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# THE McGill Daily

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Two white men screaming at each other since 1911

ART  
SUPPLEMENT  
INSIDE

## Resisting Islamophobia

A week of vigils and protests in Montreal

PAGES 5, 9 & 19



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### FEB. 24: Student Journalists Panel

6:00 p.m., Details TBA.

Check our website for details:  
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## 3 NEWS

Black History Month launches

"Resist Trump" discusses rise of the far-right

Protesters blockade U.S. consulate

Thousands gather for vigil

Transphobic event disrupted by protesters

## 7 COMMENTARY

Student activists don't welcome transphobia

Sexual assault shouldn't be a feminist slogan

Canadians need to self-reflect during times of violence

## 10 SPORTS

In conversation with a Paralympian

## ART SUPPLEMENT

## 11 FEATURES

Doing activism while mentally ill in the time of Trump

## 14 SCI+TECH

To vax, or not to vax

## 16 CULTURE

A race and class analysis in Superior Donuts

August: Osage County theatre review

Concordia's summer resident artists discuss their work

Sensory ethnography film review

## 19 EDITORIAL

We cannot fight oppression with neutrality

## 20 COMPENDIUM!

Goodbye Second Cup, hello screaming men

# Ceremony explores erasure

## McGill launches institutionalized Black History Month

**NORA MCCREADY**  
The McGill Daily

On Wednesday February 1, McGill's Social Equity and Diversity Education (SEDE) Office hosted the opening ceremony of the first institutionalized Black History Month at McGill. The ceremony, held in the Thomson House Ballroom, included numerous speakers and performances, as well as a panel discussion concerning the issue of Black erasure.

Shanice Yarde, one of the organizers, spoke about the purpose of the event and the message of McGill's celebration of Black History Month.

"I'm really excited to create space for [...] more diverse voices. Our theme is Black excellence, so we're really going to be celebrating that and all of its diversity," she said.

She went on to underscore the idea that Black history does not only belong to the month of February: it is a permanent reality.

The panel discussion was the main focus of the evening. The panelists included Rachel Zellars, a PhD candidate with our Department of Integrated Studies in Education, Dorothy Williams, a historian and writer who specializes in Black Canadian history, Uchenna Edeh, a member of the Black community in Montreal, and Kapois Lamort, a historian, writer, and CEO and founder of Production Noire.

Throughout the discussion, audience members asked questions and shared their own experiences.

The discussion was moderated by Nènè Konaté, an organizer of Black Studies at Concordia, who began with a series of questions on the subject of erasure.

"What do we select to remember?" she asked. "What do we select to forget? Who gets erased in the process? And who gets to create history and who is featured in history?"

Lamort began the discussion by talking about his book.

"My work is called *Les Boss du Québec*. It's the first book about Hip Hop history in Québec [...] a history that goes back to the end of the 1970s," he said. "[The book] is not only about hip hop and rap, but it's also about the history of the Black youth [in Québec]."

Lamort emphasized the fact that his book is the only work of its kind, demonstrating the lack of information available and the reality of erasure.

Williams continued on this theme of lack of information by discussing her own work, which is also unique in its subject matter.



An interactive poster at the panel.

**NORA MCCREADY** | The McGill Daily

"I've written the only books that exist right now on the chronology of the Black history in Montreal; [...] I go back to the early days of slavery," said Williams. "For many people at the time the book was written, it was quite a shock to find out that [...] we did have slavery in Montreal."

"Slavery ended in 1834 [in Québec]," she continued. In 1841 came "the publication of a book by François Garneau. [He] is considered the father of Québec history [...]. Do you know what he said in his book? Slavery never existed in Québec."

Williams explained that Garneau continued to repeat this assertion through three editions of the book. His son corrected it after Garneau's death, but, "it was too late. The myth had been perpetuated. The narrative was set because Québécois were told that history never existed. The erasure was complete."

She also explained why she has focused on Black history.

"I've always written out of the need to speak about me being here. It kind of goes back [...] to an experience I had in high school," she said. "One day in history class I asked my history teacher 'How come you didn't teach about slavery?' And his response to me, in front of the class, was 'You don't have a history.'"

"People ask me when they read my first book [...] 'how come there's more footnotes than there is text?'" Williams continued. "And I say, 'Because I wanted to prove that I had a history.'"

Williams further spoke about how she always remembered her identity as a Black Canadian woman. In contrast, Edeh spoke about his personal experience

as a young child struggling with questions of identity.

"I grew up with a nagging question in my mind as a young boy, that is just, 'Who am I?'"

"To this day I'm still asked, 'Where are you from?' I'm born in this city but I'm still asked 'Where are you from?' And so there's always a sense of not being or not knowing exactly where you stand. The danger of that erasure, when our history is erased on the outside, and you don't have a strong sense of who you are, or a strong sense of self, it leads to that void and [...] something has to fill that void for you to identify with. So it could be something very positive. But as we know it can also be filled with something negative."

But he explained that becoming aware of his own history and identity has given him confidence.

"My name is Uchenna Edeh, it's a Nigerian name, an Igbo name," he said. "When I was very young and [people] couldn't pronounce my name I would let them call me a nickname. But when you have a sense of who you are and a sense of history it was like, 'No, my name is Uchenna.' [...] And if [someone said] 'Oh I can't pronounce Uchenna, that's too hard,' I'm like, 'That's ok. You'll learn.'"

Zellars also touched on the issue of erasure and how it affects young Black people struggling to understand themselves.

"My son's experience living on the Plateau in the French system took my research in a radically different direction. When he was in kindergarten and then it became very apparent in first grade and second grade, he started [...] mani-

festing symptoms of self-hatred. It really reared ahead when he was about seven-and-a-half years old and he started talking about killing himself," she said.

"What I discovered very quickly was it came from the pressures in many different capacities of being the only Black child in a Plateau school in a French system that just did not see him or even have space to acknowledge this kind of Black child," Zellars explained. "I ended up taking my children out of school for a year."

Following along the same theme, Williams touched on the way that Blackness is constantly othered. She noted that currently Canadian schools follow the Ministry of Education's curriculum, but that teachers can bring other resources into the classroom. Such resources include the teaching kit that she has developed to help schools integrate Black Canadian history into the curriculum.

She stressed the importance of normalizing Black experience in order to canonize the existence of Black Canadians.

"One of the ways we're trying to inculcate the kit, to help teachers to teach it, is to take it away from the exotic [...]. We're telling the stories of the Black *coureurs de bois*, the fur traders. We're saying you don't have to make a special class to talk about Black *coureurs de bois*. When you're talking about the *coureurs de bois* you can mention that there were Blacks [...]. You can make the conversation about otherness without it being onerous. It then becomes part of the canon because it becomes normalized."



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# ‘Resist Trump’ fears normalizing far right

## Attendees discuss need for mobilization

RYAN CANON  
The McGill Daily

On Wednesday February 1, about one hundred people gathered in the Henry F. Hall building at Concordia University to discuss how to resist the new Trump administration. The meeting, organized in part by the group Resist Trump and the Far Right Network and hosted by Quebec Public Interest Research Group (QPIRG) Concordia, was aimed at introducing new members to the anti-Trump movement that they have been promoting.

The meeting aimed to “provide folks with an opportunity to engage themselves in our various subgroups, including an action/demo committee, mobilizing to disrupt Trump’s eventual visit to Ottawa, a popular education group to organize workshops and events, as well as a network building and communication committee,” according to the event’s Facebook page.

“Let’s turn our collective anger into action by working together to build short and long term plans to resist the racism, sexism and far-right politics that Donald Trump represents,” it concluded.

“Resist Trump” brands itself as a grassroots organization that seeks to organize activities to resist and disrupt the Trump administration’s agenda, whether by protesting in solidarity with Americans or disrupting a Trump visit to Ottawa.

The group is loosely organized, with sections dedicated to organizing action, online activism, and education. They have organized several anti-Trump protests, including one of the larger protests in Montreal on inauguration day, and were part of the reason that President Trump’s planned trip to Ottawa was canceled due to fear of disruptive protests.

In an interview with The Daily, Anas Bouslikhane, who joined Resist Trump shortly after the election, said, “We must view how autonomously, collectively we can respond to the structures that have been against us for so long; so that is the political parties, the big businesses, the big corporations, the oil industry that have been attacking Indigenous people [...], and the legal system. [...] How do we collectively confront this enormous global far-right that is slowly becoming a reality?”

“We can tangibly do these things, we can [...] start conversation, we can tangibly get together like we are doing today [...] and we can [...] go ahead and go to the borders and we can challenge those,” he said.

“You can say no to a wall, you can take down a wall, because nobody gets hurt with that,” Bouslikhane continued. “[Walls] block lives and kill



The ‘Resist Trump’ meeting. RYAN CANON | The McGill Daily

because those mean death sentences to people, whether it’s a physical wall or it’s a signature, so an abstract wall [...]. Those are all borders that we can collectively challenge, resist, and hopefully take down.”

There was a general sense of urgency in the room, as all in attendance voiced both concern and an eagerness to fight back.

“I am incredibly concerned about the [...] global rise of the far right. I think that not enough people talk about far-right extremism; it is an incredibly significant issue, increasingly because of people of people like Donald Trump getting elected to positions of power,” member of “Resist Trump” and event organizer Nicole LeBlanc told The Daily.

“[Donald Trump] is explicitly racist, misogynist, he advocates anti-LGBT policies, he advocates anti-immigrant policies, and has actually enforced many of those, so it is very, very scary.”

Although Trump’s jurisdiction ends at the Canadian border, LeBlanc told The Daily that she believes organizing against Trump in Montreal is still of the utmost importance.

“When a far-right extremist gets elected into a position of power and given a huge national platform, and in Trump’s case, a global platform [...] this agenda and this rhetoric is being increasingly normalized.”

It has only been a little more than two weeks since Donald Trump’s inauguration, but what the Trump administration has done during that time and the resulting impact has been overwhelming to many.

On Friday January 27, Trump signed an executive order that banned U.S. entry for citizens of seven Muslim-majority countries: Iraq, Syria, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, and Yemen. The order also suspended the U.S. refugee program for four months, as well as indefinitely suspended the admission of Syrian refugees.

Since the signing of the executive order, 60,000 visas have been revoked

according to *The Independent*. This move has sparked outrage, both in the U.S. and abroad.

“[Trump] is explicitly racist, misogynist, he advocates anti-LGBT policies, and has actually enforced many of those.”

—Nicole LeBlanc  
Resist Trump member

“We have all been saying for a very long time that the far-right is a problem, and now I believe this is an opportunity to take that discussion into the mainstream. This is not just about Trump, this is about a rhetoric and policies that are intrinsically violent and oppressive, that are being normalized and that are being sort of state-sanctioned, and even our government isn’t taken a firm stance [against that],” LeBlanc continued.

LeBlanc noted that the systemic racism and rhetoric against marginalized people has existed for a long time, but Trump and other far-right leaders’ rhetoric is normalizing it. “Members of marginalized communities would say that this stuff has been normalized for a long time, but it is being normalized to a [...] different degree now.”

When asked what she would like to see happen with regards to Resist Trump, she said she’d like to see “this become a popular mobilization in opposition of the far right, and what I probably hope even more so is to sort of bring some of the ideas of the network in opposition to the far right and critical of capitalism and stuff like that I hope that we can bring more of those ideas into the mainstream.”

# Montrealers gather in solidarity

Speakers at vigil for Quebec City attack highlight inclusivity, tolerance

ELLEN COOLS &  
XAVIER RICHER VIS  
The McGill Daily

On Monday, January 30, thousands of people gathered outside the Parc metro station for a vigil in solidarity with Muslim people in Quebec. The vigil was organized in direct response to the terror attack which had occurred at the Islamic Cultural Center of Quebec City the previous day, in which six men praying in the mosque were killed.

A variety of speakers addressed the crowd, both in English and French. Many had come with signs and candles, and a large group of people gathered on top of a small snow hill stood with a sign that said "Make Racists Afraid Again." Others walked around with their own signs, such as one that said "I'm Muslim, I'm Quebecoise, I'm Human Too #UnitedForPeace."

Vigil speeches touched primarily on inclusivity. One speaker, who did not provide their name, began by saying, "I truly did not expect this. I thought half this crowd would be Muslim [...] but that's not the case."

They then highlighted the need for unity and solidarity, a common theme throughout the night.

"We are one people, and when one of us are hurt in society, all of us get hurt. And that's why we are coming together today, all of us together, [...] to say that an attack against one of us is an attack against all of us," they said. This was met with loud cheers from the crowd.

They emphasized that everyone has a part to play in fighting against racism and Islamophobia, and highlighted the need to make Muslims and other marginalized groups feel included, in the face of events that threaten their communities.

"We must call for the positive contributions of Muslims and minorities in our society to be celebrated and recognized, and it is only then that we will have positive discourse and that we will move away from the types of problems we are seeing today," they said.

One speaker, Abdul, took the time to recognize everyone in the crowd.

"To those who lost someone dear to them, Assalamu Alaikum," he began in French. "To those who this day are between life and death, Assalamu Alaikum. To those Muslims present here today despite the cold and the fear, Assalamu Alaikum. To all our fellow citizens, who took time out of their days to gather with us, Assalamu Alaikum. To those elected officials of Quebec present here, Assalamu Alaikum."

"Dear brothers, sisters, friends, and comrades, we are gathered here today during difficult times, and our message is clear," he said in French. "We are gathered to remind terrorists that you will never divide us [...] to remind those who would profit from our fears, from our worries, those who would condone violence against Muslims, in our places of worship, you will never divide us."

"Dear brothers, sisters, friends, and comrades, Quebecers have congregated today to show that they are united against adversity," he contin-

ued. "They've come together in Chicoutimi, Sherbrooke, Trois-Rivieres, to make clear we condemn violence and hate. Quebecers here in Montreal have come out to remind us that our battle is one to co-exist. [...] Despite our differences, the ideology that will unite us, the doctrine that we live by without hesitation will be one of peace, justice, equality, and liberty."

Similarly, another speaker, who identified herself as a "an anti-racist, feminist, queer, South-Asian Muslim woman," highlighted the importance of Muslim and other marginalized communities' voices.

"I acknowledge [...] the greed and injustice that this land experiences and witnesses on a daily basis, including ongoing systemic oppression against Indigenous and black nations, against migrant or racialized communities, including Muslim communities, and again, queer, trans, women identifying people who are part of these communities," she said, to a loud chorus of cheers.

