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PHOTO ANNAYA STEWART

EDITORIAL:

Representation Matters

Canadian media is white.

Consider who you read in the mainstream media. It's probably white people—white men. The lack of minority representation in the media doesn't exist in a vacuum, but is a product of colonialism, capitalist development, slavery, and the genocide of Black and Indigenous people, and people of colour over centuries.

Let's consider an example near and dear to us: Concordia's journalism department. There are no non-white teachers. In fact, the j-school class on gender and diversity hasn't been offered since the professor who taught it retired two years ago. Out of these contexts sprouts a nationwide media ecosystem that is actively racist.

The lack of coverage on missing and murdered Indigenous women is a problem, the fact that a journalist like Desmond Cole—a Black person who reports sharply on racism, specifically towards Black people—is considered an outcast are examples of the problem. Why does the media actively turn a blind eye to the racism that is blatant

in our society?

In recorded cases of race-based harassment, why is the oppressor's face blurred, out of sympathy, while the victim's identity is made public and subject to a racist court of public opinion?

It is also important that we don't reduce these instances to symptoms of the problem. *TVA Nouvelles'* active sympathy of Quebec's far-right comes from the very same internalized racism that the previous two examples do. We have to see them as what they really are: Moments of explicit racism.

We at *The Link* call on Concordia's journalism department to take the lead in reaching out to minority communities to fix the problem of representation in the department, as well as on the student and faculty levels. We call on every journalism school across the country to do the same with their local minority communities. We hope to see balanced representation of minority issues in the media nationwide, void of any stereotyping and tokenism.

We hope to see racialized voices taken seriously, and given the dignified plat-

form that they have never been afforded in the Western world.

Out of our 15 editors at *The Link*, only two are racialized—both of whom have the privilege of being cis-hetero males. We acknowledge that this publication's editorial team is and has always been predominantly white. This is yet another example of the racial barriers in which our media landscape exists.

In this space dedicated to issues of race, a Concordia student shares her experiences with racism at the university and her concern with the predominantly white, eurocentric topics covered in her classes. She also calls out the lack of diversity within all curriculums across the school's faculties. Two women of colour write about the trivialization of their hair. A Black woman shares traumatizing anecdotes of severe race and gender-based harassment.

Still, this special issue is by no means an exhaustive look at the complexities of race, ethnic identity, and otherness. We hope these stories can expand the conversation about our racist society and how to overcome these ills. □

Living in Cabot Square



SHANNON CARRANCO

“We have our problems, but we’re not bad,” Gaitan said with pride.

Gaitan is one of the many locals who can be seen hanging out around the Atwater metro, the Montreal Forum and Cabot Square.

Gaitan’s large Saint Bernard used to wait with him in front of Alexis Nihon, all year long, as he sat with a hat on the ground, waiting for commuters to drop off change.

For years the Cabot Square area has been known to be a rough area. Historically it’s been a gathering place for a large homeless population in Montreal, especially those who are First Nations.

In its heyday, Cabot Square was a major hub for transport, being a bus terminal and the western end of the metro when it was first built in 1967. The square is sandwiched between Ste. Catherine St. West

and Tupper St., between the Forum and what used to be the Montreal Children’s Hospital, and it sits just across from the Alexis Nihon mall. It still operates as a bus terminal, especially for the night bus network. Recently, the Atwater metro entrance in the square was renovated for \$3.3 million.

Mark Shewan works at the Forum on Atwater Ave., and has for the last 17 years doing maintenance shifts during the day. Because of the nature of his job, Shewan has gotten to know many of the homeless people in the area who come into the Forum to use the washrooms and get out of the cold.

Throughout the day, Shewan will go on smoke breaks with his buddies from the maintenance crew and sit across the street in Cabot Square. One by one, different homeless people come up to Shewan to say hello and tell him about what’s been going on in the park.

Shewan listens, gives advice and maybe a cigarette, and then returns to his job.

“It’s not all rage and drugs all the time. People think if you’re homeless, you must be a drug addict, but that’s not necessarily true,” Shewan said.

Shewan has had his own checkered past. As a kid, he was sent to live at the Weredale House Boy’s Home, a group home for troubled young men that was located in a few discrete brick buildings off of Dorchester St. and Atwater Ave., across from Cabot Square. Now that space holds the Batshaw Youth and Family Centres, a non-profit organization that facilitates youth protection and intervention.

“I bet no one’s ever asked you [...] what happened? How come you’re here?” Shewan asked Gaitan and his friend Shane, another Cabot Square local, on a cold November day in the square.

“No,” Shane said.

“Well, why are you here?”

What Life is Like for the Homeless People Being Pushed Out



PHOTOS SHANNON CARRANCO

“Because I had a rough childhood. And my childhood continued to go down the wrong path. On the streets. In and out of jail. Lost my apartment,” Shane replied. “So I kind of got fed up with it, because in my head I’m not going to change. I didn’t want to sit there and lose a house every time I got in trouble. So I said enough is enough, I might as well stay on the streets. Because I don’t know when the next time I’m going to get in trouble is.”

Shane paused for a second and then continued, “This is what people don’t understand. This is what the government doesn’t understand. This is what the law doesn’t understand. We’re at the bottom.”

In the last 10 years Shaughnessy Village, the neighbourhood that surrounds Cabot Square, has become almost completely gentrified, with a significant amount of expensive condo buildings now looming over the square.

In 2008, the city of Montreal commis-

sioned a report on Shaughnessy Village and Cabot Square, examining why it had been a historic gathering place for homeless populations. The report pushed to rename Shaughnessy Village to Quartier des Grands Jardins, and encouraged plans to clean up the area by renovating Cabot Square and building condos.

In 2015, the city shut down Cabot Square for a year and completely reconstructed it—for \$6.3 million. The park’s reconstruction has been widely criticised by those who say the redesign has made it inhospitable for Montreal’s homeless. The reconstruction included making the majority of the park cement, with large walkways taking over what used to be grassy areas. The new benches include armrests in awkward places, making it impossible for people to lie down to sleep.

The lack of grass made the park feel bleak and industrial, not a welcoming space. But if the city redesigned the square

“This is what people don’t understand. This is what the government doesn’t understand. This is what the law doesn’t understand. We’re at the bottom”
Shane



to get rid of the homeless, where did they expect them to go?

When the Montreal Children's Hospital relocated to the Glen site in 2015, there was an air of hope in the area that the buildings would be used for affordable housing projects, Gaitan said. Now the historic hospital is in the process of being demolished to make way for a massive \$400 million condo project by Devimco Immobilier. The project is said to include 140 units of affordable housing for families and seniors—around 15 per cent of the total units—but nothing specific has been planned for First Nations or populations who are in dire straits.

Most homeless in Cabot Square end up at either the Open Door, a daytime homeless shelter on Rene-Levesque Blvd. West and Atwater Ave., or Chez Doris, a day time women's shelter on Lambert-Closse St.

The Open Door works out of an old

Top: Shane stands in front of what used to be the Montreal Children's Hospital on a cold November day.

Left: The Open Door on Atwater Ave. is a place where homeless citizens can have two warm meals, a good rest, and be surrounded by caring people.

Bottom: People hoped buildings left over from the Children's Hospital could be used for affordable housing. They're being demolished to build condos.



Mark Shewan sits with his friend Lucy in front of the Montreal Forum in Cabot Square.

Anglican church, which has been inactive for about a year now. It began as a place where the less fortunate could get out of the cold during the day. In 1988 they started their first official program, which included referrals to professional mental health and drug addiction counsellors, literacy training, showers, and employment assistance.

“People come in and they can eat, they can sleep, they can seek counseling, they can use computers, have their laundry done and get extra clothing,” said Zechariah Ingles, the operations manager of the Open Door. “The idea is that when we close at 3:30 p.m. every day we can send them away with food in their belly, clothes on their back, and be ready to go back out on the streets till the next day.”

The Open Door is the only “wet shelter” in Montreal, which means it is the only shelter that allows people who are intoxicated to enter, no questions asked.

“Most other shelters require some level of sobriety in order to enter. And so when it’s -40 C outside that can be a problem,” Ingles said.

The Open Door recently created the Open Door Housing Program, one of the only social housing programs in Montreal that is specifically for Inuit and First

Nations populations.

They also work closely with the Makivik Corporation, “the caretakers of the Inuit in Montreal,” Ingles explained. “They help us out quite a lot in helping get Inuit folks who have been stranded in Montreal back to their home communities, because this is not a place where you want to be stranded for any period of time, especially without support. So we have a crew of volunteers helping get a couple Inuit folks back. They’re taking a convoy of cars, just a bunch of volunteers who drive eight or more hours round trip to get them back to their home communities.”

Unfortunately, the church was sold over six months ago by the Anglican Diocese to a developer, and the Open Door hasn’t been able to lock down a new space. Ingles said that when potential new building owners find out that the Open Door is a homeless shelter, they become less enthused about them taking over.

Chez Doris, diagonally across the square from the Open Door, is a daytime women’s shelter that also supplies two hot meals a day, seven days a week. They provide clothing and hygiene services, financial services, and psychosocial support. Like the Open Door, Chez Doris has partnered

up with the Makivik Corporation, where they provide Indigenous women who are currently without a fixed address with an Indigenous caseworker to help them find stable housing in Montreal.

“You could end up dead somewhere,” Shane said earlier in November. “And when it’s too late everyone says, ‘We’re sorry, we’re sorry.’ That’s all they can say. Sometimes the mayor says they’re going to do something, but then when they get in power, they just say, ‘Up yours.’”

Later that month, the body of Marc Crainchuk, a well known homeless man in the Cabot Square area, was found under Highway 720. He had been sleeping there that night and was found by his friends the next morning.

Shelters like the Open Door and Chez Doris provide a warm place to stay during the day, but at night the homeless of Cabot Square are left without refuge.

During Mayor Valérie Plante’s campaign, Project Montreal promised they would create 12,000 new social and affordable housing units downtown. Project Montreal also promised to force developers to dedicate 40 per cent of new projects to social and affordable housing.

We’ll wait and see if they follow through. □

Why Does Siri Suck?

Montreal's Role at the Dawn of Artificial Intelligence

OLIVIER SYLVESTRE
@OLIVERSYL

Whenever I hear the phrase “artificial intelligence,” I get sucked in a rabbit hole of pop-culture-inspired reveries. Science fiction has, from its very inception, depicted sentient artificial beings capable of empathy, self-awareness, and existentialist struggle.

Science fiction almost always gives us two visions of our future relationship with AI: We'll either fall madly in love with artificial beings, or our sentient creations will turn on us and destroy us.

In Spike Jonze's 2013 movie *Her*, the main character Theodore updates his computer operating system specially designed for him and later develops a romantic relationship with it. In Ridley Scott's 1982 cult-classic *Blade Runner*, Rick Deckard falls in love with an artificial human/machine named Rachael, whom he's supposed to kill.

Through the development of AI we're promised a better future, technologically and economically. This is especially the case in Canada and in Montreal.

Element AI is a Montreal start-up co-founded in October 2016 by leading artificial intelligence academic Yoshua Bengio and entrepreneur Jean-François Gagné. Last June, they received \$102 million USD in funding from a number of investors, bootstrapping a company researching AI and offering “artificial intelligence as a service” to other companies.

At the business conference C2 Montreal last May, Bengio said that as artificial intelligence advances, the closer we get to the dawn of a new industrial era. Notably, three big names in the technology industry, Facebook, Google, and Microsoft, have also launched their own artificial intelligence research labs in Montreal last year.

And the craze for AI doesn't end at the private sector. Politicians like Justin

Trudeau and Philippe Couillard have said they also want to promote the development of artificial intelligence.

The Quebec government announced last May a \$100 million investment for the next five years in the field, and Trudeau said last October at the University of Toronto he wanted to lure Silicon Valley companies to Canada, while boasting about how much of a geek he is.

At Concordia, a new student initiative aims to jump on the hype train. Artificial Intelligence Society Concordia had its launch event in November.

The society's president, Abdellatif Dalab, said he wants Concordia to become part of the Montreal AI “ecosystem.”

“Students, when they think about AI, they don't think about Concordia,” he said. “They think of McGill and the Université de Montréal.”

He said his nine-person team wants to change that by organizing workshops and events at the university. He also said they want to teach students basic ways to use the technology. One of the society's slogans is “AI is the future.”

When we learn about investments and advances in artificial intelligence technology, we often interpret these events through the assumptions science fiction movies, television series, and novels have ingrained in us.

But then I try to use Siri on my iPhone, and I wonder how on Earth we could get there. Ask Siri for today's news headlines and she'll literally do a Google search for “news headlines,” which isn't very helpful.

But why doesn't Siri have a personality like the computer operating system in *Her*? Why doesn't she even have a little bit of self-awareness like *Star Wars'* C-3PO? Why does Siri suck?

I met Concordia professor Dr. Sabine Berger, an expert in artificial intelligence and machine learning, and asked her that very question. She stared at me.

“Everyone should take a little of com-

puter science,” she sighed. “It would help them not fall for the hype.”

The thing is, what we mean by artificial intelligence today is actually a technology called machine learning—or more precisely, deep learning, Berger explained. Put simply, machine learning involves training a computer to recognize patterns, so it can later learn how to make predictions from large sets of data.

To accomplish this, researchers use algorithms—programs, that are set up like the neurons in your brain. The “deep” part in the phrase “deep machine learning” means that these neurons are set up in multiple layers, which allows for more complex operations. As the algorithms are trained on datasets, they tweak themselves to accomplish a task more efficiently. And that's it.

The technique can be used in many ways, and it's understandable that investors are flocking to companies that are developing the technology.

On the medical front, a team from McGill announced last August that it trained an artificial intelligence to detect Alzheimer's through analyzing brain scan imagery.

