays attention to safety concerns for women and girls, ensuring a wide range of ways the system is proactive about women's safety, where the design of the system is equitable for women and takes into account their role as primary caregivers.

How does the experience for women and girls in Canada influence your work?

Canada has an international reputation as a very gender equal and progressive country but scratch below the surface and you'll see that many of the challenges women all over the world face do exist here. Violence against women is a big part of what motivates me to do the work I do, including domestic violence and violence in the public sphere, particularly against marginalized women. At the city level, it is frustrating to look at visionary documents that give lip service to diversity yet give no explicit attention to gender and issues of caregiving, which is a major oversight. This pushes me to have more conversations about adopting feminist planning approaches and gender equity lenses for all aspects of urban life.

How do you stay motivated?

Staying motivated is reminding myself that the timeline of change is not the timeline of my life, as disheartening as that can be. The writings and ideas of my role model Dr. Gerda Wekerle and others from the 1960s–1980s are still solid; they've been expanded, developed, made more intersectional in the decades since but the foundational problems are the same. I cannot control the outcome of all this hard work that everybody is putting in, nor what the outcome will be or when it will happen. All I have control over is what I do with my life day to day, focussing on the spaces I do have influence over – the students I connect with, my writing, speaking to the media or doing public events. I have to believe that every chip in the iceberg of problems is part of the solution.

How do we encourage men to be a part of this timeline?

This is not only about women. Gender is something that affects us all in a multiplicity of ways across many different gender identities. Opening this conversation has been part of an attempt to show that whatever your gender identity, you will learn things that are important to your life. If we changed the title of "feminist" in feminist studies, we would ultimately water down our own political ideological project to make men more comfortable – and they are already pretty comfortable.





What advice would you give your younger self if you could?

I would tell her that she is on the right path. As much as I have enjoyed the theoretical aspects of women and gender studies, the combination of a geographical focus gave me the opportunity for practical real change that I can see in my lifetime, which is rewarding. I'd say don't be afraid to do the kind of writing that I did in *Feminist City*, to write for the public and combine my own story with the decades of research. I believe we do things when we are ready to do them. But don't be afraid. You will see positive results from this work. Keep on the path.

And for others who want to be part of a feminist reshaping of the transport system?

We need your voice to increase the diversity of people, experiences, places and voices, represented in this broad umbrella of feminist urban work and transport work. Your story matters and there are lots of ways to be involved. You don't need to be a planner, urban geographer, politician. Don't let what may seem like a formal, distant, male-dominated world dissuade you from having your voice heard and being active in your everyday life!