"I want to say that this injustice stops here and now," she continued. "That systems based on oppression, power and privilege, leading to the tragedy that we are trying to grapple with today must end now, it must."

"I also know that so many of us have been saying this for far too long, including protesting state sanctioned white supremacy and xenophobia, like the racist and misogynist unreasonable Accommodation Commission and the so-called Charter of Values," she went on to say, again receiving loud cheers from the audience.



An attendee at the vigil. CONOR NICKERSON | The McGill Daily

The speaker then invited everyone to "take a moment to reflect on our humanity and to keep holding each other in all of our complexities, lived realities and our identities, to keep holding each other as community, to keep holding each other in space, in words, in art, in conversation, in breath, with deep love, care, and compassion."

"To my family, to my friends, to communities who are living in fear and sadness, let us breathe in resilience and let us breathe out resilience. We will make it through, even through the haze of our tears, in solidarity in our fight for social justice and liberation," she concluded.

This particular speaker seemed to resonate deeply with the crowd. In an interview with The Daily, one attendee, Kasha, noted that this speech was most memorable for her.

"What stood out about her speech simply was that I think she

touched upon all marginalized populations and all marginalized communities and [...] set a message and a precedence of inclusiveness. So I think that whoever you are, wherever you're coming from, if you're here, you felt that you were part of this communal energy," she said.

Other attendees also highlighted the sense of solidarity at the vigil.

When asked how she felt about the event, one attendee, Manaima, said, "I think it's really sad [...] not just for us [Muslims]. It's not just for Muslim people because everybody's going to be sad and everybody's going to be affected by it. I don't know how to explain it but it's very sad for me."

After the speeches ended, several hundred attendees remained in the square chanting slogans such as "Muslimans, bienvenue [Muslims welcome!]" for at least another half hour.

# Protesters gather outside U.S. consulate

Demonstrators speak out against Islamophobia in the U.S. and Canada

MARINA CUPIDO  
The McGill Daily

On Monday January 30, roughly fifty protesters gathered outside the United States Consulate at St. Alexandre and René Lévesque. Carrying signs reading "Immigrants Welcome" and "Open the Borders," and chanting slogans condemning fascism and Islamophobia, the protesters blocked the doors of the building for over an hour.

Meanwhile, more than a dozen police cars had gathered on surrounding streets, with officers surrounding the protesters, and observing them closely. Several news crews were also present on the scene, and, in addition to the surveillance cameras adorning the building, an unseen staff member installed a

portable camera in a window overlooking the consulate doors. Noticing the new camera, several protesters waved or raised middle fingers in its direction.

The demonstration was a direct response to the executive order signed on January 27 by U.S. President Donald Trump, which banned people from seven Muslim-majority countries – Iraq, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen – from entering the U.S. The order also bans Syrian refugees from entering the country indefinitely.

In the following days, the U.S. government faced criticism from across the political spectrum and around the world. Hundreds of people with valid visas found themselves detained at U.S. airports and sometimes denied access to legal counsel, while angry crowds protested outside. On February 3, a fed-

eral judge issued a temporary restraining order blocking the implementation of the executive order on the grounds that it constitutes harmful and unlawful discrimination against Muslim people, according to the BBC. At the time of publication, however, it is unclear how the restraining order will be implemented, or how long it will last.

Khosro Berahmandi, who is personally affected by the executive order and could not travel to the U.S., told The Daily he had come to the consulate "to raise our voice against what's happening right now in the world."

"Every nation [...] has a fear of others," he said, "and we're all responsible for not allowing or promoting this fear. Canada as well has practiced this sort of approach to promote fear, and [some] people from Canada, at the same time, they raise their voice against that."

Protest organizer Bill Van Driel also highlighted Canada's home-grown Islamophobia.

"The demo today is in response to Trump's 'Muslim ban,'" Van Driel told The Daily, "but we're also trying to talk about the ways that Canada is complicit in this. [...] So opening the borders in one of our core demands, but we're also demanding that Canada abandon the 'Safe Third Country' agreement with the United States."

This agreement, signed in 2004, stipulates that individuals seeking refugee status must make a claim for protection in the first country – either the U.S. or Canada – in which they land. As such, many advocacy groups have expressed concern that a Syrian refugee affected by the executive order could conceivably be turned away from seeking asylum in Canada, on

the grounds that the U.S. constitutes a 'safe country.'

"I don't think Canada is that different from the U.S.," said Van Driel. "Both were founded on land theft and genocide against Indigenous nations, and particularly after yesterday's shootings [in Quebec City], obviously we're all thinking about Islamophobia. A lot of the mainstream discourse seems to be focusing on Trump as the cause of it, [...] but at the same time, the 'reasonable accommodation' debate [in Quebec] is going back thirty years at this point. [...] This isn't new, and it's not particular to America."

After roughly an hour and a half, the protesters dispersed peacefully. The consulate had remained open throughout, unlike its Toronto counterpart, which had closed in anticipation of protests.

# Protesters disrupt transphobic talk

## McGill professor Douglas Farrow repeatedly misgenders trans women

SAIMA DESAI  
The McGill Daily

Content warning: transphobia

On Thursday February 2, the Newman Catholic Students' Society of McGill (NCSS) organized a panel at the Newman Centre on the topic of "Gender Mainstreaming and Transgender" – which featured two cisgender panelists speaking on the topic of Catholic faith and transgender issues.

Approximately thirty activists, many of whom identify as trans and are members of either Queer McGill, QPIRG McGill, and/or the Union for Gender Empowerment (UGE), protested the event, holding signs that read "Respect existence or expect resistance" and "We're here, we're queer," and challenging the speakers during their presentations.

The two panellists were Douglas Farrow, a professor of christian thought at McGill and the current Kennedy Smith Chair in Catholic Studies, and Moira McQueen, a professor of moral theology at the University of St. Michael's College in the University of Toronto.

McQueen has previously referred to gender dysphoria as a "condition" – a term no longer used, due to its insinuation of trans identity being a mental or physical illness – and has argued against the use of pre-puberty hormone blockers for transgender youth.

Farrow penned an essay denouncing Canada's Bill C-389, which made crimes committed against people based on their gender identity a hate crime. In it, he wrote that "gender identity and gender expression are not actually positive or constructive additions to the prohibited grounds of discrimination. Rather, they constitute a deliberate attack on one of the existing grounds: sex."

Prior to the event, many community members had voiced their discomfort on the event's Facebook page: "Can you please explain why you're hosting an event about transness featuring two non-trans, and actually highly transphobic, speakers? And literally no trans representation?" asked Lucie Lastinger, a U2 Women's Studies and Anthropology student and a representative of the Union for Gender Empowerment.

"The kind of ideology embodied by this event's speakers rejects the lived experiences of trans people, and enacts violence against trans communities by producing and reinforcing a culture that views trans people as medical and psychological anomalies, instead of real people," wrote Benjamin Oldham, a U2 Linguistics student. "This kind of hateful ideology has no place on McGill's campus."

After concerns voiced on the event's Facebook page, Raphaële Frigon, the outreach coordinator at QPIRG-McGill, Michelle Li, a student from Queer McGill, and

Lastinger met with the executives of the NCSS in the morning before the event.

Though the NCSS was unable to cancel the event, they changed the format of the event to include time for questions from the audience, and later chose to dissociate themselves from the event.

Farrow began his presentation with a quote from the writer G.K. Chesterton: "For the next great heresy is going to be an attack on morality – and especially on sexual morality." He then began to describe the case of Eva Tiamat Medusa, a transgender woman, at which point Lastinger asked, "so why are you using 'he' pronouns?"

When Farrow repeatedly refused to answer the question, multiple protesters continued to request that Farrow use the correct gender pronouns, at which point McQueen joined what had quickly escalated into an argument, saying that "there's no such thing as the wrong pronouns." When the protesters expressed dissent at this statement, McQueen replied "Well, how many pronouns are there on Facebook, to cover everything?"

"You don't have the vocabulary to talk about trans people, and you're acting like an expert," said Frigon.

One member of the audience asked Farrow, "would you please just use 'they' in order to keep them [the protesters] quiet?" to which McQueen responded "No, we don't have to do anything."

"You can either be silent, or you can leave," said Farrow. When protesters continued to ask questions, Farrow retorted, "Okay, so we will wait for the police to arrive and escort you out."

"Are you really that afraid of dialogue? Are you afraid of trans women?" asked Frigon.

After about ten minutes of heated debate, Farrow continued his presentation, with the activists calling out "she" when Farrow repeatedly misgendered multiple trans women as "he."

"Are you really that afraid of dialogue? Are you afraid of trans women?"

—Raphaël Frigon  
Outreach Coordinator  
QPIRG-McGill

Farrow's presentation focused on how what he called "gender ideology" – acknowledging gender and sex as separate – which has made its way into educational systems and human rights legislation. "This is the 'self-indulgent madness' of which Chesterton spoke," he said. "It seems to me that we have seen a profound



The panel at the Newman Center.

SAIMA DESAI | The McGill Daily

attack on objective value in the time in which we live."

His presentation concluded with four points: "gender ideology alienates us from our body; gender ideology alienates us from our natural communities; gender ideology makes all identity a legal fiction; and gender ideology subjects us to tyranny," to which many audience members expressed loud opposition.

McQueen's presentation, which followed, focused on Catholic schools' "dealing" with transgender students. "Many psychiatrists call the 'trans idea' a delusion," she said. "A fixation in our mind that doesn't change is a delusion."

In response to objection from the crowd, she countered "don't mistake 'delusion' as a pejorative term; it's a psychiatric definition."

The Merriam-Webster dictionary's definition of "delusion" is "the act of tricking or deceiving someone. When used in the context of psychiatry, it is "a persistent false psychotic belief regarding the self or persons or objects outside the self that is maintained despite indisputable evidence to the contrary" – both of which are pejorative, and neither of which is accurate to describe trans people.

McQueen spoke about responses to trans minors, expressing resistance towards or outright rejecting the use of puberty blockers or gender-affirmation surgery, saying that "the surgery is ineffectual in the sense that what's created does not work reproductively," to which protesters objected that genitals' sole purpose is not reproduction. Instead, she advocated for the use of "psychotherapy as a treatment for trans identity." One activist retorted, "If you're talking about conversion therapy, that's a form of abuse."

During the half-hour reserved for questions, many activists objected to

the poor scholarship of Farrow and McQueen, counter-referencing studies that supported the use of puberty blockers for transgender youth, and which showed that transgender children supported in their identities show positive mental health.

"If you're talking about conversion therapy, that's a form of abuse."

—Activist at event

Farrow was asked about Jordan Peterson, the notoriously transphobic University of Toronto professor who refuses to use gender-neutral pronouns because he believes there is "no evidence" that non-binary people exist.

He responded: "I reference Peterson's principled – as I see it, and as he sees it – refusal to be told how he must speak the language, and I support him entirely in that. The insistence that I speak a certain kind of language is an insistence that I adopt the ideology that governs that language, and I simply – like him – would refuse to do that."

The event ended with the activists thanking the NCSS for deciding to dissociate from the event.

"I cannot condone their refusal to acquiesce to really basic and simple requests, such as honouring someone's pronouns and not misgendering people – it's just a matter of human decency," a member of the protest, who wished to remain anonymous, told The Daily after the event.

"Obviously, they were not listening to the trans members of the

audience, which leads me to believe that they don't listen to trans people in general."

"While I respect the purpose of this event, and their presenting an alternative perspective – with which I'm familiar, having been raised Catholic and also being trans – I, however, cannot condone bad scholarship in the presentations," he said. "Several times Wikipedia was cited as a source which, as we all know from high school, is not acceptable."

"I cannot condone their refusal to acquiesce to really basic and simple requests, such as honouring someone's pronouns."

—Anonymous

"In an ideal world the event would have been cancelled," Lastinger told The Daily, speaking to the fact that the NCSS did not stop the event from occurring. "Trans people shouldn't be forced to engage in this dialogue; they shouldn't be forced to come to this event and fight for basic respect."

The NCSS executive has asked the UGE, Queer McGill, and QPIRG-McGill to collaborate on an event, to take place in March, featuring a panel of trans people talking about their experiences with Catholicism.

# Resisting transphobia

## Anti-trans panelists are not welcome by students

**BENJAMIN OLDHAM**  
Commentary Writer

*Content warning: transphobia*

On Thursday, February 2, students protested a panel, 'Theology Thursday', which was held by the Newman Catholic Students' Society of McGill University on the topic "Gender Mainstreaming and Transgender." The event featured presentations by Douglas Farrow and Moira McQueen, followed by an open floor panel discussion. Before the event, several students expressed concern and anger towards the panelists' transphobic reputations. Students also took issue with the lack of trans representation on the panel. After listening to the concerns of these students, the Society denounced the panelists but could not cancel the event. The Society has since expressed regret for the event and wishes to keep an ongoing dialogue with the queer community.

Transphobia is already present at McGill. Trans students at the university have faced barriers to mental health services (with counsellors not understanding trans issues or respecting gender pronouns) and name changes on official documents. They face erasure in the classroom when it comes to gender essentialism, and problems like not having more than two gender options on surveys. Even in the broader community of Montreal, trans people struggle to change their legal name and face difficulties receiving trans-positive healthcare. Transphobia is not an isolated incident; it is a network of systematic transphobic actions and institutions that together contribute, at the societal level, to the discrimination and violence trans people face today. At the panel and in their featured publications, Farrow and McQueen have shown that they do not understand, nor respect, the lived experiences of transgender people. Such lived experiences affirm that being trans is a legitimate identity; that

being trans is not a psychological or medical condition; that gender identity is not determined by the body; that a person knows their own gender better than anyone else; and that trans people routinely face discrimination, violence, and are even killed for being trans. Historic and contemporary trans lives attest to the legitimacy of these experiences. Yet, the panelists disregard them.

Transphobia is not an isolated incident; it is a network of systematic transphobic actions and institutions that together contribute at the societal level to the discrimination and violence trans people face today.

Farrow, a professor at McGill, writes in "Blurring Sexual Boundaries" (2011) that "[bills to protect trans people] are designed not to protect a threatened minority but to entrench in law the notion that gender is essentially a social construct, based not in the natural order but in more or less arbitrary acts of human self-interpretation." He argues that pro-trans legislation is not grounded in objective reality and is a ploy to force society to accept that gender and sex are independent facets of a person's identity.