In transport, Waymo, Google's self-driving car division, announced last November that its program had driven autonomously for over four million miles, a distance that's far longer than any human could ever drive in a lifetime. The program learns along the way how to drive better through the data the cars gather with its array sensors, which include cameras and radars.

A computer that detects Alzheimer's disease more efficiently than doctors might seem intelligent, but we should remember that they are just machines. They aren't conscious. All they do is analyze lots of data very efficiently. If Siri was to use machine learning, it would be to better recognize voice or actually find top news headlines, not to become more “intelligent” or self-aware.



While you won't see someone have a matrimonial relationship with their phone next year, that doesn't mean that AI technology doesn't have giant looming issues that we need to sort out.

Machine learning relies on large sets of data. Huge amounts of that data are provided by us, consumers, to private companies through the use of social media, phones, laptops, and fancy internet-connected thermostats. This of course raises privacy issues.

Social media's business model is to sell targeted ads to its users. If a particular ad is suited to you personally, it's because you are exposing more of yourself to advertisers. Social media companies like Facebook, Twitter and Google use artificial intelligence to better target you.

Algorithms use your data, and infer even more data from it, just so you tap on an ad for a brand new watch or a pair of sunglasses.

But more than that, artificial intelligence is also very apt at recognizing faces, because there's a practically infinite number of pictures available online that an algorithm can be trained with. That can be very useful for governments, and extremely dangerous for activists in authoritarian countries. For computers, identifying demonstrators participating in street protests could be an easy task.

Two researchers at Stanford University in California have developed a proof-of-concept algorithm trained on profile pictures from a dating site capable of detecting homosexuality with 91 per cent accuracy. Imagine a tool like this one in the hands of the government of a country where homosexual relationships are illegal.

"AI is like a gun," Berger said. "Guns don't kill

people, but they're a very efficient tool for killing people."

She added that she never thought she would be one day using the same rationale as the NRA, but that she finds herself saying it more and more these days.

Artificial intelligence could be used for good, and it could be used to commit atrocities. "Guns don't shoot people by themselves, people shoot people."

AI, the one we have right now, can't do anything by itself. We are the ones who need to give it instructions. It's a tool, and it's up to us to use it right, she highlights.

In Canada, academics and private companies are self-regulating. Notably, the Montreal Declaration for a Responsible Development of Artificial Intelligence, an initiative announced last November by the Université de Montréal Ethics Research Centre, aims at setting guidelines for AI development.

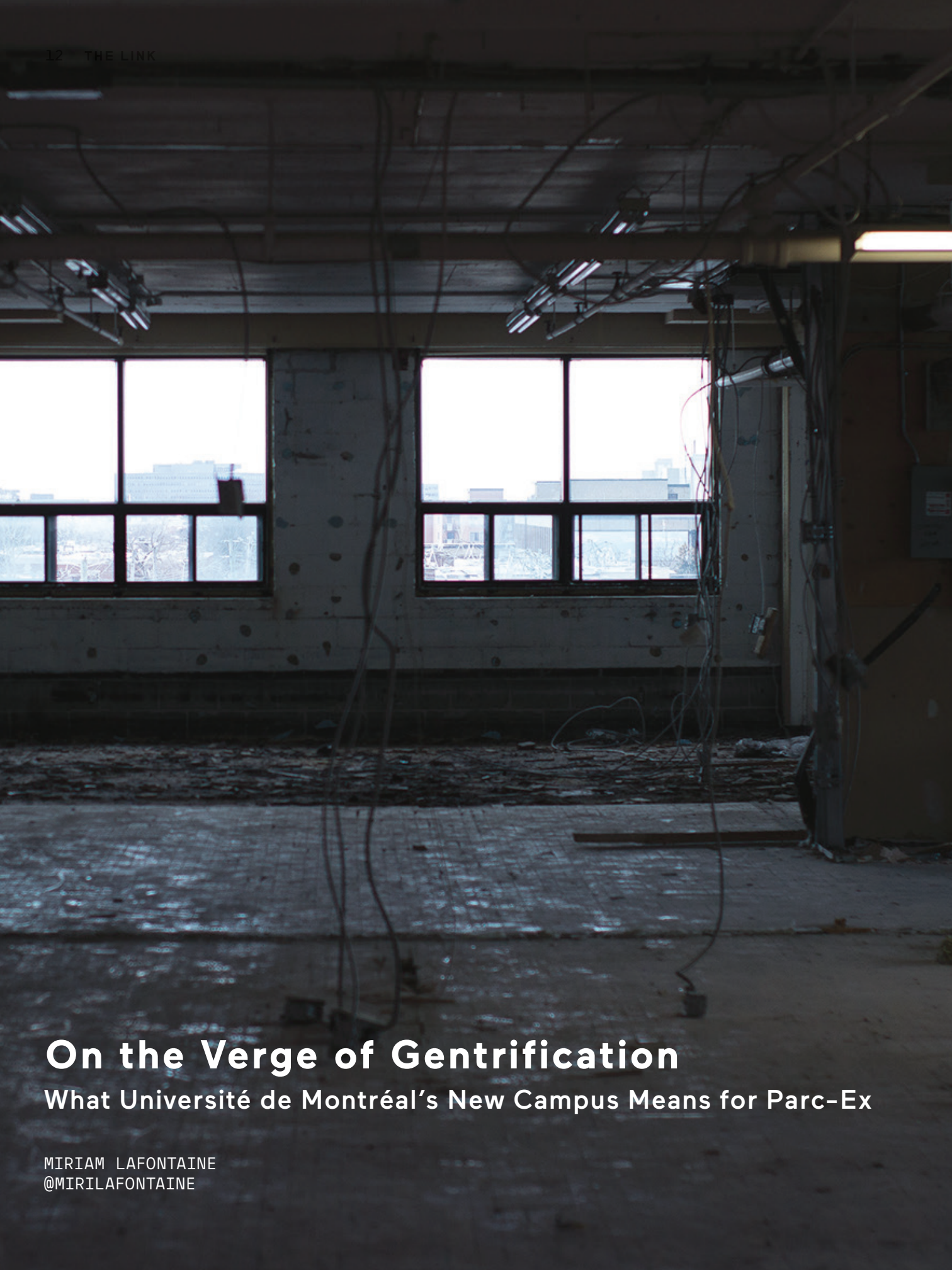
The declaration says artificial intelligence should, among other aims, "promote the well-being of all sentient creatures," "promote the autonomy of all human beings," "seek to eliminate all types of discrimination," "offer guarantees respecting personal privacy," and "protect us from propaganda and manipulation."

But it is just that: a declaration.

Back in the Cold War, the work that's being done today by artificial intelligence was done by humans. We called these people spies. Berger said we should think about regulating the use of data, just like we decided to do for other resources, like forests and mines.

"Right now it's like the Wild West," she said.

After all, it's just a resource, a digital one instead of natural, but still, it's a resource, and private companies are mining it for free. [5]



On the Verge of Gentrification

What Université de Montréal's New Campus Means for Parc-Ex

MIRIAM LAFONTAINE
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Outside the city hall of the Villeray–Saint-Michel–Parc-Extension borough, residents shuffled by, one by one.

Some held banners, another a megaphone, and police officers stood nearby as the group grew larger.

Some looked on over to the building facing them just across the street, the Johnny Brown Building. Staring down at Parc metro station from the other side of Hutchison St., the building has long served as a sort of unofficial community centre, having been a home for places of worship, an immigration aid center, family-run businesses, a local radio station, and more. But now it's fallen into disrepair. Most of its tenants have been evicted, and those remaining will be gone soon to make way for a 70-unit luxury apartment complex.

Protesters stood outside in the cold, hoping the city will back them and stop the project.

"For years we've been trying to get social housing, and housing for families, and what do we get? We get a slumlord who decides that he wants to take a piece of our neighbourhood and turn it into whatever he wants," yelled Adeel Hayat, who's lived in Parc-Extension for 13 years, through a megaphone.

On Dec. 11, city officials were briefed on recommendations from the new owner of the building, Ron Basal, who hopes the city will approve the permits he needs to continue doing construction on the building. Protesters made their way inside to personally deliver a letter detailing their concerns to the borough, but the group of 20 or so were soon pushed out by police officers. Outside, five police vans were parked to observe the scene.

Basal has no plans to rent the apartments at an affordable price, saying the units will be listed according to "market price," an offer that's far from suitable for locals.

Parc-Extension is one of Canada's poorest neighborhoods, according to a 2016–2017 survey of the area by Centraide of Greater Montreal. Out of all of Montreal's boroughs, it ranks first place in poverty, with 44 per cent of

the neighbourhood currently living with a low income.

It doesn't end there. Université de Montréal is also encroaching onto the territory. The university is building the first pavilion of a new campus set to open in 2019, between Beaumont and Van Horne Aves., on the southern border of Parc-Extension. With that, many worry the displacement of low income people in Parc-Extension will only continue, seeing the eviction of tenants from the Johnny Brown Building as one step in a longer path towards gentrification.

Hayat doesn't mince his words. "This university is putting a wall between us and them."

The four-pavilion campus will house chemistry, physics, geography, and biology departments, and it's expected to bring in about 10,000 students. The borough announced that UdeM is preparing for the shift by opening up 1,300 student housing units.

"The university is what's attracting people like [Ron Basal] here," said Hayat. "This guy's saying, 'This is my cash cow.'"

Residents made repeated attempts to express their discontent about the Johnny Brown Building to the borough and the real estate developer, BSR Group. On Dec. 21, some even visited the offices of the real estate company at its Côte Saint-Luc office so they could personally deliver a letter voicing their grievances.

They were not met with a warm welcome. Employees violently pushed the crowd out. A banner reading "Parc-Ex Stands Up for Dignity" was ripped out of one person's hands. Another filming the scene had an employee hit their camera, and upon leaving, another was heard yelling "I'm going to build condos all over your fucking neighbourhood!"

Basal, the head of the real estate company, said he has plans to continue investing in the neighbourhood.

"We're looking to buy more condos in

An old gym in the former Johnny Brown Building lies gutted. Luxury apartments are on their way in.

PHOTOS BRIAN LAPUZ
@BRIANLAPUZ

“I’m going to build condos all over your fucking neighbourhood!”

A BSR Employee

the area,” he told *The Link* in December. “We believe in the great location.”

In response to the evictions, a support group has been formed for the remaining tenants in the Johnny Brown Building. Stéphanie Guay, who’s part of the group, hopes a more open dialogue about the building and gentrification could begin between the borough and its locals.

“This is the biggest symbol of gentrification, right at the entrance of the neighbourhood,” she said. “There’s nobody at all from the neighbourhood whos going to live there, that’s absolutely certain.”

Guay’s ultimate dream is to see the building returned to the neighbourhood. At the very least, she hoped the borough would have stepped in to stop the arbitrary evictions at the Johnny Brown Building, and that they’ll step in to stop arbitrary evictions should they happen again.

In a 2013 report, urban planners from the City of Montreal wrote that the new UdeM campus is expected to stimulate the economy and social development for the surrounding area, which includes the area of Parc-Extension from Parc metro station until Beaumont Ave. But Guay, who’s lived in Parc-Extension for seven years, worries the borough might be more caught up in how it’ll improve the area’s

economy, and less concerned about the displacement of low income families.

Borough Mayor Giuliana Fumagalli said she wants locals to become more involved by opening a citizen-led consultation group that would focus on improving housing conditions in the area. She also said none of the tenants from the Johnny Brown building directly reached out to her office for help.

The borough said that 30 per cent of the 1,300 units that will open as part of UdeM’s student housing will be affordable social housing. The 2013 report also said that efforts will be made to increase the amount of affordable housing in the neighbourhood, but it’s uncertain what will be done for Parc-Extension in the immediate future.

As part of Projet Montreal’s campaign promise to increase affordable housing in the city, new residential buildings in Montreal with over five units must now allot 40 per cent of those units as affordable social housing.

“It’s a question of making sure we have a community that keeps its character, it’s soul,” said Fumagalli. “It is a concern, and I understand what the citizens are saying.”

Catherine Lussier, coordinator with the local housing rights group Comité d’action de Parc-Extension, said the price of rent in Parc-Extension has been increasing. Between 2014 and 2017, the average cost of rent in the borough jumped from \$595 a month to \$655 a month, though it’s hard to get an accurate picture of the situation in Parc-Extension specifically, since statistics collected look at the whole borough rather than only that neighbourhood. Property taxes in the borough have gone up by 5.2 per cent this year, so that also stands to increase the price of rent moving forward.

With changes coming for the neighbourhood, long-time residents and students coming in stand to gain from having access to more affordable housing. But about a 1,000 households in Parc-Ex are still on the Office municipal d’habitation de Montréal’s waiting list for subsidised housing, according to Brique par brique, a community housing group looking to establish itself in the neighbourhood.

There is also a lack of housing co-op groups—only two serve entire neighbourhood. That makes for a total of 55 low-income cooperative housing units, compared to the 431 that exist in neighbouring Villeray. And as Sarita Ahooja, a Parc-Extension resident who’s lived in a housing co-op since 2009, has noticed, most of the housing co-ops in Montreal are insular. Like any other organization, Ahooja’s said that housing co-ops tend to reproduce the same structure as the society they exist in.

“Here the co-op movement is still very Québécois,” she said. “People still stick to their own.”

As a result, she’s found that many low income people of colour don’t gain access into Montreal’s housing co-ops. She hopes to see stronger anti-racist activism within housing co-ops. In Parc-Extension, this type of work is particularly relevant, given that 47 per cent of the people living there are part of a visible minority.

Faiz Abhuani, executive director of Brique par brique, hopes their community housing group will serve to fill this gap.

“We’re trying to create a project that deals with the problem of gentrification,” explained Abhuani, who noted that racialized people tend to be the first to be displaced by gentrification. For that reason, their community housing group will look to serve low income people of colour. They plan to have their 22-unit housing complex open by the summer of 2018.

