



Press Release

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Fighting Women: A symposium on women's boxing June 21-22

Fighting Women: A Symposium on Women's Boxing is a two-day event bringing together authors, academics, boxing scholars, coaches, filmmakers and journalists who chronicle women's boxing. Some 19 presenters from Canada, the U.S., Mexico, Trinidad and Tobago, Finland and Australia will take part in the first scholarly event dedicated to examining women's professional and amateur boxing, past and present.

Hosted by Brock University, the symposium takes place June 21-22 at The Gladstone Hotel, 1214 Queen St W., Toronto. It is organized by Dr. Cathy van Ingen, Brock University, Canada; Dr. Benita Heiskanen, Turku Institute for Advanced Studies, Finland; and Dr. Anju Reejhsinghani, University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, U.S.A.

The legacy of women's boxing, including women fighting for financial gain, traces back to the first half of the 18th century. Yet women's amateur boxing only became legalized in many parts of the Americas in the 1990s. There are now more than 120 international boxing federations with registered female competitors, and the debut of women's boxing at the London Olympics placed it on an international stage.

This symposium will explore the diverse ways women have participated in amateur and professional boxing. The purpose is to investigate women's involvement in boxing in its broadest sense, from historical, ethnographic, cultural and artistic perspectives. This cross-genre approach hopes to take into account the multiple, often intersecting, aspects of this exploitative and dysfunctional, yet compelling and beautiful, sport.

On June 22 there will be a media panel discussion/Q&A with three global experts:

* **Sarah Deming**, former Golden Gloves champion and multi book author who has covered women's boxing for the *Huffington Post* and other media outlets, including serving as NBC's in-studio Olympic boxing researcher for the London 2012 Games.

* **Mischa Merz**, winner of the 2001 Australian National Championship and a winner in the Master's Division at the 2009 National Women's Golden Gloves. Merz has written two books on boxing, most recently a memoir *The Sweetest Thing* and has opened Australia's first female owned and operated boxing gym, Boxing Central.

* **Raquel Ruiz**, award-winning journalist who currently writes for *Boxing Canada*. During the London Olympics she blogged and tweeted for *The Guardian* in the UK. Currently working on a book about Barbara Buttrick, a world champion in women's boxing in the 1940s and '50s.

At 5 pm on June 21 a public screening will show *The Boxing Girls of Kabul*, followed by a Q&A with director Ariel Nasr. In this feature documentary, a remarkable group of young Afghan women dream of representing their country as boxers at the Olympics, and embark on a journey of personal and political transformation.

For more info: www.fighting-women.com

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