Farrow also writes that "good law and sound public policy can-



*Douglas Farrow gives his presentation.*

not be built on the shifting sands of the subjective." Certainly legislators can overcome this obstacle to ensure the safety of trans people, who already face violence and social ostracization because they do not conform to society's rigid expectations. But it is precisely this lack of legal protection that makes trans people more vulnerable to hate crimes and discrimination (e.g., employment, healthcare, bathroom access). By arguing that it is too difficult to implement legislation to protect trans people, Farrow contributes to a culture that views trans people as unworthy of the same rights as cisgender people. This culture denies trans people the basic human rights they need.

McQueen implies in "Bioethics Matters: Catholic Teaching on Transgender" (2016) that being transgender is not a legitimate identity. She writes that "the [trans] person is convinced that he/she is, despite bodily evidence, a member of the opposite

sex," and that "gender identity is determined at conception, genetically, anatomically, and chromosomally, [and] a person must accept that objective identity." This is hateful in that it rejects the basic autonomy of trans people to understand their own gender on a deeply personal level. McQueen also refers to gender dysphoria, and being trans, as a medical "condition." This definition of trans identity is no longer formally accepted because it is incorrect and harmful. It leads to such abuses as conversion therapy, which McQueen mentioned in the discussion as a treatment for being trans before audience members shot it down for being fundamentally abusive. McQueen's ideology reinforces a culture that views trans people as medical and psychological anomalies, instead of real people.

While 'Theology Thursday' was organized to be a panel discussion, the lack of trans people included on the panel skewed

the legitimacy of the discussion. One audience member voiced this sentiment to McQueen, saying "You're not an expert. You're not trans. Trans people are experts on trans experience." Furthermore, giving a public platform to Farrow and McQueen to spread their transphobic ideology is imprudent and could have negative effects on the queer community at McGill, especially given the university's track record with trans issues. Students who protested the panel agree that the panelists were transphobic and had no positive contributions to a discussion on trans identities. Thanks to these students and others responding to the events of Thursday night, we're sending a clear message to people like Farrow and McQueen: your hateful, transphobic ideology is unwelcome and has no place at McGill.

Benjamin is a U2 Linguistics student. To contact the author, please email [ben.oldham@mail.mcgill.ca](mailto:ben.oldham@mail.mcgill.ca).

**Have a lot of thoughts and feelings about the world around you?**

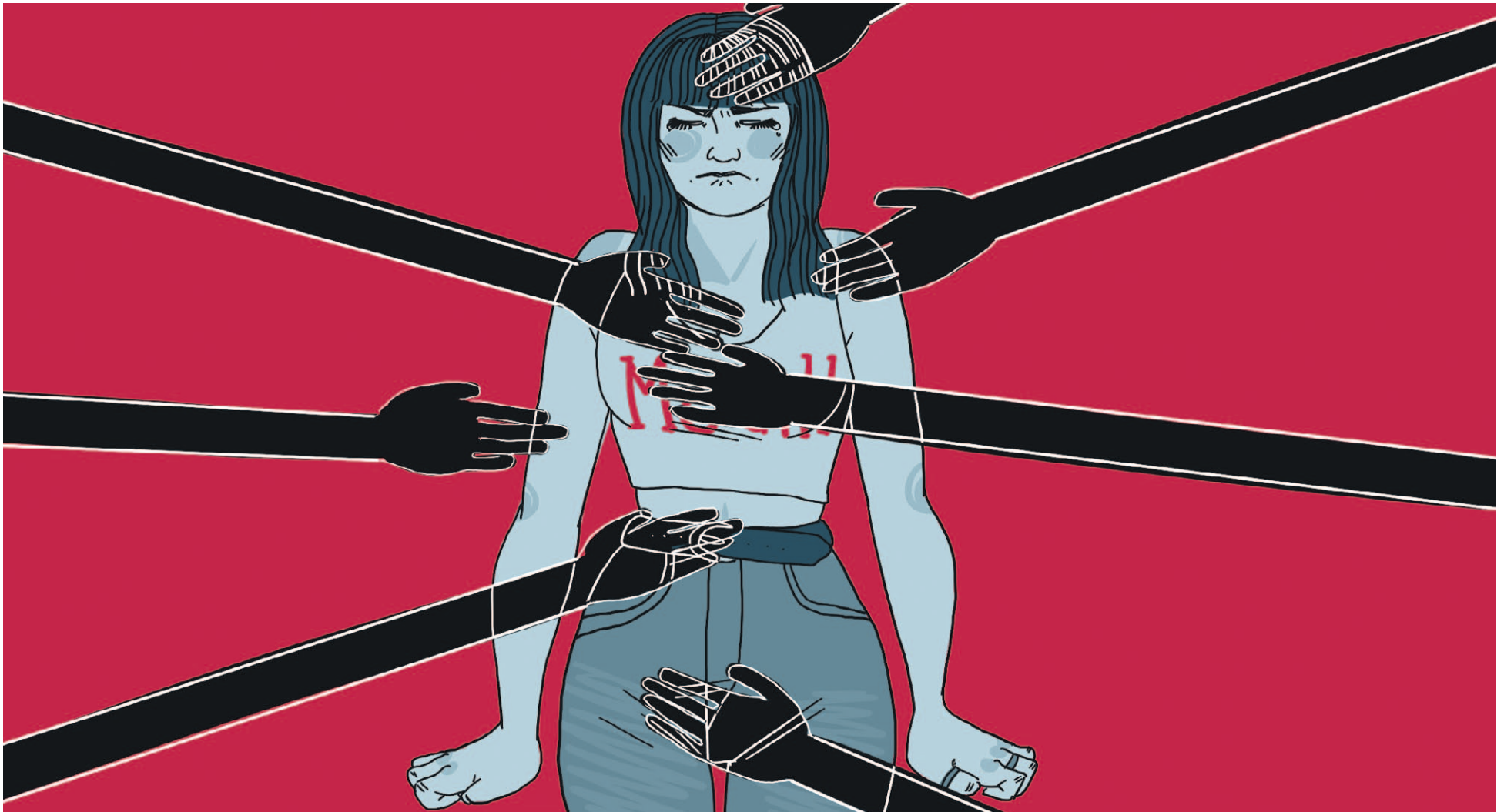
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# “Grabbing back” isn’t the answer

## Feminists need to stop turning sexual assault into a catchy slogan



MARINA DJURDJEVIC | The McGill Daily

**ANONYMOUS**  
Commentary Writer

*Content warning: sexual assault, misogyny, violence*

For as long as I can remember, my body has been objectified and claimed without my consent. One summer, when I was fourteen, I was travelling to my friend’s house for a sleepover and managed to hop on an empty subway car. About two subway stops, someone walked in and sat down near me. They gradually moved closer during the fifteen minutes it took me to get to my destination. Then they quickly moved next to me and grabbed me in the crotch. There was no one there to hear me cry, no one to see me run out just before the doors of the subway car closed. No one saw me run up the stairs experiencing a panic attack, as I waited for my attacker’s train to leave the station. This was not the first nor the last time I was assaulted like this.

Every time I’ve experienced a violation of my bodily autonomy, I’ve had to go through the process of reclaiming my body. I would not touch or let anyone touch me, and I recoiled at the idea of even being in close proximity to those I didn’t know. I stayed away from anything that mentioned vaginas. I downloaded extensions that would block out words related to the parts of my body that had been touched, watched only movies and shows that I knew were

safe, and made sure the activist groups I was a part of would actively employ warnings when such content was going to be discussed. I tried my hardest to control my recovery.

Every time I’ve experienced a violation of my bodily autonomy, I have to go through the process of reclaiming my body.

October 7, 2016 presented a new challenge: the leak of an Access Hollywood tape of then presidential candidate Donald Trump bragging about sexual assault. In the widely circulated video, Trump brags about how his status enabled him to take advantage of women and that he “[could] do anything [...] grab them by the pussy.” I could no longer protect myself from the barrage of commentary on the issue of sexual assault, and was forced to relive the assaults committed against me as a minor over and over and over again.

I expected to find solace from the repetition of this assault with activist groups on campus, in the Greater Montreal area, and on the internet. However, any critical discussion of how Trump’s team claimed the comments were “locker room talk,” or any discussion about sexual violence as a whole, were quickly overshadowed by cissexist vagina-centric feminism that followed the false assumptions that possessing a uterus is equal to womanhood and thereby excluded trans and non binary people. Instead, talks began to shift to the creation of slogans for the protests against Trump, and vagina-centric lines like “this pussy grabs back” became inescapable. The adaptation of the slogan was not publically questioned by the leaders who led these ‘safe spaces,’ and sexual assault victims were not consulted on how we felt about essentializing a traumatic event into a catchy hashtag.

During the time period between the leak of the tape and present day, I and other sexual assault survivors saw the faces of our abusers in that of the elected president of the United States. We then saw the appointment of individuals that value the lives of cells conceived through rape over those of people inhabiting violated bodies. And again, we saw the resurgence of the slogans.

I attended the Women’s March in Montreal expecting a few signs that centered around vaginas, but

what I saw was a sea of pink hats and cardboards that normalized the trauma I experienced. I expected to find solace and offer solidarity to those affected by the Trump administration, but instead saw my sexual assault turned into a punchline. Through the months of repetition, slogans like “this pussy grabs back” became a routine part of the resistance against Trump. It was no longer viewed as a personal traumatic event, but rather as a chant alongside all others.

I attended the Women’s March in Montreal expecting a few signs that centered around vaginas, but what I saw was a sea of pink hats and cardboards that normalized the trauma I experienced.

With the fact that one in three Canadian women will experience sexual assault in some form during their lifetime, I understand that there is a likely possibility that some of the sign holders may have experienced sexual trauma. It can be a healing process for some to reclaim the language of the abuser and use it as empowerment. However, it is dangerous to assume that all survivors wish to do so and acting on this assumption is violence against those of us who suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder or other psychological and emotional trauma as a result of the ordeals experienced. The repetition of slogans that trivialize sexual assault erases victims’ experiences and disrupts individual healing processes. Being at the march, being surrounded by images of the parts of my body that were violated, was not empowering to me. Instead, it left me feeling alienated from a community that claims to support me.

So during the next inevitable protest against the Trump administration, leave your vagina related signs and hats at home. Think of the fourteen year old trying to get to their friend’s house and being assaulted by a stranger on the train. Or any of the countless victims of sexual violence you march alongside as you normalize our trauma and turn it into a punch line. We are not your slogan, let us heal.

To contact the author, email [commentary@mcgilldaily.com](mailto:commentary@mcgilldaily.com).

# It's time for Canadian self-reflection

## Rising Islamophobia proves Canada isn't a 'safe haven'

**HEATHER LAWSON**  
Commentary Writer

On January 29, six Muslims were killed at a Québec City mosque during evening prayers. Outpourings of support and condolences immediately began to grace television screens and social media feeds. I've begun to notice a trend following these tragic incidents: we, Canadians, begin to prioritize our own feelings, and above those of anger, sadness and empathy, we feel denial. We say things like: "This is not our country," "how could something like this happen here?," "this is the sort of thing you expect to see in the U.S."

We Canadians will go to extreme lengths to blame anything and anyone for issues that happen within our borders. After the massacre in Quebec City, we pointed fingers at Trump. In fact, at a Montreal vigil to remember and celebrate the lives recently lost, anti-Trump sign and chants took centre stage. An opportunity for Canadian reflection on violence and our part in it became a rally against another country's government. Turning Canadian grief into American scapegoating fails to acknowledge our society's responsibility to hold its own members accountable for their actions.

Trump's ban of refugees, especially Muslims, during a time of political unrest and war, has mobilized racists and Islamophobes

across the world to be unabashedly bigoted. No two countries, especially not countries that share a border, exist within a vacuum. Canada has become all too familiar with the ripple effects of U.S. policy and U.S. intolerance. This can be seen in the forms of Canada's economic suffering as a result of the 2008 housing crash or the Flag Shop, for example, facing surprising demand for the confederate flag, a symbol intrinsically tied to the legacy of slavery, in cities such with little link to the confederation of the American south such as Vancouver and Ottawa. The American Muslim ban destabilized not only refugees but permanent residents who had left the country to travel and found themselves unable to return home. This ban affects a great number of McGill students who either cannot return home to their families or cannot pursue higher education in the U.S..

However, excusing tragedy as an isolated result of factors Canada is not responsible for, especially when that tragedy is deeply rooted in racism and settler colonialism, is weak and dismissive. The narrative of Canada as a 'safe haven' for marginalized groups is an inaccurate representation of the country. Stephen Harper's election campaign rested heavily on the banning of the niqab, which fortunately was ruled unconstitutional. Frequent vandalism of mosques and other



**NISHAT PROVA** | Illustrator

hate crimes perpetrated against the Muslim-Canadian community are testimonies to the bigotry that exists within our borders. Quite frankly, Canada could do without its self-fellating exceptionalism and constant pats on the back, especially when they occur as a knee-jerk reaction to concrete and homegrown examples of Islamophobia. When assaults like these occur, whether we define them as acts of terrorism or hate crimes, it

is a call to critically examine our own prejudice and xenophobia. We must realize that pretending we are more tolerant than others is not a solution to intolerance. It is accountability for our own shortcomings that makes nations safer, not the maintenance of a reputation Canada does not deserve. I hold a firm belief that what makes you a patriot is not your unchecked love for your country, but your commitment to improve it.

Now is the time to mourn; those killed, injured, and affected during the recent attack deserve our sorrow and our support. But more than that, they deserve justice and the assurance that Canadians will learn to reflect and progress rather than blame and dismiss.

Heather Lawson is a U1 Philosophy & Economics student. To contact the author, email [heather.lawson@mail.mcgill.ca](mailto:heather.lawson@mail.mcgill.ca).



Vigil held in Montreal for the victims of the Quebec City mosque shooting.



**CONOR NICKERSON** | The McGill Daily

# On the 'right' way to be disabled

In conversation with McGill Paralympian Sarah Mehain

PANIZ KHOSROSHAHY  
The McGill Daily

This past summer in Rio de Janeiro, Sarah Mehain improved her Paralympic record in fifty-meter butterfly – her main event – from a sixth to a fourth place. Since joining Swimming Canada – the national organization governing swimming and competitive swimmers – in 2008, Mehain has also placed third in International Paralympic Committee World Championships 2013 and first in Parapan American Games in Toronto last summer.