Looking towards the future, Abhuani said they hope to one day found a community and cultural centre, as Parc-Extension is underserved, especially after the loss of the Johnny Brown Building.

Ron Basal isn’t the only one looking to capitalize on the neighbourhood. Another 21-unit condo building is planned to open this year at 6900 Outremont Ave., just around the corner from the future site of the new campus, despite the fact that most locals are renters. Data from 2016 showed that about 90 per cent of the burrough’s residents live in apartments.

“Nobody really cared about the people here until the property value started



Construction began for a condo building at the corner of Outremont and Beaumont Aves. In the background, a new UdeM building is set to open in 2019, just at the southern border of the Parc-Extension borough.

being speculated,” Hayat observed.

To make the neighbourhood less attractive to real-estate investors, Fumagalli said she’ll be pushing to change the borough’s zoning laws so that buildings can’t go above a certain height, like two or three stories.

“That stops promoters from grabbing those two story houses, throwing them down and building four stories,” said Fumagalli.

Hannah Blais, a master student in Geography, Urban and Environmental studies at Concordia, said this type of trend is common. Parc-Extension has traditionally housed families—they make up 72 per cent of the area’s population—but new demographics come with new needs.

“It’s the students who pose additional interest. The more students move into a neighbourhood, the more landlords see there is a market opportunity

for them,” said Blais.

Neighborhoods flooded by the students tend to see a gradual increase in the overall price of rent, she noted, because landlords often take advantage of students’ short stay. Between each change of lease, it’s not uncommon for landlords to increase the price of rent. Often, renters sign into a lease without the knowledge that the previous tenant paid a lower rent. The more this happens, the more it informs the market, leading other landlords to adjust their own prices in reaction.

Many renters, and students especially, don’t take advantage of their right to refuse arbitrary rent increases, mainly out of a lack of knowledge. This process then contributes to gentrification.

“If we all [refused rent increases], then apartments would stay significantly cheaper,” she said.

Beyond refusing arbitrary rent

increases, Blais said students coming in can help fight against gentrification by being more conscious about what they bring to the neighbourhood: Don’t impose a new set of values, support the businesses that were there when you first came in over new ones. Don’t keep yourself isolated from everyone around you. Instead get involved with your neighbourhood by volunteering in your community, and more simply just be a good neighbour, Blais said.

Unfortunately, Hayat noticed that universities tend to foster the opposite. They rarely teach students about the history of the neighbourhood they’re coming into, and students become so involved in their studies that they can’t focus on anything else, becoming confined from the rest of the people around them.

But students, Hayat said, couldn’t care less. □

Marginalized Stories Take Centre Stage

At Black Theatre Workshop

Mentorship Program Fosters Opportunity and Inclusivity for Artists of Colour

BY AYSHA WHITE AND SAVANNAH STEWART
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As Canada's oldest Black theatre company, the Black Theatre Workshop has long asserted itself as a Canadian art pioneer. This year marks its 47th season putting on productions that resonate with Black communities in the city.

"The reason that the company was even founded years ago was that those who started it felt that they weren't seeing themselves on stage," said artistic director Quincy Armorer. "You couldn't go to the theatre as a Black person and say, 'Hey there's people that look like me!' or see stories that you connect with."

In the thriving theatre landscape of the country, BTW works to ensure that artists of colour are given the chance to participate in its development, and that Black Montrealers see their culture properly represented.

"It's really to make sure that stories that speak to the experiences in our cultures, dreams, and aspirations are being told," explained Armorer.

"It was very grassroots in the beginning and for quite some time," said Armorer.

At first, BTW didn't have offices and meetings were held in people's kitchens and basements. The organization was officially incorporated in 1972.

The first time Armorer worked with the BTW was in 1997. He has acted and directed in productions with the company, and would eventually become its artistic director in 2012.

"We're seeing more diversity, which is fantastic. This province of ours, which I do love, has often created a lot of challenges and a lot of barriers," said Armorer.

Armorer views BTW as an advocate for change, something they take very seriously. He thinks that theatre-going audiences are proving their desire for this kind of work. According to Armorer, BTW tells stories that do not get seen on mainstream stages today—let alone even 20 years ago.

Quincy Armorer is the artistic director of the Black Theatre Workshop.

GRAPHIC KAYLEIGH VALENTINE
@KAYLVALENTINEE



“As a Black woman, and a Black woman anglophone actually, it’s not that I could never have opportunities as other people, it’s just 10 times harder. It’s just the reality of what it’s like to be a visible minority, anglophone, in Quebec.”

Nalo Soyini Bruce

BTW was nominated for 10 awards at the Montreal English Theatre Award Ceremony in 2016–2017, winning for production regarding the play *Angélique*. However, Armorer is most proud of their 2015–2016 award for Equality Diversity and Inclusion.

“We embrace all sectors of the Black community [...] there are stories of the LGBTQ+ communities within that, and that’s really important,” said Armorer.

One of his goals as the artistic director has been to increase the amount of Black queer content they produce, beginning with this season’s Montreal premiere of *Black Boys* by Stephen Jackman–Torkoff, Tawiah Ben–Eben M’Carthy, Thomas Olajide, Virgilia Griffith, and Jonathan Seinen.

Together they form the Saga Collectif.

Armorer saw the show in Toronto over a year ago, describing it as “fantastic,” and igniting his desire to see it performed in Montreal. He approached Saga Collectif about presenting it, then consulted with the artistic director of Espace Libre, a French-language art space, who was also impressed and agreed to host the production.

The play will tour across Canada, starting in Montreal on Feb. 13, followed by Calgary and then Vancouver. It will end in Toronto where it first premiered.

The production will run for a week in English, with French surtitles. Armorer said that they added French to attract people from both linguistic sides.

“The theatre communities in Montreal, the francophones and anglophones, they’re almost segregated, for lack of a better word,” explains Armorer.

What differentiates the theatre’s translations from those shown on TV is that they’ll be shown overhead of the playing space, making them surtitles rather than subtitles.

Armorer noted that this play has been unusual for BTW because it’s a collaboration between the Black and Francophone theatre communities for a show focusing on LGBTQ+ issues. “It’s fantastic to see it all coming together,” said Armorer.

Jackman–Torkoff said it was important for both parties to see more representation of Black queer stories.

According to Armorer, there are several things they put into consideration when choosing the plays that BTW will present. He mentions balance, in both gender and the level of experience artists bring as being important.

“Sometimes there is a false expectation that the shows we do need to be about race or racism,” said Armorer. “Why can’t we tell a story about family and it just happens to be a Black family, and it doesn’t necessarily have to be ‘bad bad white person!’”

“So that’s important to me, that we’re not ghettoizing our stories or sticking to long held stereotypes. A lot of the plays that are rooted in race are very serious and sometimes you just want to laugh. It’s about finding balances within the stories that are told,” he continued.

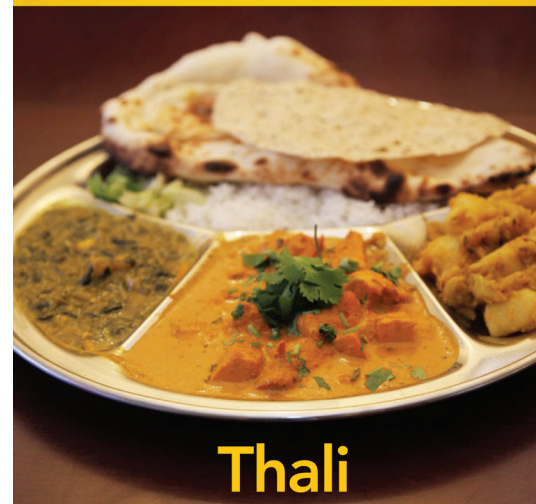


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Armorer thinks it is important to bring content to a French audience. “There is a large French speaking Black population in Montreal and they’re essentially not being represented or served by theatre on the Francophone side,” he said.

ARTIST MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

The Artist Mentorship Program is by and large the most relevant indication of BTW’s commitment to supporting local artists of colour.

First launched in 2012, the program is for emerging artists who specialize in different aspects of theatre: acting, directing, set or costume design, playwriting or stage managing.

The program in its current iteration evolved from the Youth Works program, created in 2002. “It was a little bit different before, almost like a summer camp,” said Armorer. He said that it was meant for 11 to 17-year-olds, happening on weekends and one intense week in the summer.

Now, it is held once a year, from October to April, and geared to artists who have some experience working professionally in their field but are looking to make more connections with others in theatre, hone their craft with the help of seasoned artists, and acquire the tools necessary to make a living off their art.

“It can be daunting, just finishing theatre school and being dropped into the professional world not knowing what to do,” said Armorer.

Nalo Soyini Bruce, an artist in the 2017–2018 mentorship program, said she’s never encountered a program that provides such a high level of support for the artists.

“The experience is amazing. It’s a group of individuals who are serious about what they want to do, they’re working on a

professional level,” she said. “It’s really a unique opportunity to network and just become close and become a family with a group of people [in the field].”

Kē Xin Li is a Concordia communications student and artist in the 2017–2018 artist mentorship ensemble. They are in the playwriting section of the program.

“It’s helped me a lot as an artist,” said Li. “I don’t think there’s any other program quite like it.”

They’ve learned a lot about the theatre industry and networking, both of which are important for an emerging artist to know. “The program does a really good job as a mentorship program and at bridging the gap between the industry and working artists,” they said.

Artists in the program are paired with mentors with years of experience. The designers and stage managers often have the opportunity to assist them in their work, so Bruce is helping her mentor, Eo Sharp, prepare for *The Baklawa Recipe*, a production put on by Centaur Theatre.

“We get to go to production meetings, we get to assist where there’s the opportunity to do it,” she said. “So you really just get right into it and it’s really fun.”

Armorer explains that interest in the program has grown to the point where they’re now accepting 14 applicants, instead of 12.

The program’s weekly meetups consist of group discussions and workshops. Some workshops are meant for the whole group and cover general aspects of working as an artist. Others are tailored to specific fields.

“We even do grant workshops [...] And they’re really relevant to working as a professional,” said Bruce. She said they had a workshop about taxes coming up soon. “We’ll be very much ready, pen and paper, lots of coffee,” she laughed.

Artists in the program are also provided with tickets to theatre productions going on in the city. “Regardless of where you are financially, you’ll still get the opportunity to see the shows that are happening in the city, so that’s great,” said Bruce.

Being accepted also means receiving an honorarium for seven months, provided by the Department of Canadian Heritage.

The program ends with a showcase featuring work collaborative work

between the artists.

Armorer explains that while the program gives priority to Black artists and people of colour, the colour of your skin isn’t a requirement for acceptance.

“As a Black artist personally, and as a company that exists because there was nothing for us, I know what it’s like to have doors closed before you, and I want to be an open door,” said Armorer.

Being in an environment with other people of colour has been a supportive and empowering experience for Li. They’ve struggled with the feeling of wanting to be acknowledged by a white audience but it’s helped them realize they don’t need the validation of “straight white people” and that writing aimed at queer people of colour is just as valuable.

Bruce believes that it’s BTW’s continuous commitment to telling the stories of marginalized communities and promoting artists of colour that sets it apart from other Canadian companies.

“A lot of theatres [...], it’s in their mandate to be open but it’s not always obvious that it’s something that is a real commitment. And I feel that at the Black Theatre Workshop, it is actually open to everyone,” she said.

“As a Black woman, and a Black woman anglophone actually, it’s not that I could never have opportunities as other people, it’s just 10 times harder. And that’s not a fault of my own, it’s just harder. It’s just the reality of what it’s like to be a visible minority, anglophone, in Quebec. I’m always seen as other, outsider.”

She said that the artist mentorship program is one place where those setbacks are truly nonexistent.

“For all these years [they] have been working to be sure that those hurdles are not in place when someone goes to work with them,” she said. “This mentorship program, these are not hurdles that you have to face, and I think that’s amazing.”

“As time goes on you almost hope that the need for a company like Black Theatre Workshop would almost diminish,” said Armorer.

“With every passing year it’s almost more important for this company to exist and thrive. I think it’s more important now than ever.” □



Royalty Inside Her DNA

MALICIOUZ Paintings Empower the Black Female Form

BY AYSHA WHITE

The stairs leading up to MALICIOUZ's studio reveal walls covered in drawings and graffiti. As you walk through the hallway leading to her studio, the characteristic catlike eyes of the women she paints stare at you from the back of a door.

MALICIOUZ is a Montreal-born graffiti artist who has graduated from the city's walls to her own exhibitions.

Of Haitian descent, she says her heritage has been a significant influence on her art. Her vibrant graffiti murals can be seen around the Mile End, where her studio is located.

She's been in the shared space for the past five years—it is small, cozy, and paint splattered. There is a mixture of art on the walls, both hers and the artist with whom she shares the space.

MALICIOUZ enjoys painting for its communicative power. Her paintings and murals are often composed of strong, proud Black women, sporting tribal styles representing the African and Caribbean diaspora. MALICIOUZ aims to represent all cultures that fall under that umbrella, by not committing to, for example, painting only traditional Kenyan jewellery.

She stands proudly in her own skin. She comes across as self-contained and quiet, but not exactly out of shyness. Like the figures she draws, there is an intensity to her presence. She projects strength by speaking clearly and firmly—she's not afraid to stand up for herself and her beliefs.

She says her favourite materials to use are paint cans, but she also enjoys painting with acrylic on canvases and developing sculptures.

"I've always liked using highlighter pink and contrasting colours [for my murals]," she said, explaining that it helps the viewer see them from afar.

MALICIOUZ studied graphic design,

but was dissatisfied because everything produced for it was "too commercial and not natural," she said, explaining that she often found herself ignoring the teacher's instructions.

She describes her style of art as "Afro-Urban." The "Afro" represents the diaspora of various cultures that she draws inspiration from, while the "urban" represents the inspiration she draws from hip-hop and graffiti culture.

"They're royal figures in everyday styles," MALICIOUZ said.

Many of the women she paints are depicted alone, or as mothers cradling babies, though MALICIOUZ explained that she often draws fathers too, behind the mothers, hidden in the shadows.

"[Men] are there, but we don't see them initially. It's important for me to incorporate them even if they're not clearly depicted."

This places the men painted in a "protective" but not central role, MALICIOUZ said.

Ali Joseph, MALICIOUZ's partner, was a fan of her work before they started dating. He's passionate about art, especially Afro-Urban art, which is why he reached out to MALICIOUZ after seeing her colourful works on Facebook.

"They spoke to me," he said. He invited her to come onto his radio show to discuss her work. After that encounter he fell in love with her as an artist, as well as her talent, dedication, and energy.

"Her artwork is avant-garde, socially aware, historical, timeless, and feminine, with a sense of assertion," said Joseph. "In my opinion, her art contains all of the elements that you'd find in the women from [Haiti] because her latest works are powerful, sensible, indispensable for the people. Mysterious, yet spiritual."

He's known her since 2014 and said that over the last few years her artwork has progressed in many ways. "Whether that's at the level of the technique she uses to illustrate her messages, the characters depicted on her canvases, the different media she employs, or the series she chooses, what stands out is definitely the depth and power of the characters she presents," explained Joseph. "There is a sense of sensibility and a femininity that's omnipresent."

"My mother has been a great source of inspiration," MALICIOUZ explained. Many of the women she paints are depicted as warriors. A 2015 painting called *Mama's Gun* depicted a woman cradling a baby tenderly in the crook of one arm while looking at the viewer, proudly holding a gun.

"It's a way of illustrating force, but more so the spiritual force of women," MALICIOUZ explained.

The desire to illustrate these complexities is shown in two female figures hung up on the walls of her studio: two Black women whose eyes stare out at you, the lower half of their faces covered by the flag of Quebec, but in black, not blue.

"I was inspired by my brother, who is a rapper. The last music project that he did was called *Le Côté Noire de Quebec*, and the cover was a flag of Quebec which was black, and had his silhouette on it. The painting is a tribute to him," said MALICIOUZ.

"It reflects the realities of Black people in Quebec, like shadows." □

MALICIOUZ has an upcoming exhibit called MATRIARCHE, from March 28 to May 13, at l'Espace Mushalaga located at 533 Ontario St. E.

PHOTO ELISA BARBIER



Moving on From Football, Trenton Miller Picks Himself Back up After a Career- Ending Injury

BY DUSTIN KAGAN-FLEMING
@DUSTINKFLEMING

PHOTOS COURTESY CONCORDIA ATHLETICS

Four weeks into his final year of university football, Concordia's star quarterback had his career cut short and his future marred by uncertainty.

On Sept. 24, 2017, the Concordia Stingers faced off against the Université Laval Rouge et Or in Quebec City. For once, it looked like the Maroon and Gold were going to be able to go toe-to-toe with the conference's toughest team in a hostile environment.

What started as a tense, exciting game for Concordia, quickly turned into a team's worst nightmare.

As Trenton Miller ran down the field, the quarterback took a devastating head-to-head hit from opposing linebacker Gabriel Ouellet. Miller went down immediately. The longer he stayed down, the clearer it became that it wasn't just pain from a hit keeping him from getting up.

From the moment their helmets made contact, Miller knew something was wrong. When he managed to pick himself up off the turf, the only thing he could see was the colour blue. "That's not right," he thought, knowing right away he had just suffered a concussion.

Miller was out for the remainder of the Réseau du sport étudiant du Québec season and, more importantly, was told by multiple experts that he would never play football again.

What followed was a difficult period in Miller's life. A "weird time," he described. While the quarterback had dealt with concussions before, finding out that there would be no coming back to the field was a pain that only added to an already difficult recovery period.

"When you get hit like that, you're

dealing with the literal changing of your brain chemistry," said the Buffalo, New York native. He began to feel a change in his mental state. His hormones were off, and Miller began to feel "extreme" changes in his mood.

There was little doubt, before all of this, that Miller would play professional football after graduating. His time with the Stingers was nothing short of dominant. Over his three years, Miller played in 19 games, scoring 35 touchdowns, and throwing for 5,735 yards.

On top of this, he holds school records for touchdowns (20) and completions (204) in a season in addition to the record for most passing touchdowns in a game (6).

The 2015 RSEQ most valuable player had also spent time at professional teams' training camps. Specifically, that of the local Montreal Alouettes and the Toronto Argonauts. Miller had also been receiving calls from the Canadian Football League and Europe-based teams heading into his final year.

In a flash, in one play, all of those possibilities were erased.

"I worked my whole life, sacrificed a lot, for that one opportunity," said Miller. "It felt like it kind of got grabbed [away] from me. It was my chance to win the championship in my last year and then get the opportunity to go pro. It was difficult."

Over a decade of excellence and hard work put towards what appeared to be a bright, professional future in the game he loved was suddenly out of the cards for Miller.

Miller cites sports studies showing that the grief of losing such a major part

"It felt like it kind of got grabbed [away] from me. It was my chance to win the championship in my last year and then get the opportunity to go pro. It was difficult."

Trenton Miller

of one's life as an athlete is comparable to that of losing a loved one.

Miller is looking to the future though. Rather than sitting and brooding over what happened, he's moved forward with his life.

"I think I left Concordia in a better spot than when I came, so that's rewarding for me and I'm excited to see what they can do moving forward," said Miller, who spent the rest of the 2017 fall semester finishing his MBA. After earning his degree, Miller moved back to the United States, taking up a job as a pharmaceutical sales oncology specialist in Florida.

On and off the football field, work ethic and a good attitude were defining characteristics of the quarterback according to his teammates and coaches.

"He'll be a leader in something," said coach Matt Connell who sees Miller as the kind of person who will

succeed in whichever field he works in. Connell spent plenty of time with Miller as the team's offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach.

It was Connell and fellow coaches Mickey and Patrick Donovan that preached the kind of passion that inspired Miller to look ahead to his next goal in life.

"We might not have the facilities that [Université de Montréal], Laval, Sherbrooke, and McGill have, but what none of those schools have is the people that Concordia has in the athletics department," said Miller "I think it's an exciting time to be a part of the Stingers family."

That family mentality and the passion he fostered at Concordia has Miller's eyes set on a new challenge: Coaching.

"[It comes from] looking back in my career and the people who influenced me, knowing that I could be that influ-

ential in someone's life," said Miller. "That's something I would definitely be interested in."

Perhaps the biggest inspiration for Miller is former coach, Jim Kubiak. A former National Collegiate Athletic Association, Arena Football League, and NFL player, Kubiak may have coached Miller years ago but the two haven't lost touch. Miller still talks to the former quarterback almost weekly, asking him for advice or using him as a sounding board for ideas.

"Seeing how much of an impact he had on my life really stuck with me. He's definitely an inspiration for that," said Miller who is hoping he can have the same kind of impact on young players' lives.

When those close to Miller hear that, there's not a doubt in their minds that he has all the tools he needs to succeed as a coach. Connell noted that Miller's



Trenton Miller

SCHOOL RECORDS:

Touchdowns in a season: **20**

Completions in a season: **204**

Passing touchdowns per game: **6**

2nd total passing yards: **2,384**

CAREER NUMBERS

Games played: **19**

Touchdowns: **35**

Passing yards: **5,735**

HONOURS:

2015 RSEQ Most Valuable Player

ambition, work ethic, and high football I.Q. are all key tools for any good coach.

"He's a vocal leader but [Miller] was also a guy who modelled what it meant to be a leader," said Connell. "He was here training during the summers [...] Guys saw that it mattered to him and it made them want to go work."

His teammates agree.

Adam Vance was Miller's backup at the beginning of the year. After the game against Laval, it was Vance who started the rest of the year. According to the man who ended up in his position, Miller was nothing but a mentor to him after the injury.

"When he found out he wasn't playing anymore, he actually stepped up even more," said Vance. "He saw that I was still adjusting to the Canadian game. That was something really cool to see from a quarterback who just found out he couldn't play [anymore]."

As much as he helped teammates by staying around the team, Miller believes his fellow Stingers players did just as much for him. He wanted Concordia to succeed.

"It was easy to be around the [team]," said Miller. "It helped me out of the dark place you get in when you get concussions."

Miller is confident that he can one day coach at a high level. He's not only built a strong football resume, but many connections in the coaching world as well. Whether it's at the high school, NCAA, RSEQ or CFL levels, Miller has spent time with plenty of teams, forming relationships with helpful contacts in the field.

Miller isn't rushing in expecting a university coaching job right away. He knows that you have to learn and move your way up the ladder. That's just what he's doing with his quarterback school.

In May 2017, Miller started the Next Gen Quarterback Academy. He works with quarterbacks in Montreal from as young as 12 years old, all the way up to the CEGEP level.

"It's really rewarding, it showed me what the coaching world is like in terms of helping the youth," said Miller.

"That's definitely something I'd want to be a part of."

The academy's roster of 11 quarterbacks gets plenty of one-on-one time with Miller, who focuses on teaching the technical aspects and specifics of the position. So far, the students are seeing plenty of success with all star team selections and letters of acceptance to top-rated prep schools in the United States to show for it.

Vance isn't surprised at how good of a coach Miller is for his students; he experienced just how good of a teacher he is firsthand.

"He would always give me tips," he said. "Teaching the [quarterback] position is hard and he's been doing it for a while so I think that will help him in the future."

Miller says that the school "keeps his attachment to football alive," even if he will only get to coach somewhere down the road.

"I would love to be a coach giving the opportunity but you play football your whole life and then it might be good to get away for a few years to reflect and then come back recharged," said Miller.

While running his academy, Miller is working back in the United States, taking some time away from his own football career for the first time since he was a young child.

Not playing football anymore is "a big adjustment," said Connell. "It'll be good for him to take that time away to learn that there are other things out there, other things that are important too."

Connell also knows from experience that a player will eventually come to miss the game that they have spent their entire life playing. That's where coaching comes in. It was Connell's way back into the game he loves and he expects it will be the same for Miller.

Miller is just focused on moving past everything that happened and getting ready for what the future may hold for him.

"You look back and you say 'I'm glad it happened'," said Miller. "You just gotta pick yourself up and move on." □

Brick by Brick, Wall by Wall

Thoughts on Prison Abolition

BY JON MILTON
@514JON

When I was growing up, I used to love talking to my grandmother. She was always one of my heros. She lived in Florida, so we didn't see her too often, but whenever we interacted, it always felt magical. She would call our house on Christmas Eve and leave a voicemail pretending to be Santa Claus—this tradition lasted way past the time that my brother and I knew that no such person existed.

Once when she came up to visit, she brought my dad's half-brother, my Uncle Zach. I was really young at the time, and he's not much older than me. It was winter, and Zach had never seen snow before—he rolled around outside, amazed.

My grandmother never had much, as far as money goes. She was poor, she lived with roommates right through old age. She was a flight attendant for a while, then worked odd jobs here and there, in coffee shops and restaurants. She may have been poor, but she had more friends as an old lady than the most popular kid in high school.

As Zach entered adolescence, he became rebellious. He started using drugs, and like many poor kids, he saw the allure of easy money that came with crime. He fell into it. Before he turned 18, he was arrested and was charged with multiple felonies.

In many American states, criminal law is defined by a “three strikes” system. Implemented in 1994 under Bill Clinton during the escalation of the War on Drugs, three-strikes laws make it so that anyone convicted of three crimes, including at least one felony, will face very serious sentences, often life in prison. The specifics of how three strikes



GRAPHICS NICO HOLZMANN @HANGEDMAGPIE

laws function vary from state to state, and Florida's is one of the harshest.

Because Zach was convicted of more than three crimes, he was sentenced to 20 years. The crimes he committed would have probably gotten him around a year in prison in Canada.

I was just a kid at the time, less than 10 years old. But I remember the frantic calls between my dad and my grandmother, the confusion, the pain of

having a family member ripped away and locked in a cage. My grandmother was heartbroken in a way I had never seen before, and that heartbreak would follow her for the rest of her life.

That was the first time I had ever really been forced to think about prisons. How could they do that, how could they steal away the best years of my uncle's life? What benefit comes from tearing apart families? I knew that Zach had messed

up—he would be the first to say it—but the whole thing seemed wrong.

I remember, in those early days, I used to think a lot about how the American justice system was particularly evil. This type of thing wouldn't happen in Canada, I thought. Our society isn't as cutthroat as our neighbours to the south; we're friendly, we don't have the same types of problems with crime and mass incarceration. Sure, we've got prisons, but up here the only people inside them are hardened criminals with nowhere else to go. Right?

My grandmother had always been an activist—she had been active in the civil rights movement, and used to love to show off the scar on her forehead from taking a police baton at the Democratic Convention in Chicago 1968. After Zach got locked up, she started organizing with a network of people with incarcerated family members, called Little Old Ladies in Tennis Shoes. During her time there, LOLITS worked on getting mandatory minimum sentences reduced, sometimes successfully, by supporting groups like Families Against Mandatory Minimums.

I guess that, in a lot of ways, my own drive to change the world came from her. I started being genuinely politicized during the student strike in 2012, when students fought successfully to prevent a massive tuition hike in Quebec. I remember getting off work and seeing kids being brutalized in the street for protesting. Mass arrests were common back then, and some students faced seri-

ous criminal charges. Later, I started organizing in the environmental movement, which often meant working alongside Indigenous folks who led that fight.