On top of that, Mehain is a member of the McGill Swimming team and a fourth year student in sustainability sciences. The Daily spoke to Mehain about her experience as a Paralympian as well as her views on invisible disability, media representation and sports activism.

**McGill Daily (MD):** How did you get into swimming? Did you find it to be an overall accommodating sport?

**Sarah Mehain (SM):** I swam from an early age but I didn't always know about para-swimming. But then I had a coach that had previously coached a Paralympic athlete, and he got me into Paralympic swimming when I was 12. And at that point I knew that there were a lot of opportunities ahead of me, I had no idea before that. Swimming is a very big Paralympic sport in terms of the number of events and competitors and has a very good support system for the athletes. And it's accessible to all different levels of disability. It's a very well-developed paralympic sport, and it's easier to get into.

**MD:** How does the Canadian InterUniversity Sport (CIS) system accommodate disabled athletes?

**SM:** In CIS, teams rank themselves against each other using their points, but there is no opportunity for disabled athletes to contribute to those points. [This system] effectively prevents [disabled athletes] from being part of varsity teams. Technically, I can compete at the [CIS] meets with the [McGill] team but there'll be no consideration for my disability. My time will be taken flat against everybody else's and I'll come in last so I won't make any points for the team. [As a result] universities don't want to take in disabled athletes because [disabled athletes] are not going to improve the ranking of the team. So what needs to happen is to have a point system that allows disabled athletes to compete for university teams and get points. The U.S. is working on allowing a point system [like this].

**MD:** So how did you get into McGill swimming?

**SM:** I had a very hard time finding a university that would allow me to swim with the varsity team. Peter [Carpenter], head coach of McGill varsity team, had worked with

Valérie Grand'Maison [gold medalist at the 2012 Paralympic Games in London] before I started working with him. So he was already in the system, he already knew about the Paralympics, and he was willing to take me in and allow me to train with the varsity team, go to their meets, have a different schedule, and train me throughout the summer at a different time.

“I'm not telling you I'm in the Paralympics because I want to devalue myself, I'm telling you because I'm proud to be in the Paralympics.”

—Sarah Mehain  
Paralympian

**MD:** Is participating in parasports and Paralympics political to you?

**SM:** In a way. Because you're representing something that isn't just a sporting movement, it's an activism movement. I don't have a lot of time to be very active in disability activism, but the best way that I can represent [Paralympics] right now is by talking to people. Every time someone introduces me and says, “Hey, this is my friend Sarah, she went to the Olympics,” I say, “No, actually, I went to the Paralympics, and this is what Paralympics is if you don't know.” A lot of people don't know what Paralympics is. I once went out with a guy and when I told him I had competed in the Paralympics, he said, “Oh, that's awesome, so when are you going to go to the real Olympics?” To this guy's defense, he thought that paralympics was ‘pre-Olympics,’ it meant the level before Olympics and it was a step toward going to the Olympics. A lot of people also tell me, “Oh well, [the Paralympics] is just as good!” Like you don't need to tell me that. I'm so, so, proud of what I'm doing, I've put so much work into it, you don't have to tell me that [Paralympics] is just as good as the Olympics. It's different from the Olympics, for sure, but in my opinion it's different in a good way. It's not any less than the Olympics. I'm not telling you I'm in the Paralympics because I want to devalue myself, I'm telling you because I'm proud to be in the Paralympics.



COURTESY OF SARAH MEHAIN

**MD:** How do you view the mainstream representation of disability in the media?

**SM:** Currently the only examples we have in our media is either the promotion of elite sports for Paralympics, or representations where a disabled person is either a villain, or lonely, never a romantic interest, or they're evil, or they want to end their life because that's how bad having a disability is. They would rather not exist than have a disability. This type of media representation leads people to assume that [disabled people] can't do anything so when you can make it into university or go grocery shopping they're surprised that you can do normal everyday tasks. They say, “Good for you,” but no, I'm just living, I'm just doing my own thing. They wouldn't say that if it was an able-bodied person. Paralympic sport organizations though are moving away from [‘inspirational’] type of branding. Especially Swimming Canada is moving toward promoting their athletes in a way that's similar to Olympic athletes. So you're focusing on high performance, excellence, hard work, and all the hours that go into this rather than focusing on the fact that you're doing it with a disability. I think it's really good that we are moving into that direction, but it's also important to not forget the disability, because it's a huge and very powerful part [of the sport].

**MD:** How have participating in Paralympics changed the way you understand your disability?

**SM:** If you grow up disabled, often you're not exposed to other people with disabilities and often you're isolated in your own experiences. You grow up surrounded by able-bodied people and you're the only one that's different – you play with Barbies with perfect bodies, you watch Disney movies with [able-bodied] princesses, and you have no positive examples in your childhood, in your young adult life, of people with disabilities. You think it's just me, that's why you don't say anything. You keep getting the message that you should act a certain way to be disabled, be accommodating, kind, friendly, inspirational. Basically you're objectified. As I tried to be involved in Paralympics, I saw examples of people that were doing amazing things with their lives – or not even amazing, but just normal things with their lives, like doing sports or getting married. That was the first time I was exposed to the possibility of having those things in my life.

**MD:** How does having an invisible disability shape your daily life?

**SM:** A lot of para-athletes have a very low level of disability. It's enough that they couldn't compete with able-bodied athletes. It's not necessarily immediately visible so it requires a level of disclosure. The

problem with disclosure is that right now, in order to get any accommodations to do something on an equal playing field, you have to disclose your disability. So if people can't see your disability, they question it, they ask if you really have a disability, if are you really impacted, they attach a lack of authenticity to your disability. You don't fit into the right narrative of disability because it's not visible and you don't fit the right narrative of [normativity] because you can't do everything without accommodations.

**MD:** What do you think of accommodations system at McGill?

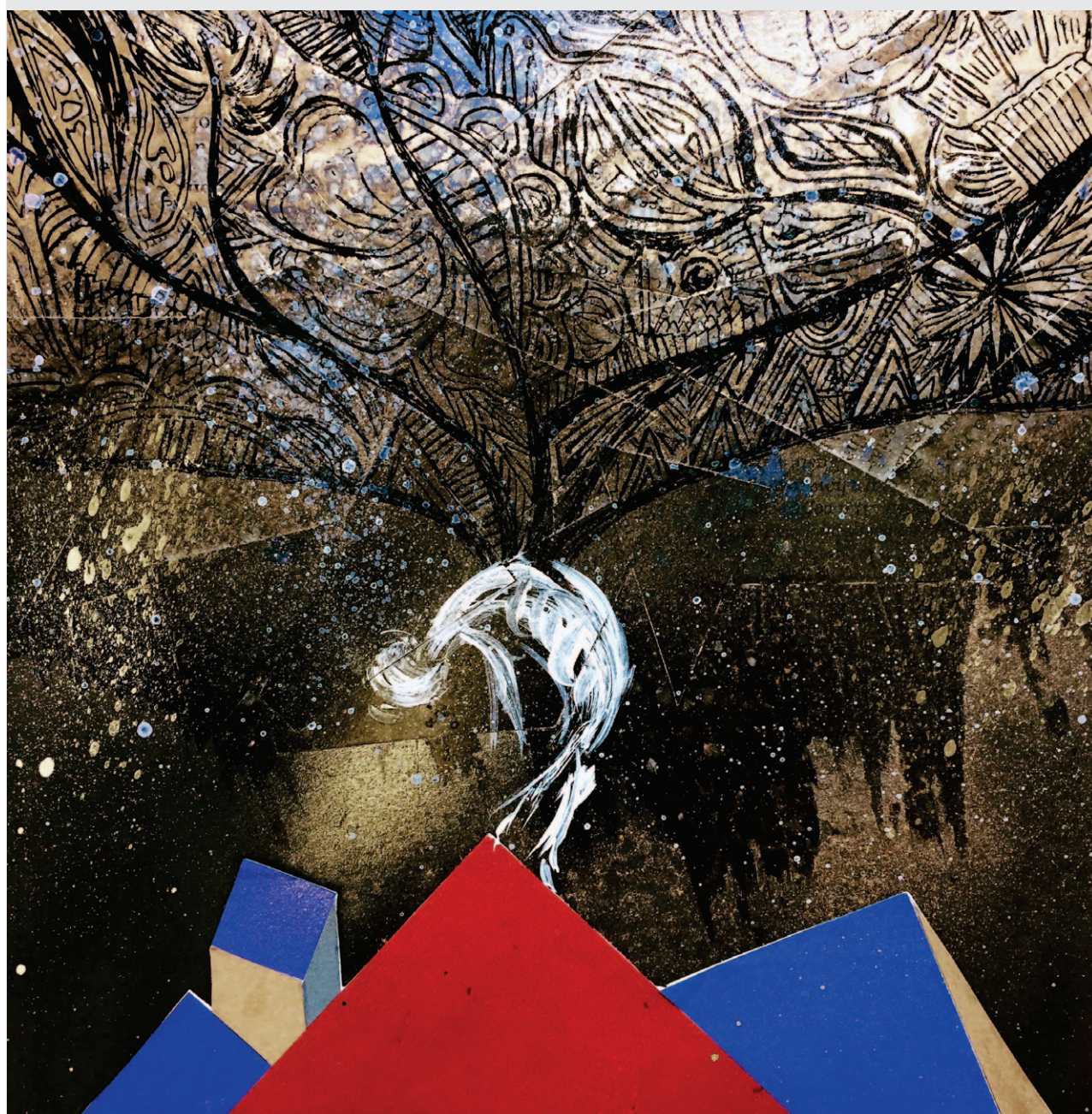
**SM:** With professors, it really depends on the person, because I've had professors that are really accommodating and really respect the fact that I'm doing sports. But then I've had profs that [required me] to write exams an entire semester late because I'd missed it for a swim meet. Overall, [accommodations] shouldn't be seen as privileges. The students that need these resources, they deserve them, and it's their human right, their right as students to access those. To improve, the OSD (Office for Students with Disability) could promote their resources better, and McGill could also create a standard method for dealing with accommodations with professors and for athletes.