In a way, my formative years as an activist forced me to learn about police and prisons—stories about friends of friends being criminalized are a crash course about what happens to people snatched by the jaws of the carceral state. This understanding, forged through my own confrontations with systems of power, shattered my closely-held myths about a kinder, gentler Canada.

Indigenous people in Canada are 10 times more likely to be incarcerated than non-Indigenous people—that's higher than the proportion of Black South Africans imprisoned at the height of apartheid. In America today, Black men are six times more likely to be locked up than white men.

In the same way that mass incarceration in America is referred to as the “new Jim Crow” because of its effect on Black communities, Canada's prison system is referred to as the “new residential schools.”

From a historical perspective, this shouldn't be shocking. The institutions of law and order in this country were founded, in many cases explicitly, with the goal of targeting Indigenous people. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police was originally called North-West Mounted Police—itsself inspired by the Royal Irish Constabulary, a paramilitary force which the British used to violently colonize Ireland. This force, the first of its kind in Canada, was regularly used to put down Indigenous rebellions and clear land on Canada's western frontier for settlement. In the prairies, agents of the Canadian state confiscated crops and left them to rot in order to starve Indigenous communities, get them off their land and force them onto reserves.

Today, the prison system in Canada is about more than just cops, walls, and

razor wire. It is a network of interlocking institutions that profit from locking people in cages. From the companies that “insource” prison-workers to avoid minimum wage laws and worker protections, to companies making their money selling food and goods at absurd prices to people inside (including Concordia's food provider, Aramark, which has repeatedly been accused of giving prisoners food poisoning), the prison industry in Canada is big business.

That business sustains itself in a self-perpetuating cycle. It's prison guards' unions advocating harsher confinement practices. It's the refusal of the courts to prosecute killer cops. It's cultural stereotypes that uphold white supremacy and make us afraid of our neighbors. It's the idea that we don't have the capacity to solve conflict ourselves, that we need the courts as an arbiter. Together, these institutions are often called the prison-industrial complex.

The prison system is also about more than crime. Nearly half of federal inmates have been diagnosed with Antisocial Personality Disorder, and around 15 per cent have been diagnosed with Borderline Personality Disorder. Over half of inmates don't



“Prisons aren’t about protecting citizens from crime, they’re about managing the people we leave behind.”

have high school diplomas, and around two thirds have a history of substance abuse. Since the 1960s, Canada's incarceration rate—the amount of prisoners compared to the overall population—has nearly doubled.

As social services, including mental health services, have faced systematic cutbacks, the prison system has grown in proportion—despite dramatic decreases in crime rates since the 1990s. The people absorbed into the machinery of the prison-industrial complex have been abandoned by neoliberal capitalism; they're people viewed as disposable. Prisons aren't about protecting citizens from crime, they're about managing the people we leave behind.

With all this in mind, how might we imagine a world without prisons? How can we make prisons, and the prison-industrial complex, no longer necessary? How do we get from here to there?

I'm not going to pretend to have all the answers to these questions. If we're going to move towards a society that's truly based on justice, then we need to walk that path together—no single person can provide the way.

The movement to abolish the prison-industrial complex—led by prisoners themselves and their family members—has been grappling with this question for a long time, since the prison abolition movement began to take hold after the violent repression of the Black Panthers in 1960s and 1970s America.

As the leadership of the Black liberation struggle were locked away for

decades, they began to organize prisoners, culminating in a series of prison rebellions, most famously the Attica Prison Uprising in New York, on Sept. 9, 1971. Forty-five years later, to the day, prisoners in the United States commemorated that anniversary by launching the largest coordinated prison strike in history, aimed at ending prison slavery.

Canada also has its own history of prisoner resistance. In 1976, hundreds of prisoners at Archambault Institution near Montreal launched a strike that lasted 110 days, demanding better living conditions, and the formation of a committee of prisoners tasked with writing a constitution outlining prisoners' rights. The strike won some of the prisoners' more specific demands, including an end to the prohibition on conjugal visits.

The success of the Archambault strikers led to a wave of prisoner resistance across Canada in that same year, including coordinated hunger strikes in every maximum-security prison demanding an end to solitary confinement.

This wave began an unbroken line of prison rebellions that continues to this day. In 2017, inmates in Saskatchewan organized to stop working when their wages were cut to \$1 per day. Prisoner resistance is a hidden, but permanent feature of the carceral state.

To go beyond fighting the worst effects of prisons—the slave labour, solitary confinement, inhumane conditions—and towards a world without prisons at all, prison rebels can't be left to fight on their own. On the outside, we need to chal-



Incarceration, Over Time

1816:

Construction of the first modern prison in Auburn, New York. Prisoners slept in individual cells but spent days in common areas or working.

1835:

First modern Canadian prison is opened in Kingston, ON, using the Auburn model.

1873:

Formation of the North-West Mounted Police, a precursor to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. The NWMP would be tasked with bringing state power to the Western Frontier.

1911:

Economic crisis ends hope for Canadian prison reform. Wave of riots in prisons against worsening conditions.

1960:

Ten-year wave of new federal prison construction begins, from nine federal prisons in 1960 to 34 by 1970.



lenge the broader systems that make prisons seem necessary.

We also need to find alternatives to incarceration in the very real cases where people harm one another. The seeds of such an alternative can be found in restorative and transformative justice processes.

Restorative justice grows from that desire, and is beginning to be used on a small scale in some criminal cases. Acknowledging that crime is harmful to communities, this process seeks to restore relations without the further harm that comes from pulling people out of their networks. As such, it is an inclusive and participatory process, and is led by the people directly harmed. The perpetrator is asked to give back to the people they have harmed, and to their community more broadly, in order to restore trust.

Transformative justice pushes this perspective further, asking what the root causes are. Have the perpetrators been harmed themselves? How might their social context have contributed to their decision to harm others? How, most importantly, might we transform the relationships that led to harm in order to prevent it in the future?

As a process, transformative justice requires input from entire communities and allows for an understanding that goes beyond the hyper-individualized approach to crime that has miserably failed at keeping our communities safe and strong. It is a holistic approach, one which attempts to change the conditions which lead us to harm one another.

Zach and so many others like him

were never given the option to change their behaviour to heal themselves and their communities. Instead, prisoners like Zach are stripped of their humanity and fed into a machine that is designed to break people. I write him whenever I get the chance, and I'm proud to say that he's unbreakable.

But not everyone is so lucky. Many of the people who don't have outside support end up permanently scarred, condemned to going back and forth, in and out of the prison system for their whole lives. The real Canadian recidivism rate—the rate at which people who are incarcerated eventually return to prison—is unknown, because government statistics only track people for two years after release. Some surveys point to a rate being as high as 70 to 80 per cent when tracked for longer.

My grandmother passed away in 2013. She never saw Zach as a free man again. She dedicated those last years of her life to fighting against the prison system, alongside others like her who had family members taken away. In that way, the prison system took years of her life, as well as Zach's.

One day, we will live in a world where humans are no longer locked in cages—but building that world is up to us. In the meantime, we can support the people inside who struggle for better conditions, and change the society outside the walls in a way that makes prisons obsolete.

Every step of the way, I'll be thinking of my grandmother. Our generation can build the world she never got to see. [E]

1962:

Massive riots in St. Vincent de Paul prison in Laval, Que. lead to a series of reforms, beginning in 1963.

2012:

Bill C-10 introduces mandatory minimum sentences for drug offenses, makes sentencing harsher for young offenders. Some provisions are eventually struck down by the courts.

1976:

Coordinated strike in Archambault prison saw prisoners winning some of their demands. The same year, there were riots in prisons across the country and coordinated hunger strikes in every federal maximum security prison in Canada. The death penalty in Canada was also abolished.

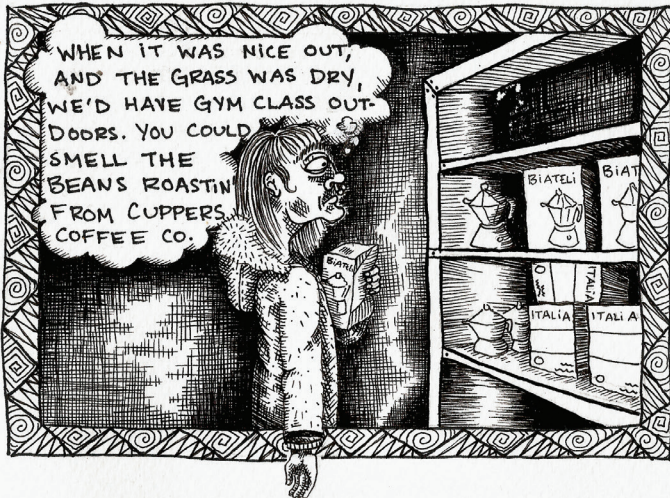
1997:

Drug law reforms are passed, making sentences harsher for drug-related crimes.

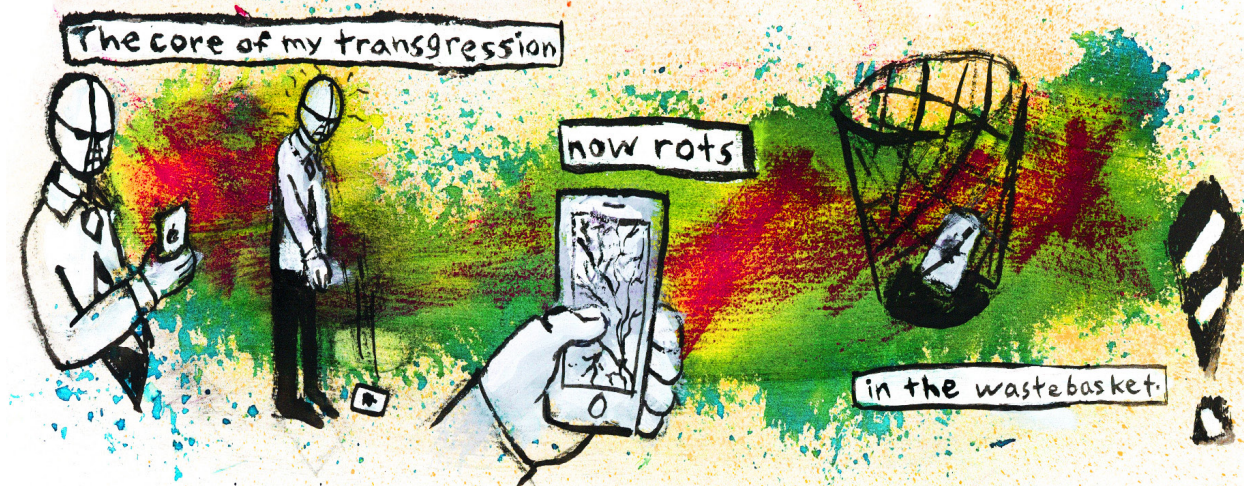
2010:

Truth In Sentencing Act passes, putting more people in prison while they await trial. Federal government begins wave of prison construction.

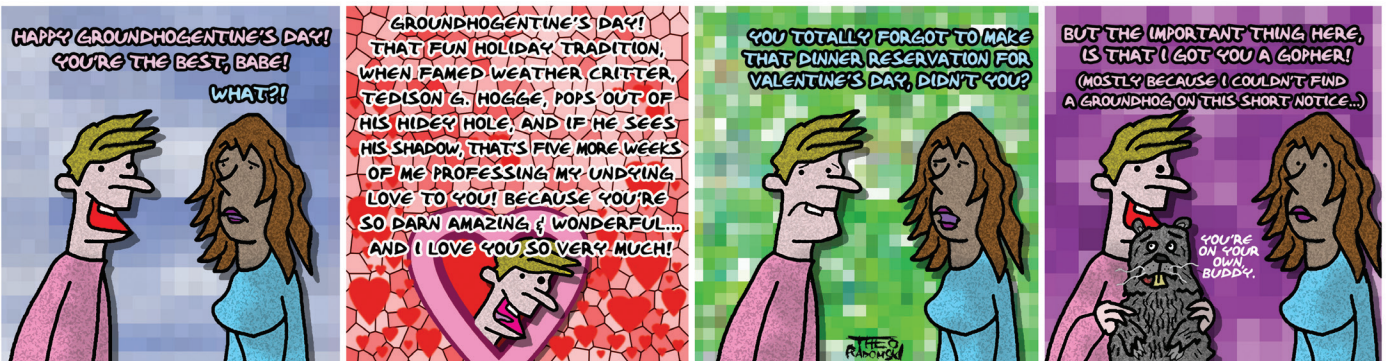
Bialetti by Moragh Ailish Rahn-Campbell, @madd.egg



The Epic Adventures of Every Man by Every Man, @theepicadventuresofeveryman



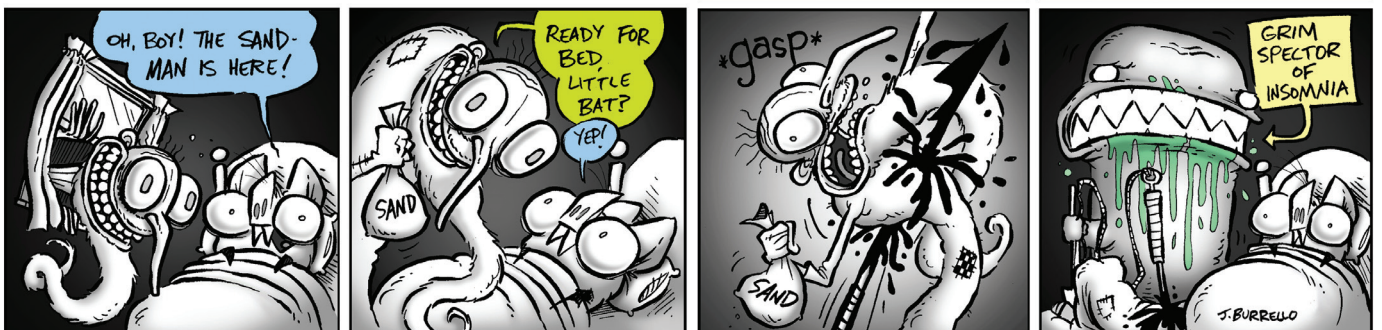
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The Race Issue

GRAPHIC GLORIA FRANÇOIS

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Race, Racism, and Being Racialized

Learning the Painful Truth That This Society Wasn't Made for You

SOPHIA SAHRANE
@OYADIONYSUS

I'm in the metro on my way home from school after my 11 p.m. class finishes, when suddenly I notice two individuals talking very loudly behind me, two white people with dreads, two white people with dreads loudly making racist comments.

I've had a long day, I don't want to hear this, I know it's there, it's everywhere, it's institutionalized. I just don't want to be exposed to it more than I am and have been my whole life. I could snap, I could yell, but I don't, I don't have it in me, I've had a long day. I still engage and maybe I shouldn't, but I have to or feel that I have to. Anyway, I engage with them.

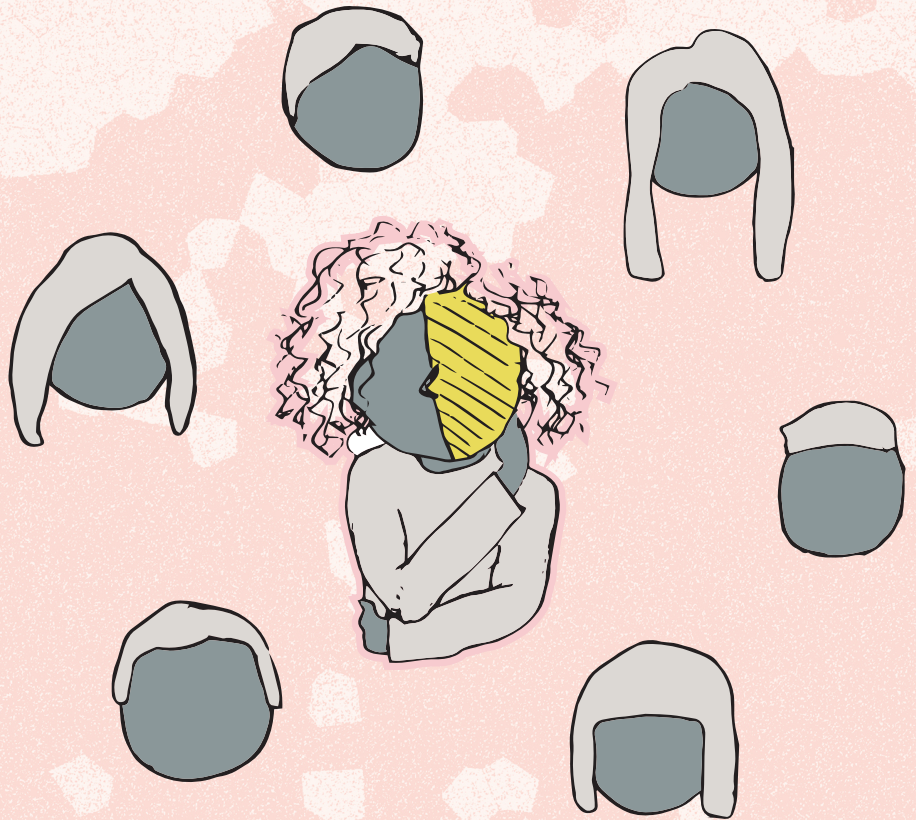
I tell them very calmly that what they are saying is offensive and racist and it offended me. Good, this isn't too awful and my stop is next, I can just walk away from this, go home, make some Moroccan tea, and forget about them.

But no. They decide to insult me: "Esti de négresse!"

They are yelling now, and I can't yell back. I am tired and they're wrong; why are they arguing that they are not racist by using racial slurs after saying racist things?

It's fine, I'm getting out in a second, I can still walk away and drink my tea. No. They decide that I owe them an explanation, to stay and be yelled at. That does not surprise me. I have dealt with and feel multi-generational oppression all the time. My ancestors were owned, insulted, and assaulted by their ancestors. They feel entitled to do the same to me—nothing new.

I'm finally at my stop. Everything's not fine but will be when I won't have to go through this violence. Everyone is watching, listening, no one is doing anything—nothing new. They follow me out. It's not their stop. As I walk away,



*Reviens calisse
de tamul !
C'est toi la raciste.*

ignoring their shouts and insults, they demand I come back and explain: "Reviens calisse de tamul! C'est toi la raciste."

Oh, right. I'm wearing a head wrap. They must be torn between using racial or Islamophobic slurs, and are throwing both around. They're still following me yelling. I threaten to call the cops, knowing that I would never call the cops. The cops are the problem, I don't trust them, they have beaten me, and have been a tool for the repression, oppression, and violence of racialized people. I don't trust them, I fear them.

Some random person asks me if I'm

ok and tells them to stop. They stop, turn around and probably catch the next metro. I guess racist white people respond better to other white people. I get home, I'm drained, I'm done.

This is just one example of the ways I experience my race in my everyday life.

I don't remember the first time I became aware of being racialized.

I remember instances of blatant racism from a very young age, like that time, when I was nine years old in elementary school and needed urgent



medical attention because of my diabetes. But instead of calling an ambulance, the teachers at school called the police.

Like that same time, when I tried to explain what was happening to the police officer, and he looked at me with a mix of disgust and wariness. Or when I tried to leave the office that I was confined in with him and he pushed my small nine-year-old body against the wall three times to keep me from leaving. Or when he told the principal of the school that “[he] knew those kids, they only want attention because they don’t get it at home.” Or when I spent the following few days in a coma because I didn’t get the medical attention I needed.

I don’t remember when I first realized I

had very little agency over my own body. But I do remember specific instances of people (mostly white, mostly male) imposing their will over my body.

Like all the times Beckys grabbed my curly, unruly hair without my permission, like I was on display at a petting zoo. Like all those times I was out with (white) friends and I was singled out and expected to feel thankful for and enjoy having my ass grabbed, being touched, being cat-called, because my racialized body is less holy and worthy of respect than that of a white woman.

The meaning was, for a very long time, that for me, being racialized, that for me, not being white in a predominantly white environment, to be subordinate, lesser, unworthy—that notion only

cemented itself at university.

I have spent four years at Concordia University completing my undergraduate studies in the Faculty of Arts and Science. From the fall of 2013 to the spring of 2017, I have been registered in and attended 34 courses with 34 different professors.

I studied in the School of Community and Public Affairs, which means I studied a mix of sociology, history, anthropology, and political science.

Of those 34 courses, 32 were taught by white professors, and only a handful addressed in some way racialized people and Indigenous people within the course content. Most of my courses, unless reviewing historical “facts,” explored different social issues and their impact in so-called Canadian society.



So how could sociological, anthropological, historical, and political courses focusing on past and present society not address racialized people's place, involvement, and contributions in that society?

How come, in the handful of cases where racialized people, race or racism were mentioned, they were analyzed through the lens of white writers and thinkers?

I do remember in great detail the moment I realized the uneasy, uncomfortable, and harmful feeling I had existing in this institution, as the daughter of African-Muslim immigrants, was because this university, like all universities in so-called Canada and other predominantly white countries, was not made for me.

It was not intended to welcome me, my history, my realities, and my identity the same way it was built to cater to white people, their needs, their stories and their voices.

Academia in western countries is inherently white-washed and over-represents the dominant white side of history and writers, actively devaluing racially marginalized voices and their contributions and existence in society. I was hurt by this realization and still am because this is not a singular situation which was bound to pass once I left university.

This is institutionalized racism. The university is both a way in which it manifests itself and a tool it uses to enforce and perpetuate itself. My university experience was not the start or

the end of it, it was just another way in which I experienced my race.

This—institutionalized racism—is how and why Black, Indigenous, and people of colour have been forcefully put in a situation of subordination; it is how and why Black bodies are policed and criminalized. It is both the cause and the tool that ensures Black women are more likely to experience sexual assault and significantly less likely to report it, and why Black people are disproportionately killed by the police.

This is why I was never taught there were slaves in so-called Canada; this is how and why our existence has been erased, is erased; this is why my body is less holy, less deserving of respect.

This is why the cops are called when I need medical attention; this is why unnecessary force is used against my nine-year-old body seeking help.

This is why I can't go home after my 11 p.m. class without being subjected to racist slurs, without being followed, without being scared.

That is what racism is, as author Toni Morrison puts it; it is a distraction, it keeps me from doing simple things simply, from living without my existence being questioned, without my culture being stolen, without my people being killed.

My experience as a racialized person in so-called Canada and more specifically at this university is one of institutionalized racism. It is a product of the social construct—race—created by and to preserve the dominance of white supremacy.

These experiences are personal to me, but are not particular or exclusive to me. I do not claim authority over all the ways in which racialized people experience racism, however I know my stories will be familiar to the Black, Indigenous, and people of colour with whom I share these struggles.

That is because these stories are everywhere; that is because the fact that racism is institutionalized means that it seeps through every part of life and society. Just like these stories are braided into my everyday, racism is braided into the intricate fibers of my life.

Mais le racismisme au Québec, ça n'existe pas. ☐

Notes on Diversity

CHELSEY MONIE

Being a student at Concordia has been a tiring and demoralizing experience for me. I am either tokenized in the classroom, or made invisible. Some days I am the “exotic” Black girl who represents the assumed homogenous Black experience, and other days I am left invisible while my peers say the N-word with a disturbing ease. In the fall of 2017, in my fifth semester, I decided to start speaking up and using my voice in class. As a result of this, I started to email my professors to alert them of my presence, and their complacency in a culture that erases bodies like mine.

These emails resulted in very little progress, and more stress. The replies

often began, “Dear Chelsy,” followed by several lines that refused to address my point. One particular professor thought it would be helpful to spell out multiple variations of the N-word in her email. It was not.

Another reply was “surprised” to read my experience, as if my story was fictional rather than real. I went as far as scheduling meetings with some recipients of my emails. In one particular meeting, I was advised to continue raising my voice.

“Keep raising your voice! Keep calling out your professors, and keep sending emails!” she chanted rhythmically.

My question is, when will I no longer have to raise my voice in order to be heard?

(no subject)

1 message

Hello,

Attached are some of my notes on [REDACTED]. I still have a lot to say, and would appreciate speaking to someone about my experiences..

Chelsy Monie

Notes on Diversity

When I first walked into [REDACTED], I expected to learn in an environment where I would be comfortable to engage. I was even more excited by the fact that there were four Black women in the class, myself included—the highest number of Black women I had ever witnessed in one classroom in my three years at this institution.

For the first few weeks, this was my favorite class! I kept up with the readings, aced the weekly quizzes, and tolerated the lack of student engagement. However, I soon found out that the course was entirely about a “diversity” that I could not apply to my world.

For the majority of the semester, we discussed Protestantism, Catholicism, Quebec tolerance, and Ireland. The professor, [REDACTED], grew up in [REDACTED] and digressed a lot, speaking about himself and his family. To make it worse, he also started to use very problematic and insensitive language. Throughout the semester, he has said the following, and more that I either did not witness because I began to skip class, or did not pay attention to because when I did show up to class, I was numb:

“Black men do not have role models because they grow up without fathers. White men are different because they grow up with fathers.”

and insensitive language. Throughout the semester, he has said the following: "Either you did not witness because I began to skip class, or did not pay attention to because when I did show up to class, I was numb."

"Black men do not have role models because they grow up without fathers. White men are different because they grow up with fathers."

"Young Black men who look like they just walked out of a hip hop video are buying into their own stereotype."

"Mohawk people might wear Aboriginal headdresses, but it's not true to their culture. Even if they tell you it is, it's not."

"Halal and Kosher are the same thing."

Even the assigned readings were problematic. In the last book that we read—written by a friend of his who also happens to be white—the author argued that race is not important, even going as far as to say "Dear Friend, I am Black."

The problem with comments like these is highly contextual. We live in a world ridden with racism. For a white man to stand at the front of a class and say such comments is painful and erasing. This professor and his author friend are clearly in a position of privilege that allows them to make such crude comments.

To push this even further, they did not acknowledge that privilege.

They also neglected to contextualize the systems and institutions that are at the source of such comments. For instance, many Black men in the United States (this is not a global trend, Black experiences are not unipolar) may not grow up with fathers because Black people make up 13 per cent of the US population and 40 per cent of the incarcerated population. One out of 15 Black men are incarcerated, while one out of 106 white men are incarcerated. The numbers go on and on for sectors like education, health care, drug use, police brutality, and poverty. Clearly, Black men do not "grow up without fathers" by choice.

I can write page after page about the effects of institutionalized racism on minorities, and how much I was triggered in this class, but I can also simply say that two of the Black girls dropped out in the middle of the semester. The only reason that I did not follow suit is because I am an international student, and my classes cost a lot of money. Instead, I stopped going to class, and that reflected in my grade.

The professor was kind and accommodating enough to let me re-do two assignments in order to salvage a good grade. But my grades would not have suffered if the class was taught well in the first place. I take lots of pride in my grades and academic performance; I am a good student. This class almost created a scar on my permanent record, which would have had lasting effects in the rest of my academic career, in terms of grad school applications.

It is up to Concordia to monitor the people that it hires. It is not up to me to make sure that professors and faculty are not triggering and harmful. Instead, it's this institution's job to make sure that it is providing students with an education in a safe environment. One where I do not have to worry about problematic professors, who trigger and erase my existence, being protected by tenure or unions.

Two years ago, I was invited to minor in the [REDACTED] because of my good grades. I find it ironic that it is this same school that harmed me academically and personally.