*This interview has been edited for clarity and length.*



*'Jealousy in a Jar,'* Alejandra Morales

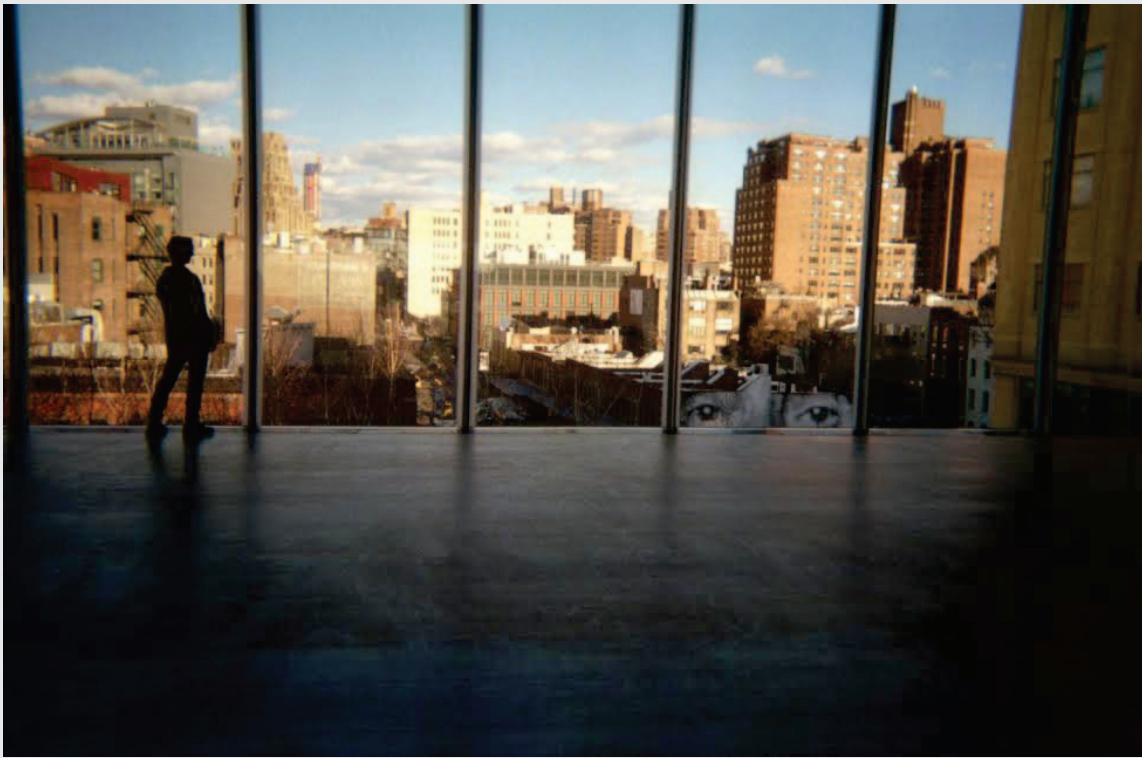
ART SUPPLEMENT



**'Resurrection'**  
Lanya Feng



**'Into the Mist'**  
Lanya Feng



‘Untitled series’  
Islay Cannon





‘Untitled series’  
Yanqiu Chen



**I AM A WOMAN PHENOMENALLY**



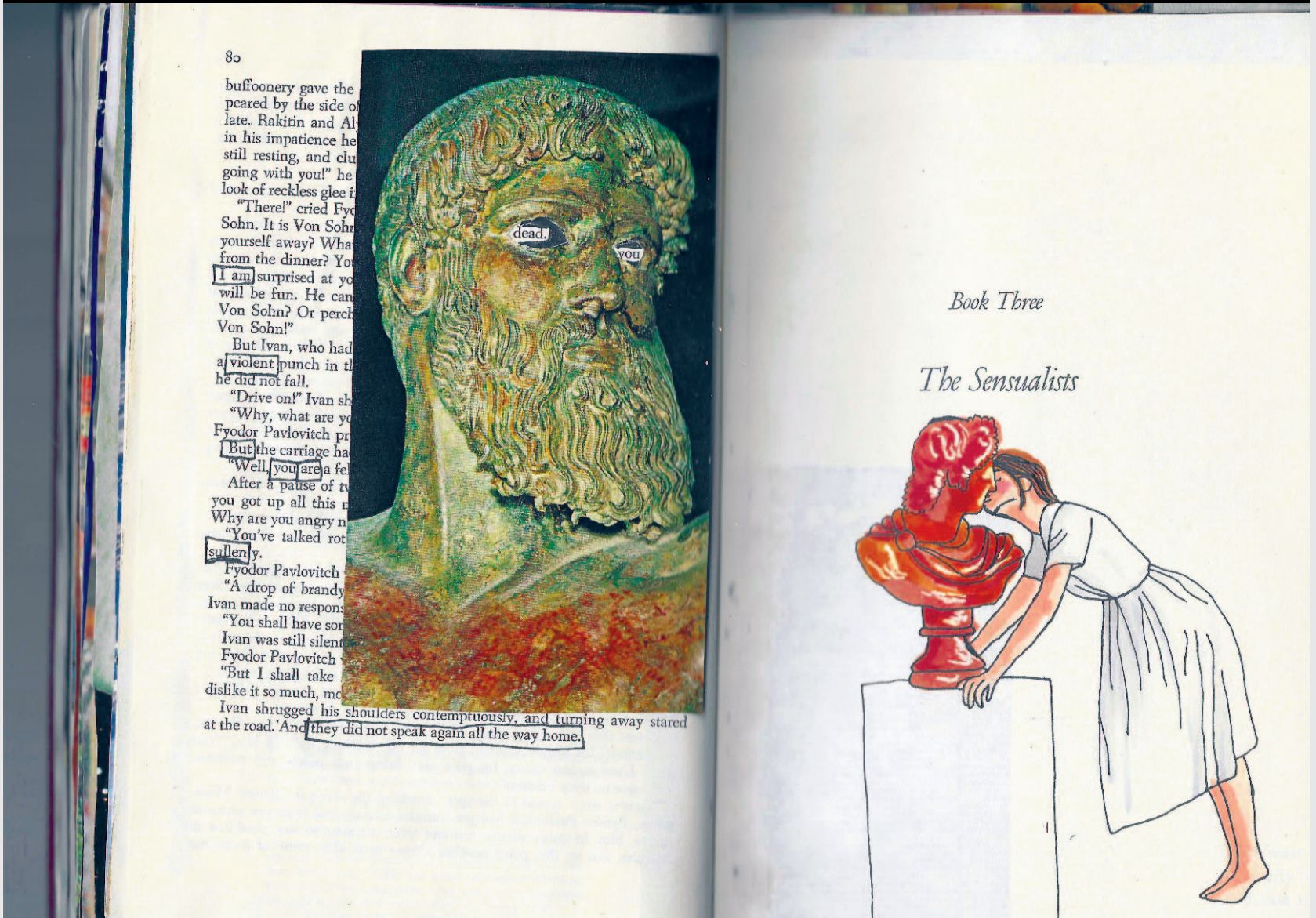
**'Phenomenal Woman'**  
Abby Couture

**'Angel from Vancouver'**  
Changqi Yu





‘Untitled series’  
Laura Brennan





**'Hipstamatic Photo'**  
Arno Pedram

**'Chaton'**  
Cindy Lao





**'Fortune Battle'**  
T-Kay Tran

**'The Duet'**  
Siting Ni



TK  
2017



‘Ring of Roses’  
Leila Fabing



‘Untitled’  
Laura Brennan

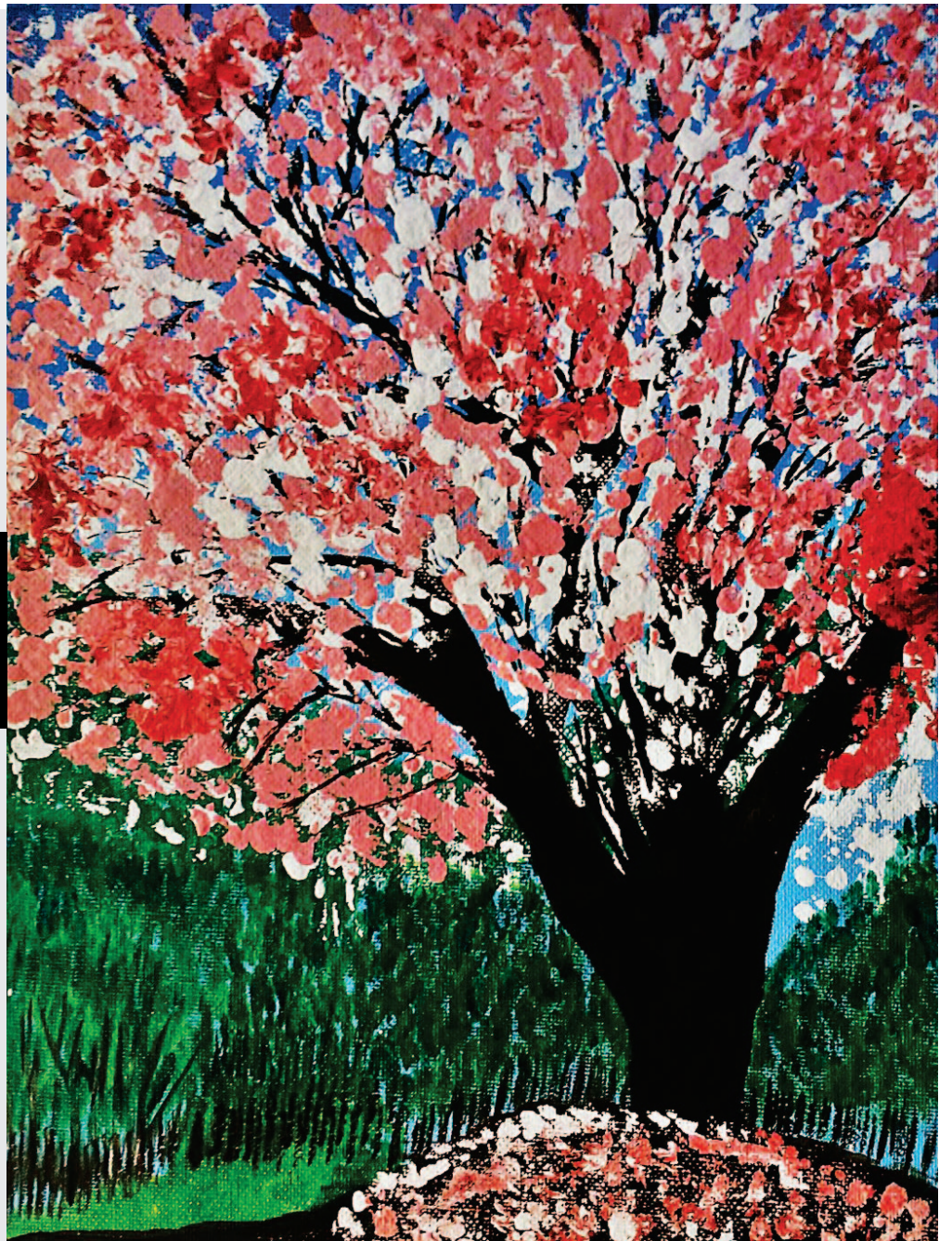


**'A View from the  
Afternoon'**  
Nora McCready



**'Untitled'**  
Ambre Battistella

**'Untitled'**  
Monica Patel



**'Blue Still Life'**  
Jennifer Guan





‘Die Kuh’  
Céline Kerriou



AMBRE BATTISTELLA | THE MCGILL DAILY

# ORGANIZING OUR WAY THROUGH MENTAL ILLNESS

Lots of activists live with mental illnesses – so why is social justice organizing still so ableist?

WRITTEN BY SAIMA DESAI | VISUALS BY SAIMA DESAI

*Content warning: mental illness (depression, anxiety, suicide, eating disorders, self-harm, bipolar disorder, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder [PTSD]), rape, police and gun violence, Islamophobia and anti-Blackness*

Two days after Philando Castile was murdered, I took my first antidepressant.

I'd struggled with depression and anxiety for years, mostly silently, and always unmedicated. I'd never considered that my mental illness could be linked to politics, because my depression started long before I developed any significant political consciousness. But, last summer, while obses-

sively refreshing Twitter for hours while crying, I started to suspect that my social justice work and my declining mental health had somehow gotten entangled.

Now, as I write this, my social media is filling up with the news of six Muslim men murdered at a mosque in Quebec City. In the last two weeks since Donald Trump's inauguration, and the accompanying onslaught of Islamophobia, racism, and misogyny, I've felt hopeless, numb, terrified, and overwhelmed. I don't know if this is proportional shock to the state of the world, or if it's my depression. I can't tell the difference – maybe because they've started to bleed into one another.

I explain to myself and others over and over that depression is a chemical imbalance in the brain. I've been told that I'm just "too sensitive," that I should "snap out of it," that my depression can be cured by doing yoga or eating kale or smiling more. Those messages are dangerous and invalidating, tossed out casually by well-intentioned people who insinuate that I'm just "weak" or even making it up for attention. I cling to that chemical imbalance, to tell myself that I'm not just delicate, or self-centered, but that my mental illness is as valid and real and deserving of medication as any physical illness.

And yet, I've begun to wonder if that's the whole story.

## **Mental illness is political**

I've often thought about the heavy overlap between activists and people living with mental illness. For a long time, I assumed that this was because social justice spaces, with their commitment to fighting ableism, were simply environments in which people felt safe being honest about their mental health. This is true in many ways – at The Daily, for example, we check-in with each other before every meeting, and editors often remind each other to take their meds or ask for help during a difficult week. Often, people who have mental illness that stems from trauma from sexual assault, or racist or imperialist violence, become activists to fight for a world where

people don't have to live through what they experienced. Many of us are racialized, women, queer, trans, physically disabled, or poor.

More recently, though, I've started to believe that mentally ill people don't just self-select or feel comfortable outing themselves in social justice spaces. Maybe the high prevalence of mental illness is caused – or at least contributed to – by the nature of our work. Our work is to stare straight at injustice, to document violence, to analyze through a lens of unequal distributions of power. Working in social justice spaces is intense because your work follows you home – you can never justify not thinking about

systemic oppression. There's no conversation that's safe from an analysis of hierarchies of power.

In February 2016, MarShawn McCarrel, a 23-year-old Black Lives Matter activist, committed suicide on the steps of the Ohio Statehouse. It opened a conversation about depression and trauma amongst Black Lives Matter activists under the hashtag #BLMhealing. "In the movement you're just constantly engaging in Black death, seeing the communal impact," said Jonathan Butler, the University of Missouri graduate student who went on a hunger strike for seven days in protest of a series of racist incidents at his university, in an interview with the *Washington Post*. "You're being faced with the reality that I'm more likely to be killed by the police, that I'm being discriminated against. You start to see all of the microaggressions."



"White supremacy often feels vast and hopeless. I believe suicide is what happens to some of us when our minds are in a place of, 'We need freedom, but we can never be free here,'" Angel Carter, a St. Louis-based organizer, told the *Pacific Standard*. According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, Black people are 20 per cent more likely to have a severe mental health condition than the general population, and women of all races are nearly twice as likely to have clinical depression than men.

As Laurie Penny writes in her incredible essay on wellbeing ideology, "The lexicon of abuse and gaslighting is appropriate here: if you are miserable or angry because your life is a constant struggle against privation or prejudice, the problem is always and only with you. Society is not mad, or messed up: you are." It's even worse when you decide that you're going to be an activist, to dedicate yourself to fighting the worst and most violent instances of oppression, to field harassment or hate-mail or shouting at your parents over the dinner table about Ferguson. For me, that's grounds for depression and anxiety.

Maddie, who worked at Planned Parenthood on queer and trans allyship, and has worked with QPIRG-McGill on various social justice initiatives, agrees that systemic oppression is a factor in mental illness. They have dealt with an eating disorder and depression for five years, alongside lifelong anxiety, and they

identify as queer, non-binary, and a person of colour. "Maybe some people are genetically more predisposed to mental illness – but I think that living under this fascist system is a huge contributor to people's illness," they told me. "I don't see how it could be otherwise, if the world isn't built for you to exist, and you are constantly having to struggle to survive in it. Some people don't have to struggle so hard. There's a huge strain, all the time, just trying to exist."

We need to think about mental illness as the product of social and economic situations. Reducing mental illness to brain chemistry implies that the only way to manage or cure it is by taking pharmaceuticals. Medication is crucial to many people for managing their mental illness – but at the same time, it's undeniable that the medical-industrial complex makes a staggering amount of money off (over)medicating people. Reducing mental illness to brain chemistry also feeds the idea that we're all responsible for only ourselves, an individualist ethic that's the result of neoliberalist capitalism, which relies on the idea of a meritocracy to foster competition and self-interest. It works to isolate us from the broader injustices that are implicated in how shitty we feel – and prevent us from dismantling them together.

#### Trauma, psychosis, healing, and exhaustion

"Even when we do try to make room for people who are mentally ill in organizing, we usually do it in the easiest possible way, by focusing on depression and anxiety," Sonia Ionescu, the coordinating editor at The Daily, told me. "It's easy to identify with depression and anxiety because everyone's nervous, everyone's sad. But not everyone feels the urge to hurt themselves, or not eat, or experiences mania – that's a really hard thing to grasp even a symptom of."

THERE'S A  
HUGE STRAIN,  
ALL THE TIME,  
JUST TRYING TO  
EXIST.

—Maddie  
U1 Sociology student

"I've been self-harming since I was twelve," she continued. Sonia has been diagnosed with anorexia, chronic depression, generalized anxiety, and social anxiety, with a possibility of bipolar II disorder.

"Of mental illness, depression and anxiety are the most common, and so it makes sense, in a way, to give them the most attention. But also it's really easy to just ignore everything else if we do that, and to just pat ourselves on the back and

be like 'we're being inclusive!'" I have depression and anxiety, and I don't lack the space to talk about them, so for this piece I turned to activists I know who have more severe or different mental illness from me, and who work more directly on specific struggles.

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CHANGE."

—Sonia Ionescu  
Coordinating editor at  
The Daily

Hannah\* is a member of the #ConsentMcGill campaign and has worked on sexual assault awareness and prevention. "Two and a half years ago I was raped, and that has led to me having PTSD," she told me. "I think one of the ways that I tried to deal with that was by really immersing myself in fighting the cultures that contribute to [rape]."

"There's not a day that goes by when it doesn't come to me in any shape or form as a reminder that it happened to me. But I realized why [Trump's] election and the subsequent actions have impacted me so much," she explained. "It was the single biggest reminder I've had since it happened to me that nobody gives a shit about sexual assault. When a man has twelve [alleged] counts of sexual assault against him, and he gets elected as President of the United States, with almost half of Americans voting for him – it was just the biggest reminder that no-one cares."