- Chelsy Monie

--

[REDACTED]

1 message

To:

Hi [REDACTED]

Today in class, [REDACTED] said the N-word while reading a passage from the text in order to state her point. Following that comment, I let it be known that I do not feel comfortable with anyone who is not Black saying that word. [REDACTED] then apologized and said that she did not know whether to read the quote and say "N-word" or just not say that word at all. I then replied, and ended all dialogue, by saying that she should assume that the whole class has read the text and not say the word at all. Leaving out a single word when speaking a quote does not render the quote completely unusable, especially when that word is packed with hate, trauma and centuries of inhumanity.

I was upset, uncomfortable, and triggered precisely because she said that word. There is no context in which I would be comfortable with a white person saying any variation of the N-word. I understand that it is in the text, and it is in many places in our lives. We all interact with this word, but as a Black person I interact with it very, very differently. I don't see a possible situation where a white person in 2017 would use such a word and then have an explained context. My response was simply to let it be known that we must be careful how we use such words and in what company. This is not to say that I am comfortable with people using the word when I am not around, but there is not much I can do about situations like those. I deliberately did not challenge or start a dialogue because I firmly believe that there is nothing to be challenged. The word is poison, and the use of it is jarring.

I have come into contact with this word in very many instances in my three years at Concordia, and from many different mouths. Today is the first time that I have ever spoken up to someone who used the term. I am happy that I spoke up, and I hope that I find the strength to continue doing so. However, it was very scary and frightening, especially with me sitting at the front of the class. At this point, I looked to you as the professor in hopes that you would make a comment. You didn't, and I felt isolated. In all honesty, today was not an easy class. I was the only Black person in the room, having to deal with this for the first time in my life. Even writing this email is not easy. When I was reading the text last night and came across that particular passage, I felt uncomfortable. I am well aware of the importance of contextualizing texts, and I interact with emotionally draining texts on a daily

I don't think that [REDACTED] had any ill intentions, but I also do not have the energy to worry about [REDACTED] intentions. It was a mistake, but it was a mistake that she learned from because I spoke up. I spend too much energy considering the viewpoints, experiences and feelings of people that harm me. I would say this is something that a lot of minorities do. However, in order to be progressive and care for ourselves and others, we need to step our feet down and draw a clear line. Today [REDACTED] forced me to do exactly that.

This is not something that I look forward to discussing—I don't think I am emotionally able to endure another conversation about today's incident. As university students, we all know that words have power. But we cannot keep hiding behind academia and using such poisonous words in the name of scholarship. I am not suggesting that we erase histories and act as if comments like these never existed. What I am saying is that we do not benefit from using such words. I personally do not want to imagine my child sitting in a classroom in 30 years, and someone says the N-word because they are reading out a quote from 2017. In thinking about how we engage with language, I think it is very important for us to keep in mind the frequency in which we use words that we should not be using.

This class has been a very interesting one this semester because it is the first

and someone says the N-word because I think it is very important for us to keep in mind the frequency in which we use words that we should not be using.

This class has been a very interesting one this semester because it is the first cultural class where my Blackness did not become a topic of discussion. As a prof, I want to let you know that I enter every one of my classes as a Black woman, and I know that when the topic of blackness comes up, I will be the token magically assigned to that class to speak on behalf of all Black people. This has been my life for three years, and this will be my life for many more. It is draining and I am tired. In this class I have been observing and engaging with [REDACTED] as much as I can because our experiences intersect on many levels. It is truly difficult being the representative of an entire race of people everyday and in every class.

I did not mean to write such a long email, but I also want to let you know that what happened today did not happen in a vacuum.

Thank you for this course! It has impacted the way that I navigate and view this land. I have truly learned a lot, and I will take this knowledge forward in my work as an activist. I am really interested in your interview with the South African woman that you mentioned today. I hope that goes as planned!

Best Regards,

Chelsy

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

1 message

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Hello Professors,

My name is Chelsy Monie and I am a third year undergraduate Art History student here at Concordia. This week in one of my [REDACTED] classes, we had a guest artist come in and facilitate a zine making workshop. I chose to make a zine critiquing the way artwork from Africa is discussed and taught in the Art History department here. I think that this is a field where there is a lot of space for improvement, and I would like to start some sort of discourse about this.

Attached below is my zine. Though the zine is quite short, it speaks volumes about how we view Africa as a village—a primitive place of people using raw tools—instead of a continent that is replete with cosmopolitan cities and technological devices.

I would like to inquire about how I, as a student, can begin this kind of discourse, and perhaps have a talk with someone in the department. Fundamentally, my goal is to bring attention to my professors about the lack of representation that people like me experience in this program. I have enjoyed the majority of my classes so far, but I also believe that I deserve more!

Thank you,

Chelsy Monie

[REDACTED]

"Look at Me, Talk to Me"

BY ANNAYA STEWART
@ANNAYA STEWART

My work focuses on people of colour because the media fails to represent them. I focused specifically on Black women because I am a Black woman. My theme for this project is, "Look at Me, Talk to Me."

The title is easy to understand. Some people tend to ignore the fact that Black people are people as well. They pay attention to stereotypes and judge us rather than getting to know us without any prejudice.

My goal is to use my photography to learn about people. I only know my own culture so I want to learn about other people and their ways of life.

Here are what these women have to say about race.

"Race cannot be ignored. It is always the elephant in the room. As a young Black girl, I believed that I was a good person but I would never describe myself to be a beautiful one.

Not because I was told specifically by someone that I was ugly, but it was rather the lack of girls and women in the media that looked like me and that weren't playing a slave or a crackhead in a movie.

I was living with a deep-rooted insecurity about my skin colour that could not be changed. As I got older I learned to love myself so that I would not have to look for it somewhere else. I know that my skin colour cannot be 'changed' or 'corrected' because my Black skin is perfect.

Being a young Black dark-skinned woman, I have experienced looking in the mirror as a little girl and not liking what I saw. Now, the girl that once didn't like what she saw is the woman that loves every inch of herself and the colour that she possesses. Black is beautiful. We are all beautiful no matter the skin colour. It is up to us to realize it and stand with pride."

—Alivia Lynch, Dawson College Student





“In my opinion, the idea of race being a social construct is simply that: an idea. It was put in place to service the rich and the powerful which is why I also believe that race is a class issue. Meaning that if you are not well-off or a political figure, you won’t get ahead as easily because the system was never meant to benefit you.

That’s why it’s odd to some people when people of colour are proven to be successful because we do not have the advantages that non-people of colour have. We are shown in the media around the world to be less than human when we are all equal simply because we are all human. No ‘race’ of human is better than any other ‘race’ of human.

We are simply different and that’s all.”

—Shakiara Stewart, Dawson College Student



“I feel that race is a man-made concept that was created to divide people. Although we should not be divided, the concept of race cannot be avoided because it has been ingrained into our society. It is important to be educated and talk about race issues so that we each do our parts to overcome this divide and fight against discrimination.”

—Jaya Johan, Concordia University Undergraduate Student

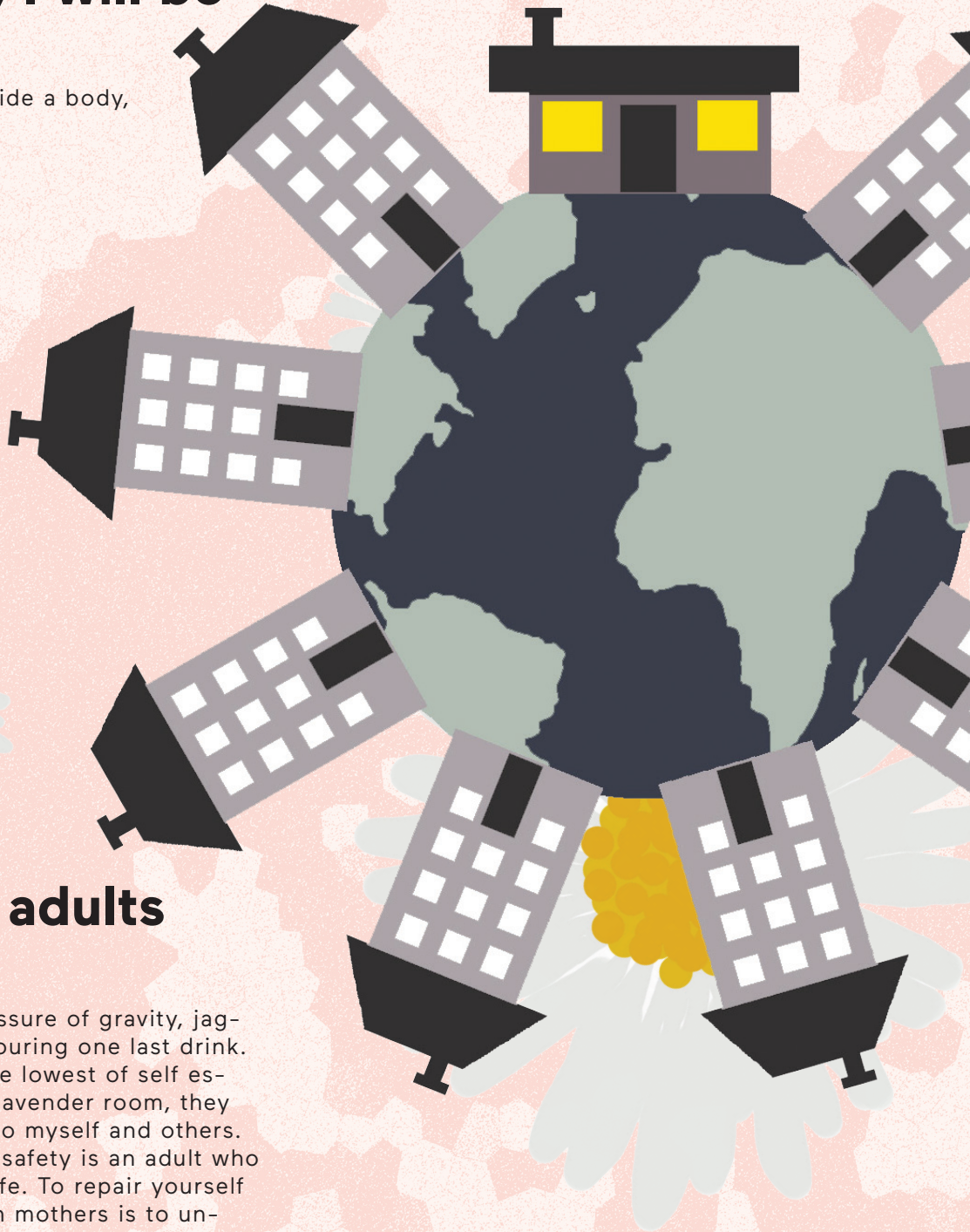
I was, I am, I will be

KĚ XĪN LI

I was a spirit shoved inside a body,
lost inside a home.

I am a wandering spirit
settling in a body
building a home

I will be a spirit
a body
a home
whole. ㄣ



Dangerous adults

KĚ XĪN LI

I shattered from the pressure of gravity, jagged edges of a bottle pouring one last drink. Liquid confidence for the lowest of self esteems. Locked inside a lavender room, they told me I was a danger to myself and others. A child that never knew safety is an adult who must learn how to be safe. To repair yourself from a lineage of broken mothers is to unlearn toxic intimacy.

How do you be soft when you were raised to have tough skin?
How do you process your feelings when you were never allowed to cry?
How do you understand yourself when home was a place your parents escaped so you were destined to runaway? ㄣ

GRAPHIC JENN AEDY



For Multiracial Women, Hair Is a Political Statement

AYSHA WHITE &
MARISSA RAMNANAN

I have a weird ethnic first name (Aysha) and she has a weird ethnic last one (Ramnanan).

We are both mixed race, meaning we won't find ourselves represented in mainstream media. In mostly white environments, such as universities, we become uncomfortably aware of how different we look from people belonging to a single race.

I gravitated towards Marissa, guessing she was also mixed because of her very curly hair.

We bonded realizing we'd both felt awkward when conversations about race came up in our journalism school. We felt like 40 pairs of eyes were fixed on us.

White women are positioned as the pinnacle of feminine beauty, whereas

women of colour are "othered" and are therefore seen as less attractive. Mixed women are the other of the other, not accepted by either group.

We live in a racist, patriarchal, capitalist society that creates and profits off of women's physical insecurities. In this context, a woman's value is based on her appearance, and the degree to which she conforms to Eurocentric beauty standards.

Many women want to change something about their appearance, but the qualities women of colour dislike about themselves necessitate a change in DNA.

Or, corrosive creams that bleach your skin, dramatic cosmetic surgery to widen your eyes, shaving your jawbones down to make your face look smaller, relaxers that burn your scalp and break your hair.

Women of colour are forced to play respectability politics, which includes altering their appearance.

The way in which a woman of colour chooses to present her appearance is either an act of resistance or submission.

White women have the privilege of not noticing or caring as much about what they look like, in a way that women of colour simply don't.

The most glaring example of how Marissa and I don't fit into what is considered "beautiful" is having curly hair, which doesn't conform to Eurocentric standards of beauty.

Straight blonde hair is the respectable standard, in contrast to curly-haired women with darker features, a symbol of hypersexualisation. However that doesn't apply when a straight-haired woman curls her hair. Instead, it's seen as a simple and pleasing change of appearance.

When we straighten our hair people ask us if we are Italian. It's not a question that either of us receives otherwise. This demonstrates that curly hair is seen as an "ethnic" quality. Society as a whole does not



put much thought into why caucasian women are deemed more beautiful than racialized women; it's just a reality. A reality that we, as racialized women, are all too familiar with.

MARISSA

I am of mixed race.

My mother is part Bajan and part English, and my father is Trinidadian, of Indian descent.

My skin is golden brown. I have tight curls and brown eyes.

Adorning myself with the skin of the othered is something I do every time I look in the mirror. Eurocentric beauty standards are ingrained in Western society, and are an integral part of systemic racism. This is a segment of the West's psyche—no matter what race you come from, the lighter the better. This is called colourism, and it is rampant worldwide.

People think I'm "light skin," which is said to be privileged in the Black community. Historically, lighter skinned folk worked as house servants rather than out on the fields. These half-Black, half-white servants, called Mulattos stemming from the latin word for mule, were the offspring of white masters and African slaves, and reportedly received better treatment.

In present time, lighter skinned Black folk are often seen as privileged—the closer one is to having caucasian features, the more likely to be accepted by social institutions.

I also get mistaken for an afro-latina, or middle-eastern because of my last name. My ambiguity seems to be a game to some people. Something people constantly ask me about, even upon first meeting. I get it virtually everywhere I go.

We do not have con-

tact with my grandfather's family on my mother's side, so growing up looking Black with no Black family was a struggle.

My mother perms and straightens her hair—she has been doing so for years. She encouraged me to do so as well, but something inside me decided against it.

I've kept my hair natural for most of my life, except I hardly ever wear it out. I always have it in a braid, a bun, or up in a ponytail. This act of constantly trying to make myself smaller, more manageable, more acceptable screams volumes of the effects Eurocentric beauty standards have on racialized people.

Until my last year of CEGEP, I would only

get compliments on my hair whenever I straightened it. I was told I "should wear it that way more often," and I "look beautiful like that." It was detrimental to my journey, so now I rarely ever do it.

I have some family on my mother's side whose Blackness is so minute they

On the left is Marissa,
on the right, Aysha.

PHOTO ELISA BARBIER



have blonde hair and clear blue eyes. White-passing. So, basically white, with all the privilege that comes with it. And the ignorance.

I have people in my own family whose skin crawls when they think to introduce us, the literal Black sheep of the family, to their purebred Italian side.

So we haven't met them yet, and probably never will. We don't get invited to Christmas dinner anymore, because their newfound relationship with the inlaws unearthed their unspoken shame of their Blackness. Of my Blackness. Of me.

On my Indian side I get a similar treatment. I remember overhearing a conversation with an elder in the family, asking if I still looked like a negro's child. My hair being more unruly than my brother's, thus making me look more Black than him.

Even if you are from a minority race or religion, that does not exempt you from racist thoughts or predispositions. Having people of a minority race in your family does not give you any exemption from it either.

AYSHA

I am seven and everyone's parents are in our first grade classroom, so we can show them what we've learned this year.

My mother has curly black hair. It's imposing and impossible not to notice.

She came from work, wearing a red skirt suit. You can see the gold hoops glinting through her hair.

The other mothers don't have to work. They're wearing pastel sweaters and slacks. They have tasteful pearls and short ashy blonde hair as a rule.

Suddenly I'm aware of how different she is. And how I, a part of her, must be the same.

My mother is Pakistani and my father is Irish. I have pale olive-toned skin. My eyes are dark and hooded.

I benefit from white-passing privilege but I believed, as a child, that it would be impossible for a woman who looked like me to be as beautiful as a blue-eyed blonde.

I've oscillated between wanting to appear brown or white. During the first part of high school, I lightened and

straightened my hair. For the remainder I wore it curly; I became obsessed with self tanner and giant hoops.

I've had a succession of blonde best friends. I'm always cast as the bitchy brunette in contrast to the bubbly blonde, regardless of our actual personalities.

Being mixed race has made me uncomfortably conscious of my appearance.

I look like a brown Barbie, identifiable as exotic but palatable enough for a suburban shopper to toss in their cart.

I have a giant mass of dark, curly hair. White women regularly ask me "how" I brush it. White men regularly tell me it would look "better" if I straightened it. Both like to touch it without asking.

If you see "curls" on the red carpet, they've probably been created with heat styling tools on straight hair. Magazine articles claiming to instruct the reader on curly hair care include pictures of those same "curls."

Before hair straightening irons were invented, women used household irons to smooth undesirable curls into submission.

I remember being eight years old, lying stiffly on the floor at my maternal grandparents' house as my older cousin passed the iron over my hair, spread out, half curly, half straightened.

I remember my body tensing as she reached roots, especially the spots near my ears.

And then there was a sizzling sound. She burned my ear. But we kept going. There was an ugly, painful, yellow blister the next day but I didn't care because my beautiful new hair hid it from sight.

My paternal grandparents are divorced. Through my Norwegian step-grandmother, I have four older, blonder step-cousins.

Three of them are girls, whose names all start with S. Growing up, I was envious of them. They were often complimented for their blonde hair and blue eyes.

I was bothered that they looked more like my grandfather than I did.

I remember Christmas when I was six. I was so excited to receive the same present as them. It was a "big girl" present: a talking, eating, cooing baby doll.

At first, I felt included and excited to feed the little baby who I called

Annabel—a non-weird, non-ethnic, non-Aysha name.

As I watched my cousins play with their dolls a prickly feeling started to run up my arms.

These dolls looked exactly like my cousins, with their round blue eyes and silky blonde hair. I felt as though I wasn't supposed to be there, that I was wrong, and yucky.

I thought that if the way I looked was right, or even okay there might be a doll confirming that to me, as the other Annabels confirmed that to my cousins.

That was the first time I can recall experiencing a feeling that would follow me through my life: being an ugly brown duckling surrounded by pristine blonde swans. □

"The way in which a woman of colour chooses to present her appearance is either an act of resistance or submission."

Be I a Lily or a Rose

RHONDA CHUNG

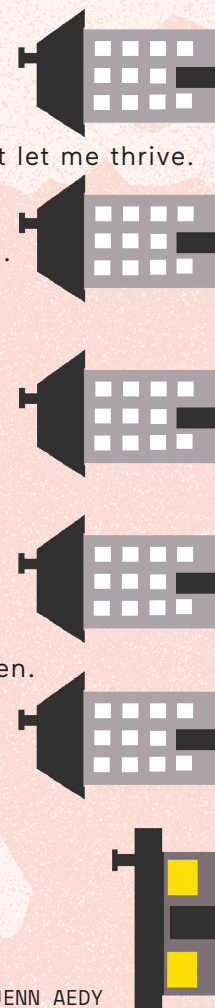
I belong to this earth.
I'm tethered to this ground.
I've grown an impressive network of roots here, but you won't let me grow—you don't let me thrive.
You keep trying to cut off my roots with: Where are you from?

Despite my seeds having been sewn here, your question tells me that I do not belong.
How can a plant not belong to the soil that it was grown in?
Be I a lily or a rose, or a hybrid not often seen in your garden,
It's not the hue of the petals that binds one to the soil.

I grew from your earth.
I am your product.
Your environment raised me.
When I tilled the land locomoting towards my wants and needs,
When I searched for nutrients to foster my development,
When I found other photosynthesizing friends,
I flourished.
The soil that I had cultivated allowed me to bloom.
If I cannot yield fruit nor flower, it is because the soil you provided me with was barren.
Because I am nothing if not persistent.

Yet, you will say that I am not your product.
You will insist on knowing my provenance, despite you living on unceded ground.
You will demand a taxonomic rank of my genus.
Despite knowing that:
Blades of grass don't grow yards away from each other,
They cluster together,
Because they thrive best as a group;
You will single me out. ☒

GRAPHIC JENN AEDY



THE LINK CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Feb. 8, @7:30 pm

CJLO Presents: *The Link* magazine launch party. With panelists Chelsy Monie, Ke Xīn Lǐ, and Sophia Sahrane; and musicians Nazim, RoniCea, and Edwin Raphael.
La Sala Rossa, 4848 St. Laurent Blvd.

Feb. 16, @4 pm

Workshop: Start Your Own Podcast. With award-winning independent journalist Aaron Lakoff.
The Link office, H-649, 1455 de Maissonneuve Blvd. W.

March 2, @4 pm

Workshop: Know Your Rights as a Freelancer. With an expert from the Canadian Freelancers' Union!
The Link office, H-649, 1455 de Maissonneuve Blvd. W.

The Tone Is Hush

Our Society Can't Simply Cower Away From Discussing Racism

ANAS BOUSLIKHANE

Many problematic and dangerous events have recently taken place regarding migration and xenophobia at home and abroad. They require our careful attention.

At the provincial level, the same government that bans hijabs and burkas called for a consultation on systemic racism. Demonstrations against racism have also multiplied and heinous acts and discourse are rising at an alarming rate. We need to review these developments in the hopes of better addressing the situation and prospects of progress at hand.

WHAT'S GOING ON?

It is arguable that a positive turn is taking place in the general understanding of urgency in addressing the toxic social dynamics in Quebec and Canada. But it's clear that the necessary dialogues around racism and xenophobia are hindered by a lack of genuine concern in the matter. They are wholly prevented by cultural norms that devalue the uncomfortable conversations that should be more broadly taking place throughout society.

Not too long ago, the Parti Québécois proposed its Charter of Values. The Liberal Party called for, and subsequently cancelled last fall, the consultation on systemic racism, and at the same time passed the Islamophobic face-covering ban Bill-62. A normalization of scapegoating narratives is taking place in popular discourse, where major political parties are openly blaming of our social malaise on refugee claimants, people of colour, Muslim people, and migrant communities.

We are witness to a concretization of racist populism: the rise of European far-right groups and parties, U.S. President Donald Trump's election and his administration have reinforced systemic discrimination and barriers, and bol-

ster each other's rhetoric and concrete power. The two largest far-right demonstrations in Quebec since the 1930s took place last year in Quebec City.

A lot is happening before our eyes, but such is the rhythm of times we live in.

Jan. 29 marked the first anniversary of the tragic mosque shooting in Quebec City. A 27-year-old Quebecer known for following far-right groups and admiring far-right politicians took it upon himself to act on a well-nourished racist ideology, killing six innocent people and injuring 19.

With all of these terrifying events taking place, can we make space for a genuine discussion that addresses these issues' underlying causes?

How is it that such a xenophobic climate is unfolding, yet we fail to find grounds on which to stand on? We struggle to learn from our past failures and experiences, on which there is great potential to build. In the hopes of progressing and moving forward collectively, is there an appropriate way to have an honest dialogue? Is it possible at all?

When columnists known for their racism continually speak on the defensive, calling other folks this and that, they attempt to drown the conversation before it even starts. When a consultation on systemic racism is called by the same government that bans burkas, there are clear questions as to how such conflicting events could provide any basis for a healthy conversation—the contradictions that underpin public discourse need to be exposed before an honest debate can take place.

When folks and members of civil society choose to remain silent because it is uncomfortable to have such conversations, then—with all these factors in mind—we, as a society, have successfully hushed the central dialogue.

FINDING THE APPROPRIATE TONE

There is a continuous thread line in modern Western culture that works by confining what makes us uncomfortable to the margins of the public debate in the hopes of ultimately avoiding difficult conversations.

An acceptable modern debate requires an acceptable modern tone, a tone that should never make anyone uncomfortable or create discontent, nor should it question foundational causes that brought us to the very situation we find ourselves in today. If this tone deviates from what is socially acceptable, then afflicted voices cannot speak and an honest conversation cannot take place.

There are all too many cases of injustice and tragedy that cannot be expressed in words. There are all too many cases of harm that continue to occur because they cannot be named. Should they be identified, they are far too often dismissed because the very way in which they were brought forth was not considered acceptable in tone. This mode of adequate social participation in the public sphere is one that requires status, income, privilege, and all such social advantages that people in distress simply do not have.

If silence and complacency dictate the tone of the conversation because we are worried about making people uncomfortable, then critical views cannot be expressed, crucial voices cannot be heard, and, as a whole, a lot will simply be omitted or deemed unacceptable in public debate. What is mostly stalling the conversation is not the will nor the evidence brought forward, but rather it is the fixation on civility as the only adequate mode of engagement. If we wish to address these issues more seriously and con-

cretely, we need to acknowledge, and accept that there will inevitably be discomfort.

LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

If there are limitations preventing us from discussing these issues, there are indeed ways to transcend these boundaries by acknowledging that processes of change come accompanied with discomfort.

The current context of social change and movements that attempt to break

sociopolitical stigmas, such as the movement against sexual assault, demonstrate that social discomfort can be part of tangible positive change. It only seems healthy that to see possible progress is to reconsider our priorities. That is, if we acknowledge that part of the process of social change might cause negative reactions, and that conveying a critical disruptive message can change a certain state of affairs, we also have to recognize the value of speaking unhindered by tone. Discomfort is part of the process.

What needs to be clear is that what is divisive about the current social context is not the act of denouncing harmful ideologies, but rather the choice to be silent and complacent about said ideologies. To frame an honest social debate about these issues, it is crucial to define it not as a conflict between those who are upset and those who stay civil, but rather to expose racism as a social ill that requires explicit denunciation and responsible, timely and active consideration by society as a whole.

Moving forward with these issues, we can then envision a healthy conversation that addresses the root causes of social conditions, and engage in an honest, multifaceted far-reaching dialogue as a society. ▣

"If this tone deviates from what is socially acceptable, then afflicted voices cannot speak and an honest conversation cannot take place."

GRAPHIC PAULINA DOMÍNGUEZ

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Corrections: In the previous issue of The Link, the article "No Refuge" stated an incorrect figure for the sample size used by Naffi in her research. It also stated that Naffi's choice to leave Lebanon was an "easy choice" for her to make. That section has been corrected, and more detail has been included to explain why Naffi chose to leave Lebanon. The Link regrets these errors.

The Link acknowledges our location on unceded Indigenous land. The Kanien'kehá:ka Nation is recognized as the custodians of these lands and waters. Tiohtiá:ke is historically known as a gathering place for many First Nations.

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**LES JEUDIS
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LE MEILLEUR DU MILLÉNAIRE

**LES WEEK-ENDS
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