During Trump's campaign, and especially the last month, Hannah's had to have more discussions about rape culture. "It's really hard having conversations with friends where they're saying something that's really offensive, especially when it's surrounding sexual assault, but I don't have the energy or the strength at that time to talk about a subject that's so personal to me," she said. "In those situations it becomes a big moral dilemma, because I can't justify staying silent, but I also don't feel strong enough to defend what I believe at that time."

The last week has been characterized by a widespread sense of helplessness – a feeling familiar to many mentally ill people. I've heard from many who feel like they don't know what they can do – and even when they do act, it's never enough. "I feel very hopeless in terms of not being able to do anything tangible that will help – and for that reason, I feel less functional. A lot of my self-worth is tied to [social justice work]," Maddie told me.

"A lot of the time I feel bad for not being a functional mentally ill person, which is fucked up," they explained. "I know so many people who also struggle with mental health, but they're still able to do things, they're still able to go to protests and demos that matter. And then I question, am I really putting in effort, am I really trying? I think that's really contributed to me feeling even worse."

CJ\* has been organizing around Palestinian human rights and the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement for three years. She's had severe depression for five years. "Yesterday I worked for twelve hours, and then came home and cried, because I was so tired," she said as we began our interview.

"Sometimes I feel like there's a never-ending amount of organizing one could do. This is something I feel I'm quite bad about, in terms of regulating how much I do," she told me. "I guess I really struggle because everything is pressing and urgent. Palestine, which is what I usually organize around, is just so important – and it feels more important than me. And so I'll often sacrifice my mental and physical health because I just know I'm contributing to an important struggle."

"This past month or so I've been in a manic state," explained Sonia. "I feel like I can do so much more organizing and [attend more] actions, and the validation I get from contributing to those things – not just from other people, but from myself – kind of feeds into not wanting the mania to end, which is dangerous in that mania is not sustainable. It's just not a healthy way to live – I need more sleep than I'm getting, I need more food than I'm getting, I can't keep going at this rate, but it feels good to, and it feels good because I'm making a change."



For the mentally ill, social justice work feels like a constant coin-toss, where the two faces are being

either exhausted, demoralized, and triggered, or galvanized, motivated, and hopeful.

"Social justice is one of the ways that I self-care," Hannah told me. "I was really lucky in that sense, because that helped my recovery and finding a really healthy thing to pour my energy into, and my anger into – because there's so much anger. Obviously you don't want that anger directed at yourself, and I don't know who it was [that raped me] or how many people there were, so I can't direct it at a specific person. So I kind of directed it at the system that would be oppressing me and anyone else who experiences [sexual assault]."

CJ told me that even when her depression made it impossible for her to go to class or do schoolwork, she was still able to organize. "I feel like organizing is maybe one of the best things that I can do for my mental health. If one of the problems I have is that everything I do is pointless and meaningless and empty, this feels like something that is clearly meaningful, and has a point."

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—CJ\*  
Palestine activist

#### On identity and interconnectedness

Over the summer, when Alton Sterling and Philando Castile were killed, I was working in the News and Features editorial team at a high-profile women's magazine in Toronto. The team met every morning to pitch stories and discuss breaking news that was relevant to Canadian women. The morning after Philando Castile's murder, scrolling through my Twitter feed, I felt a mixture of deep rage and sorrow. But when I got to the morning meeting, visibly shaking, no one said a word about the shootings. I returned to my desk in tears.

Part of my rage was because during the course of that job, even as an intern, I felt unfairly burdened with the responsibility of advocating for coverage that acknowledged issues of race. I was one of the very few women of colour on the editorial team, and there were no Black wom-

en working at the magazine at all. At a magazine mostly run by – and marketed to – white women, I felt that if I didn’t talk about race, no one would.

WHEN I GOT TO THE MORNING MEETING, VISIBLY SHAKING, NO ONE SAID A WORD ABOUT THE SHOOTINGS.

The next day, I didn’t go to work, because I woke up and immediately started having back-to-back panic attacks that made it impossible for me to even get dressed. Instead, after years of refusing medication, I went to my doctor and got a prescription for an antidepressant.

I’m not a Black man living in the U.S. under the increasing militarization of the police. I’m not a refugee, or a Muslim person, or an undocumented immigrant facing deportation under the Trump administration. I’m not one of the women or other people living in the Global South who will be condemned to death by his global abortion gag order. So why is my mental health so deeply affected by these atrocities?

I worry that it’s a performative mourning: that I’m participating in an economy of horror and outrage that’s not sincere, and focuses attention on myself rather than on the affected communities. This is the voice that tells me that my mental illness is a ploy for attention – a self-indulgent wallowing in misery or angst. I worry that my anger and sadness is only contributing to a voyeuristic culture that loves to spectate, consume, and commodify the suffering of marginalized people. This is the voice that tells me that my activism and commitment to social justice is in bad faith. All these voices insist that I should care less – that the pain I feel is insincere or exaggerated. Against these voices, how can I justify feeling affected?

Some of these concerns are valid – there’s a way that the privileged can (and do) appropriate the pain of marginalized people, and turn the attention back on themselves. There’s a way that support floods in for affected communities in the days after a well-publicized mass murder, but dies out as soon as the topic disappears from the mainstream media. In a couple weeks from now, non-Muslim people expressing outrage following the terrorist attack at the Quebec City mosque will move on, and we’ll go back to not talking about Quebec’s long history of state-sanctioned Islamophobia.

And yet, while I’m a proponent of staying in one’s lane and not

speaking over those with lived experiences of a certain form of oppression, I also believe that there must be a way for us to feel the pain of another community without it being self-serving. In *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*, Judith Butler writes: “No one person suffers a lack of shelter without there being a social failure to organize shelter in such a way that it’s accessible to each and every person. [...] This means that in some of our most vulnerable experiences of social and economic deprivation, what is revealed is not only our precariousness as individual persons – though that may well be revealed – but also the failures and inequalities of socioeconomic and political institutions.”



This is not a new idea – that one’s life is not lived in isolation, but is always already a social life. The injustice levied against a single body is always indicative of systems of injustice that we are all implicated in. By no means do I pretend to feel or understand the pain of those directly affected by Trump’s agenda. But I understand that my life does not exist separate from the lives of other marginalized people facing more direct violence. That I, a brown woman in Canada, am engaged in a common fight with the same systems of white supremacy, misogyny, and border imperialism that threaten Black people and trans femmes and Syrian refugees. That the systemic oppression that undergirds my mental illness also works to uphold police violence and fascism.

OUR BODIES ARE JUICED FOR LABOUR AND THEN DISPOSED OF WHEN THEY CAN NO LONGER WORK.

“Bodies in the streets” and the ableism in organizing

Our worth as activists is measured by our ability to throw down in the street, to stand at vigils or strikes for hours in the cold without food, our willingness to risk being arrested or pepper sprayed or kettled. We’re expected to be constant-

ly active on social media, constantly debating and educating our less-political friends and family, constantly up to date on the news, constantly offering emotional support to affected communities. Physical, emotional, and mental exertion are used as yardsticks of commitment to the cause – without taking into account our differing abilities and skills. It ends up replicating structures of capitalism, where our bodies are juiced for labour and then disposed of when they can no longer work – the workers become what Marx, in *Capital*, calls the “conscious organs of the automaton.”

“THAT’S DEFINITELY INTERNALIZED IN MANY ACTIVIST COMMUNITIES: THAT YOU NEED TO PUT YOUR BODY ON THE STREET, YOU NEED TO BE READY TO FACE VIOLENCE.”

—Maddie  
U1 Sociology student

“There’s a hierarchy in mental illness, where the people who are the most productive are at the top, and the people who are the least productive are at the bottom, which is ingrained in us by capitalism,” said Sonia. As a result of all of this, a lot of the discussion around activism and organizing is incredibly ableist. It’s coming from seasoned organizers as well as the recent influx of new activists that perhaps haven’t done the work to interrogate their ableism.

The rhetoric of “bodies in the streets” activism most strongly excludes people with physical disabilities and mobility restrictions, as well as many undocumented, racialized, and trans folks who simply cannot risk arrest in the way a white dude can. But ableist activism also affects those of us with mental illness. People with anxiety are excluded from protests. People with PTSD are side-eyed for not shutting down a sexist comment at a dinner party. People with bipolar disorder are judged for not showing up for the vigil, when in reality they couldn’t get out of bed that day.

“I feel like there’s no room for people who can’t make those protests for various reasons. And even if people say that they don’t have that mentality, I think it’s very in-

grained,” Maddie told me. It’s the mentality that creates the idea of the Platonic form of the activist: a young white man who’s necessarily able-bodied and infinitely resilient, who can scream at the cops without risking being beaten or deported. “That’s definitely internalized in many activist communities: that you need to put your body on the street, you need to be out there, and be ready to face violence,” Maddie continued.

For those who organize in communities or alongside friends, withdrawing from high-intensity work means not only feeling like a bad activist, but a bad person overall. “We have to keep loving people when they’re not able to organize, and not able to do as much,” CJ told me. “And I think that’s hard because I definitely idolize or deeply respect and admire people who spend their life organizing, and really do a lot – but that’s also just not possible for so many people, for so many reasons.”

Part of this ableist rhetoric of activism is the idea of “slacktivism”: posting, sharing, liking, or donating via social media, which is considered ‘lazy’ or ‘shallow’ activism. But creating a hierarchy of activism, where violent protest is at the top, not only excludes those who cannot attend protests or smash windows, but also underestimates social media’s value as a tool for organizing and community-building.

“During high school I isolated a lot from my physical community because of my depression, but I did a lot of online community stuff; I had this screen and I felt more comfortable behind it, and I didn’t have to move out of my bed, also,” Maddie told me. “I created a community through Twitter and Tumblr – that was my initial introduction into social justice spaces.”



Protests and vigils are wonderful and necessary forms of political action. But we also need to value other forms of resistance, and make space for people to resist in whatever ways their bodies and brains allow – lest our work become anti-oppressive in name alone. This has never been more important to understand than now, when mass protests are erupting in Montreal twice a week, when we’re inundated with calls to “step up,” and “show up,” when tapping out of visible, high-intensity, or physical activism is seen as inexcusable. When Trump has a history of

mocking disabled reporters, his possible repeal of the Affordable Care Act will strip many disabled people of healthcare, and his federal hiring freeze is going to make it even harder to appeal for Social Security Disability Insurance, activists need to make sure that we’re not excluding the very people whose rights we should be fighting for.

WE NEED TO MAKE SPACE FOR PEOPLE TO RESIST IN WHATEVER WAYS THEIR BODIES AND BRAINS ALLOW – LEST OUR WORK BECOME ANTI-OPPRESSIVE IN NAME ALONE.

Staying sane in the time of Trump

I have a lot of friends who have never been politically engaged before who are coming to me and asking how to attend a protest for the first time, or which grassroots organizations to volunteer with. I’m really excited about this wave of popular resistance, but I also know that this intensity of fear and rage amongst activists is not sustainable. I know that this work erodes your sanity. If we don’t start talking about mental illness in activism – and not just as a throwaway acknowledgement, not just as an afterthought – then we’re facing mass burnout in the near future.

This chunk of writing is how I’m staying sane in harrowing times. I’m writing to try and open a more honest conversation about mental illness amongst activists, but I’m also writing to help myself untangle my complicated relationship with the politics of mental illness. I’m writing because I feel helpless and sad, and journalism is my activism and my catharsis. This is my act of resistance – against Trump, against ableism, against burnout and desensitization, against my own creeping depression.

CJ told me, “it would be good for me to prioritize my own mental and physical health. I should do that for my own sake. But also to actually do the most good, my organizing has to be sustainable, and I have to find ways that it doesn’t kill me.” Four years is a long time to keep up a fight, and it’s imperative that our work survives – but to do so, the activists have to survive too.

\* names have been changed

# A dose of nonsense

## The life and longevity of the anti-vaccine movement

LINDSAY BURNS  
Sci+Tech Writer

It is difficult to appreciate the effects of vaccines on modern medicine to their fullest extent. Despite a potentially bothersome injection schedule or the myths associated with their ingredients and adverse effects, vaccines have saved millions of lives since their inception in 1796. Vaccines are considered to be one of the ten greatest public health achievements of the 20th century, on par with motor-vehicle safety and the recognition of tobacco as a health hazard. Akin to seat belt requirements, or anti-smoking campaigns, the widespread use of vaccines has been met with controversy.

Vaccines administered to infants or young children during the past two decades are expected to prevent 322 million illnesses, 21 million hospitalizations, and 732,000 deaths over the course of their lifetime, according to a 2014 report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Prevention of potentially devastating illnesses among children is estimated to save \$295 billion in direct costs, such as medical expenses, and an additional \$1.3 trillion in societal costs. However, skepticism of vaccine safety — and fading memories of vaccine-preventable diseases — have led some parents to become hesitant to vaccinate their children. “For a lot of people, they perceive that the risk is gone,” said Dr. Brian Ward, a researcher in the field of immunization at McGill, “and so they start making calculations on what’s the risk of the vaccine versus not getting the vaccine. And for them the risk of not getting the vaccine is zero. So they are comparing the very tiny risks of the vaccine to nothing.”

Only three Canadian provinces have legislated vaccination policies, which strictly applies to children starting school. Ontario and New Brunswick require vaccination against diphtheria, tetanus, polio, measles, mumps and rubella, while Manitoba requires a measles immunization. In each case, however, the legislation includes an exemption clause on the basis of conscience, medical or religious grounds.

In 1796, Edward Jenner, a rural British doctor, observed that in accordance with local folklore, milkmaids were protected from smallpox after naturally suffering cowpox. Jenner theorized that cowpox not only protected people against smallpox, but can also be deliberately transmitted from one person to another as a novel tool for conferring protection. To prove his theory, Jenner injected eight-year-old James Phipps with pus taken from a cowpox pustule on

the hand of a milkmaid. The boy developed a mild fever but recovered shortly after. Afterwards, Jenner inoculated Phipps again, with matter from a fresh smallpox lesion. No disease developed, and Jenner concluded that the protection was complete. Edward Jenner had effectively pioneered the world’s very first vaccine. He submitted his findings to the Royal Society for publishing, but his findings were rejected. Instead, Jenner privately published a small booklet outlining his hypotheses, experiment, and observations titled *An Inquiry into the Causes and Effects of the Variolae Vaccinae, a Disease Discovered in some of the Western Counties of England, particularly Gloucestershire, and Known by the Name of The Cow Pox*. The publication of Jenner’s inquiry was met with a mixed reaction, and he was widely ridiculed by his peers in the medical community. Although Jenner had made one of the most impactful health discoveries in history, his discovery was met with a spurious epidemic of panic and fear. Jenner’s critics, primarily the clergy, deemed it repulsive and ungodly to be inoculated with material taken from a diseased animal. Skepticism of vaccines remained widespread, despite lack of records entailing such side effects. Opposition to vaccination has existed as long as vaccination itself.

Albeit, the anti-vaccination movements ideology has shifted since the days of Jenner. The overall message remains the same: vaccines are dangerous and those responsible for developing vaccines are not to be trusted. Recent myths propagated by the anti-vaccination movement include: the infamous “vaccines cause autism”, safety of common ingredients, superiority of naturally acquired immunity over vaccine-acquired immunity, and the belief that vaccines are no longer necessary against disappearing vaccine-preventable diseases. Recent anti-vaccine claims seem more plausible than the myth of turning into a cow after the smallpox vaccine, however, growing scientific evidence exists debunking nearly every one.

A 1998 case series published in *Lancet*, a British journal, suggested that the measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine may predispose children to development of autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Despite inadequate sample sizes ( $n = 12$ ), uncontrolled design, and the speculative nature of the conclusions, the paper received widespread publicity, and MMR vaccination rates began to fall. However, immediately following the paper, subsequent epidemiological studies failed to produce the same link between MMR vaccination and autism. The logic that the MMR vaccine was responsible for triggering



HAYLEY MORTIN | The McGill Daily

autism was criticized because the injection of the MMR vaccine and ASD diagnosis both occur in early childhood. Subsequently, the link between the two could simply be correlative in nature. As a result, the paper was formally retracted by the journal in 2010, citing its “failure to disclose financial interests”, as well as, “guilty of ethical violations”, and “scientific misrepresentation” on part of the original authors.

Despite inadequate sample sizes ( $n = 12$ ), uncontrolled design, and the speculative nature of the conclusions, the paper received widespread publicity, and MMR vaccination rates began to fall.

Following the MMR scare, vaccination programs started to recover its reputation. However, shortly afterwards, a new controversy regarding vaccine ingredients was popularized. Thimerosal, an organic, mercury-containing compound added to some vaccines as a preservative, became

the centre of a new “vaccines cause autism” controversy. Although there is no evidence to suggest that the amount of thimerosal used in vaccines poses a health risk, leading public health, medical organizations, and vaccine manufacturers agreed to reduce or remove the ingredient from vaccines as a precautionary measure. In 2001, The Institute of Medicine’s Immunization Safety Review Committee concluded that there was insufficient evidence to prove or disprove claims that thimerosal exposure from childhood vaccines and the neurodevelopmental disorders of autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and speech or language delay were connected but “favours rejection of a causal relationship” on a more recent report. The committee did confirm that the association between thimerosal-containing vaccine exposure and neurodevelopmental disorders was biologically plausible, though not well-defined.

Other common ingredients were also quickly branded as unsafe, including formaldehyde, mercury and aluminum. While these chemicals are toxic to the human body at certain concentrations, only trace amounts are found in the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved vaccines. Formaldehyde is produced at higher rates by our own metabolic systems than in a typical vaccine dosage. The low levels of chemicals added to vaccines do not surpass the respective recommended allowances outlined by the World Health Organization.

Vaccines interact with the immune system to produce an immune response similar to that resulting from natural infection, but do not cause disease or put an individual at

risk of its associated complications. Risks of acquiring immunity through natural infection include intellectual disability from *Haemophilus influenzae* type b (Hib), birth defects from rubella, liver cancer from hepatitis B virus, or death from measles. In Canada, to gain natural immunity through contracting measles, one wagers a 1 in 1000 chance of death from the disease, and a 1 in 1000 risk of developing encephalitis. In contrast, an individual opting to vaccinate has zero risk of developing measles from the vaccine and a 1 in 1 million risk of encephalitis.

Fortunately, incidence rates of vaccine-preventable diseases are on the decline in most developed countries. Some vaccine-preventable diseases are declared as eradicated in North America. However, this does not mean that vaccination programmes in these areas can be eliminated. “One of my favourite [myths] is that we don’t need vaccines because these diseases were disappearing before vaccines were introduced,” said Ward, “and in terms of mortality, that is absolutely true [...] but not the incidence of disease.”

Modern sanitation, improved nutrition and the development of antibiotics have contributed to the reduction or elimination of infectious diseases. Although vaccine-preventable diseases are becoming less common, the infectious agents that cause them continue to circulate in some parts of the world. In a highly interconnected society, international travel is a common occurrence. Infectious agents are capable of crossing geographical borders, infecting the most vulnerable in nearly any corner of the world. Due to the success of immuni-

zation, Canada has not reported any cases of endemic measles since 1998. Infectious agents that boast only human reservoirs are capable of being completely eradicated, as in the case of smallpox, but until global eradication can be achieved, it is necessary to continue vaccinating against diseases that persist as potential threats to the Canadian population. However, “as a general rule, if there is an environmental reservoir, we have to vaccinate forever,” noted Ward. This applies for diseases such as polio and diphtheria, as they exist naturally in the environment and thus the risk of infection can never be completely eliminated.

There are two fundamental reasons to vaccinate: to protect ourselves, and protect those around us. Successful vaccination programs depend on the cooperation between individuals to ensure an overall benefit. This concept is referred to as “herd immunity,” specifically when the resistance to the spread of a disease within a population is achieved only when a sufficiently high proportion of individuals are immune to the disease, mainly through vaccination. When a critical portion or a community, typically ranging from 83 to 94 per cent, are protected against a disease, there is little to no possibility of outbreak. The concept of herd immunity is crucial to protecting those members of society that cannot receive vaccines, due to age, severe allergies, suffering from specific diseases, or are immunocompromised (diminished immune system capabilities). When vaccination rates fall below acceptable levels, members of the population become increasingly vulnerable. Overall, the coverage rates for vaccines are high in Canada, although some fall below the minimum range to maintain herd immunity. The anti-vaccination movement further jeopardizes these coverage rates by propagating misinformation regarding the necessity of vaccination in areas where incidence rates of vaccine-preventable diseases are low. For some parents, the herd immunity argument is insufficient to convince them to vaccinate, resulting in a difficult consideration of individual risk versus moral obligation. Ward agreed: “It’s the individual harm versus the greater good that is always the dynamic around vaccine safety [...] what’s the hit that you’re willing to take, in terms of these very low risks, to participate in this larger likely benefit?”

For many vaccine hesitant parents, vaccine-preventable diseases represent an unfamiliar, insubstantial threat. Many parents have simply never witnessed the potentially devastating effects of contracting measles or polio, or known someone to suffer from these diseases. Physicians and nurses in North America, despite working in the medical field, have only encountered such cases in literature. Vaccine programmes are largely responsible for a generation of parents unfamiliar with the symptoms and risks associated with infectious diseases, “we are very much vic-

tims of the success of our programs,” said Ward. Many images of disease exist only as obscure relics of the past. Long forgotten are the puffy cheeks and swollen neck of mumps, the severe diarrhea, vomiting and abdominal pain of rotavirus, or the flat, red blemishes of measles. Aside from the signs and symptoms, many of these diseases can have lasting health risks ranging from permanent deafness, brain damage, and paralysis leading to death.

The resistance to the spread of a disease within a population is achieved only when a sufficiently high proportion of individuals are immune to the disease, mainly through vaccination.

Undeterred, anti-vaccine advocates may continue to pivot the target of their accusations. The baffling longevity of the anti-vaccine movement partly speaks to its impressive malleability. “Like most myths, all of them have a grain of truth,” said Ward, “[...] they seize on the grain of truth and then extrapolate.” However, it is nearly impossible for researchers to keep up with evolving fears as they occur. Not only is studying extremely rare vaccine-associated effects difficult, anticipating them is impossible. “One of the really problematic things with vaccine-associated adverse events is that they are so rare. And so it is actually really hard to study something that is so rare,” said Ward. Take for example a new vaccine that has an unknown serious adverse effect of causing thrombocytopenia (low blood platelet count) in 1 per 2.9 million cases. Canada has an annual birth cohort of approximately 400,000 babies. This means that it would take over seven years for a true vaccine-associated occurrence of thrombocytopenia to appear, amidst a background of cases of thrombocytopenia resulting from some other factor.

How is it possible for researchers to pinpoint this single case as being caused by the vaccine? Worse than looking for a needle in a haystack, it would be comparable to searching for a single specific needle in a stack of needles. “People who stand up and shout [that] we have the tools to determine what vaccines are safe or not before we give them to people, that’s complete nonsense. We don’t. We’re pretty good but nowhere near that good for looking at these incredibly

rare events,” added Ward, “but that’s the expectation of the population... We just don’t have the tools.” Although technology is advancing, and adverse event reporting programs are improving, we are far from a CSI: Crime Scene Investigation level of scientific field-work.

The Public Health Agency of Canada [PHAC] childhood National Immunization Coverage Survey of 2013 asked Canadian parents about knowledge, attitudes and beliefs related to vaccines and vaccination. The survey revealed that 95 per cent of parents agreed that childhood vaccines are safe. Similarly, 97 per cent of parents thought that vaccines are effective and important for children’s health. However, nearly 70 per cent of parents expressed some degree of concern on the possible side effects of vaccines. More than one third falsely believed that a vaccine could cause the disease it was intended to prevent. Almost five percent of parents strongly believed that alternative practices, such as homeopathy or chiropractic, could eliminate the need for vaccines.

Homeopathic alternatives, such as nosodes, are not a substitute for vaccines. There are no suitable substitutes for vaccines. A CBC Marketplace investigation found that alternative health practitioners offer unproven vaccine “alternatives,” adding to many parents’ confusion regarding vaccines. Nosodes are prepared as dilutions of diseased tissue or excretions secreted during the course of a disease below concentrations expected to have protective effects, to a point where any trace of the original substance is likely not present. Homeopathic practitioners claim that the “memory” of the original substance is sufficient to create immunity. While no regulations prohibit homeopathic practitioners from offering health advice or alternative remedies, and to prove their positive effects, these treatments are not approved by Health Canada as an alternative to immunization. Medical experts agree that there is no scientific proof to substantiate their efficacy.

These results demonstrate a need for improved public education on immunization. If the willingness to vaccinate is placed on a spectrum, there are committed percentages at both ends, those whom are resolutely behind vaccines, and those against. However, from the PHAC data above, approximately 70 per cent of parents waver somewhere in the middle of this spectrum. These vaccine-hesitant parents are the target of most physician and researcher efforts to communicate with, better understand, and come to some sort of compromise with.

When the burden on the public and scientific community to communicate was discussed, Ward said, “Of course it’s always on the shoulders of the scientists to communicate and make sure the people understand, and do so in a way that’s easy for people to understand. It’s

also incumbent on the scientists and [physicians] to be completely transparent about risks. You have to acknowledge right up front that there is no such thing as a safe vaccine.” The discussion often boils down to one of understanding and accepting risk. “You have to be sensitive to each individual’s concept of risk [...] to say to somebody who’s worried ‘there’s no risk.’ It is much more effective to say ‘the risk is really small and I vaccinate my children.’” By moving the complex discussion of factors involved in vaccine safety to a simple understanding of the associated risks, as well as personal reassurance, “it’s completely transparent and it also says I know a whole lot more than you about the relative risks and I chose to accept those risks for my children,” said Ward, “So either I’m a shitty parent, or I’ve made an informed decision.” Heidi Larson, an anthropologist at the London School and Hygiene and Tropical Medicine echoed this sentiment during an interview with BBC News, “the reason that people get more entrenched in their opposition to vaccination is they feel like they’re not being listened to. So you don’t throw information at the problem. Instead you learn to listen.”

Homeopathic alternatives, such as nosodes, are not a substitute for vaccines. There are no suitable substitutes for vaccines.

“As a profession, our first step has to be to look at ourselves [and] say what are we doing wrong,” noted Ward. An important solution to dispelling misinformation around vaccines could therefore be that physicians and researchers devote more time to addressing doubts in a closed setting with hesitant parents.

In order for this method to be productive, parents must have the will and capacity to put risks into perspective. For most, honesty is the best policy, and transparency is imperative to trusting. Like any medicine, vaccines may carry real risks, ranging from minor swelling and fever, to rare but serious adverse effects including seizures and anaphylaxis. Doctors can begin to build trust by framing these risks alongside the dangers of disease, or comparing them to risks assumed in daily life. For example, a serious encephalomyelitis (inflammation of the brain and spinal cord) due to administration of the MMR vaccine occurs once in 1 million doses. In comparison, an individual is more likely to die in a car accident (one in 113), to suffer a severe ana-

phylactic allergy to penicillin (one to five in 10,000), or to be struck by lightning (1 in 13,000). These comparisons can be useful to truly appreciate the safety of current vaccines.

In addition to directly interacting with the public, it is integral for physicians and researchers to acquire an “expert versus expert” mindset to dispel propagation of false information by members of the medical and scientific communities. “The one’s I single out for the most pointed criticism is my peers. The medical and scientific experts. There has got to be consequences for people who stand up and spout nonsense,” insisted Ward, “I think we’ve been too passive.” The onus is on members of these respective communities to call out and challenge fraudulent claims made by their peers.

“We ask citizens to get vaccines to prevent 14 different diseases, which can mean as many as 26 inoculations in the first few years of life, to prevent diseases that people mostly don’t see, using biological fluids that most people don’t understand,” said Paul Offit, the head of an infectious-diseases division at the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia during a Q&A with University of Pennsylvania newspaper the Penn Current, “it’s not surprising that people are hesitant.” People can reject vaccines for a variety of reasons, such as personal or religious reasons, scare stories incubated on the internet and amplified by headline-driven media outlets, or due to fading memories of vaccine-preventable diseases that programmes have so adequately eliminated that we gladly forget their symptoms and risks.

Parents are responsible for the well-being of their children, including protection from diseases that are easily preventable. But with the population of vaccine-hesitant parents continuing to expand, we can only expect the committed anti-vaccination movement to grow as well. However, this is a different issue from smoking, or removing a seatbelt, where one knowingly accepts the risks associated as an individual. The choice made by parents not to vaccinate their child puts the livelihood of innocent children at risk.

“When I am confronted by somebody like that [parents who refuse to vaccinate children] I say I really hope for the sake of your children that your decision, which I think is ill-informed, [does not result] in them dying from tetanus or being hurt by measles. That, to me, would be a horrible outcome for both of us,” said Ward. Unfortunately, trends in the public perception of science, the government, and the vaccine industry highly contributes to parents’ distrust of vaccines. The public must learn to support credible scientific research and facts, to avoid misguidance and make well-informed decisions.

# Tragedy with a sprinkle of humour

Race, class, and food for thought in *Superior Donuts*



Vanderzon and Kaboré in *Superior Donuts*.

COURTESY OF ANSH GOYAL

**SABRINE MAAZ**  
Culture Writer

Don't let the title fool you – *Superior Donuts*, written by Pulitzer Prize winner Tracy Letts in 2008, is not the feel-good comedy you would expect from something named after a comfort food. Set in the eponymous donut shop of Chicago's developing Uptown neighbourhood, the play tells the story of shop owner Arthur Przybyszewski and his struggle to salvage his business after a vandal broke in and graffitied "Pussy" on the wall behind the counter.

The rendition by McGill's Players' Theatre, directed by Clay Walsh, successfully balanced the play's heavy subject matter with light scenes of comic relief, despite the drama's overall mournful tone. However, the audience becomes disoriented as they are constantly pulled between these two extremes: is this a comedy or a tragedy? The setting seems to suggest that it should be a comedy – the retro donut shop reminiscent of vintage sitcoms, with regular customers that never fail to amuse with their obvious social awkwardness.

However, despite chuckling at the offhand remarks made by Franco (the young new employee of Superior Donuts) I was left with a sinking despair at the intermission and after the play. Feeling betrayed by the play's unexpected darkness,

it became clear to me that *Superior Donuts*, unlike regular donuts, was not meant to make you feel good. In fact, the play is a dark comedy that explores not only themes of loss and friendship, but also the underlying systems of oppression that drive the characters into dilemmas where they must pit their dreams against reality.

Jonathan Vanderzon played Arthur, the middle-aged donut master of Polish descent who has experienced a series of hardships, leading him to expect nothing but failure. As a disillusioned divorcee whose estranged wife died of cancer after their separation, he is too emotionally numb to notice that a young police officer, Randy Osteen (played by Francesca Scotti-Goetz) has fallen in love with him. A young Black man named Franco Wicks (played by Sory Ibrahim Kaboré) charms Arthur into offering him a much-needed job at the shop, and proceeds to attempt to rectify both Arthur's romantic life and his failing business.

The well-spoken Franco boldly urges Arthur to update the establishment by playing lively music and offering healthy menu options, citing the 'Whole Foods mentality' that is emerging in the working-class neighbourhood as a result of gentrification. Unfortunately, like his donut shop, Arthur is stuck in the past and takes offense at Franco's suggestions, yelling, "I'm the

owner!" in a tense moment, shredding any illusion that this play is a simple comedy. Franco attempts to talk Arthur out of his pessimism, to no avail. Not only does Arthur doubt change will benefit his shop but he also resists change in general, insisting on keeping his hair long, and his clothes as disheveled as his store.

The rendition by McGill's Players' Theatre [...] successfully balanced the play's heavy subject matter with light scenes of comic relief, despite the drama's overall mournful tone.

Franco is a ray of hope in every sense of the term. He brings humour to the table with his witty comebacks to Arthur and serves up some ambition to the audi-

ence as he presents him with a battered manuscript. It is for his Great American Novel about a Black man who tries to make it big in the States. Even Arthur, a secret literature buff, is blown away by the young man's talent and urges him to show the book to a publisher. After Arthur leaves the scene, however, two Italian mafiosos who describe themselves as Franco's 'friends' come to extort Franco for the \$16,000 he owed them in gambling money. The boss Luther Flynn (played by Thomas Fix) gives him an ultimatum: have the money by next week or suffer the consequences. Arthur arrives just in time to see them leaving but Franco refuses to reveal their identity.

The downward spiral begins. When Franco begins to get uncomfortably familiar with Arthur by asking what happened to his wife, Arthur gives him the cold shoulder, saying that he was only paid to work, not to talk, and this rupture marks the end of Franco's optimism. One week later, Arthur learns that Franco has been hospitalized because two men broke his fingers and destroyed his precious manuscript. Arthur ultimately acquits Franco's debt out of his own pocket, planning to redeem his friendship with Franco after the latter exits the hospital. But when Franco returns to the donut shop, he is quiet and withdrawn because his dream was destroyed along with his novel.

As the play descends into a series of tragic events, the hopeless circumstances faced by the main characters appear to be consequences not of their own actions – but of a society built upon racial discrimination. As Franco strives toward the so-called 'American dream,' systemic oppression is evident as he is forced to drop out of school and resort to working in a donut shop to support his mother and sisters who are living on food stamps.

However, despite acknowledging these intersections of racism and classism and implicitly critiquing capitalism, the play fails to interrogate its own perpetuation of these systemic issues. Franco's character plays upon racial stereotypes: he is portrayed as an 'entertainer,' playing the light-hearted, funny, and extroverted Black friend to Arthur. Similarly, the Black police officer is depicted as frivolous and irrational when he is berated for dressing up as various fictional characters at comic book conventions. Even Arthur's character relies on the trope of 'Polish hopelessness' – a common and explicit theme in his many soliloquies – through his introverted, awkward, pessimistic, and old-fashioned depiction.

The play's highly problematic conclusion continues to reinforce the hierarchy it attempts to critique. A now-optimistic Arthur pays off Franco, who has shifted from stereotypically 'entertaining' to hopeless,

enacting the white-saviour narrative. In a twist of events, Franco rejects Arthur's help, insisting that he "doesn't want no handouts" as an acknowledgment of the same structural forces that cornered him into his current servitude.

Overall, the actors portrayed their characters very effectively, especially Jonathan Vanderzon, who infused Arthur's soliloquies with just the right amount of nostalgia to convey the spirit of a rebellious young man in a middle-aged body. Another highlight was Lady Boyle (played by Gretel Kahn), the eccentric, colourfully-dressed elderly lady who speaks too loudly and can make Arthur smile like nobody else. Kaboré was delightfully energetic and playful as Franco, radiating hope – at least in the beginning – and representing the beating heart of the plot.

However, Franco and Arthur's dialogues seemed a little forced at times – though this is perhaps intentional given that Arthur is supposed to be an awkward character. The dynamic between Arthur and Lady Boyle was the most natural one. In general, all the other characters seemed to have little rap-

port with each other, resulting in slightly awkward stage dialogues in which it seemed more like the characters were waiting for each other's turn to speak rather than having a natural conversation.

Despite my initial disappointment that the play was not the comedy I expected it to be, the tragic elements provided insight into the harsh conditions faced by Chicago's immigrant and racialized working class. After the play ended, the audience was left wondering: how can hope – embodied by Franco Wicks – survive, when society is building barriers between him and his dream? Judging by the solemn ending, the story line seems to suggest that hope cannot survive as long as society revolves around structural violence, despite Arthur's hopeful recitation of the catchphrase that "America will be." The deliciously good acting and witty repartees will leave you with a bitter aftertaste once you realize that this play is a grim but accurate depiction of the tragedy of a boy who fails to make it big due to the class-based and racial barriers plaguing the country he once idealized.



SABRINE MAAZ | Illustrator

## Not with a bang but a whimper

The unhappy family in *August: Osage County*

CAROLINE MACARI  
Culture Writer

Content warning: mentions of suicide and substance abuse

**A**ugust: *Osage County* by Dawson College Productions ran from January 23 to February 4. The Pulitzer-winning play by Tracy Letts chronicles a tumultuous time in the life of an Oklahoma family. The play opens with protagonist Violet Weston's elderly husband, Beverley, committing suicide just before their children and grandchild come to visit, forcing the family to confront their dark, hidden realities.

The cast members, part of Dawson College's professional acting program, performed an impressive show against a simple, handmade backdrop. Props were also eliminated from this production, inviting the audience to imagine the action as the characters realistically imitated smoking, physical fighting between family members, and eating a post-funeral meal. By simplifying and decluttering theatrical technicalities, the actor's heightened creativity, attention to detail, and complex acting was able to be better appreciated.

*August*, comprised of a predominantly female cast, explores the relationships between women in the family – and specifically investigates the complexities of family and mental health, the process of grief, and the realities of addiction. Barbara, Violet's eldest daughter, exemplifies support and loyalty in how she handles Violet's drug addiction. She is encouraging without being patronizing or forceful, but she also does not let her mother suffer in silence. She opens up discussion of the drug use and suggests



*August: Osage County* explores complex family dynamics.

COURTESY OF DAWSON COLLEGE PRODUCTIONS

possibilities for recovery, while juggling her own divorce from a cheating husband and considering the effects of the divorce on her daughter, Jean. Barbara's younger sister, Karen, embodies coolness and spunk. She initially seems silly and even ignorant of her family's hardships, but throughout the play, she embraces growth as she experiences harassment from her fiancé and learns to be a more present sister, daughter, and aunt.

Violet suffers from mouth cancer due to excessive smoking, but then becomes addicted to her medication and more intense substances. The play carefully approaches the

topic of drug addiction, conveying through Beverley's suicide and the family's subsequent focus on Violet in her time of grief, that it is possible to recover with support from loved ones. However, the play also sheds light on the effects of toxic family dynamics on one's mental health. Throughout the play, Violet's daughters often gaslight and criticize her, excusing their behaviour with the fact of her addiction.

At first, *August* seemingly relies on racialized and gendered stereotypes in its portrayal of Johnna, the Indigenous nanny and housekeeper serving a white family. She is initially

servile, spiritual, and financially reliant on the Weston family, who assume the position of white saviours. However, as her character develops, the play seems to show reverence and respect for Indigenous traditions. In one scene, Johnna shows Jean, the Weston's teenage granddaughter, photos from her parents' wedding. Jean compliments their "costumes," and Johnna explains to Jean, and the audience, the cultural significance of her parents' marriage ceremony. This gave the character a voice and the opportunity to reclaim representation of her identity from the mouths of the white Weston family.

*August: Osage County* dealt with provocative elements that, at times, forayed into dark, heavy moments. It asked its audience to consider the importance and complexities of personal relationships, mental health and the effects of drug use, and the implications of dysfunctional family dynamics – without presenting a way to reconcile these elements. Instead, it closes on an ambiguous note as Violet weeps into the arms of Johnna, the two of them alone together indefinitely, stating the closing line from T.S. Eliot's *Hollow Men*: "this is the way the world ends."

# On cinematic anthropology

## The use of sensation in ethnographic filmmaking

CLAIRE AVISAR  
Culture Writer

To most people, the image of a farm on the outskirts of Montreal, the routine of a professional bodybuilder, and Afghan lullabies have little to do with one another. To students of the Anthropology department's ANTH 408: Sensory Ethnography course, however, they represent the subjects of a semester's worth of work documenting, creating, and reflecting upon the process of ethnographic filmmaking.

On January 20, held within the historic limestone walls of Thompson House, McGill's Anthropology Students' Association hosted the students, their friends, and professors of a class whose central work focused on sensory ethnography (a practice that privileges audiovisual representations of living subjects and rejects the mediation of dialogue, narration, or subtitles). Prefaced by a cocktail hour, this event provided its attendees an evening of food, drinks, and the chance to engage with the students whose work was showcased. With a set of topics as diverse as their approaches, the films were united under their rich cinematography, experimental approach to the traditional narrative, and the attempt to decode human understandings of the world.

Professor Lisa Stevenson, an associate professor in the department of Anthropology, stepped up to the podium. She expressed pride for her students, along with the central question of the night: what is the value of cinematography over traditional written works?

Developed largely during the 20th century – a time of expansion within the discipline of anthropology – ethnography grew out of the schools of cultural and social anthropology as an observation driven

method of data collection. Moving beyond bound volumes of empirical analysis, sensory ethnography resides at the intersection of social science and aesthetics. Stevenson emphasized that, instead of drawing on prose as a method of documenting subjects, these student films drew primarily on the power of visual and auditory imagery in unearthing cultural idiosyncrasies. The practice aims to transform current ethnographic methods by creating new ways for researchers to engage with their audiences. The ultimate goal is to shift from data collection to practical knowledge.

### What is the value of cinematography over traditional written works?

Through sensory stimulation, researchers elicit reflection and emotion from the viewer. Stevenson explained that although such a style of film might reflect an experimental quality, its loss of linear narrative is purposeful. Without narration or subtitles to guide the viewer, sensory ethnography leaves space for reflexivity and interpretation. Citing Polish anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski, Stevenson explained that many of the films captured "the imponderabilia of everyday life." This concept was articulated in films such as *Delirium* by Timothy Mapley and *Rainy Day* by Lara Esrey, both showcased at the event, which utilized repetition and routine in order to explore the monotony of consumerism.

Within their documentation of a professional bodybuilder's daily



Professor Lisa Stevenson at the event.

regimen and an amateur boxing team, respectively, films such as *Kinesthesia* by Yuki Kasai-Pare and *Underdog* by Liona Gibbs-Bravo explored the relationship between the montage as a film technique and movement as a human experience. Seeking to show the self-discipline and strength of the human body when pushed to its physical limits, *Kinesthesia* coupled images of muscles in motion with classical music, the dynamics of which mirrored the intensity of weightlifting. By allowing the audience into their personal workout, the intimate perspective of the film, coupled with stimulating auditory cues, led the piece to succeed in conveying a personal pain that was palpable to the audience.

In contrast to the intensity featured in the aforementioned films, *Natural* by Julien Renaud and *The Present Moment* by April Barrett were powerful – but in subtle ways. The films evoked a sensory reaction through an exploration of stillness.

Placid and serene, *Natural* explored nature in the absence of humans, meditating on the passing of time by filling the screen with images of farmland upon winter's edge. Similar in its awareness of time, *The Present Moment* staged an encounter between the audience and a community of Roman Catholic nuns. Panning the bright corridors of a church, the smooth camera work enabled the hymnal chatter to prevail as a central feature.

As setting, motion, and sound all helped to develop a focus on what is expressed as sensory, the lighting – or lack thereof – in *Sonoluminescence* by Alec Tilly and *Lullaby for Kian* by Homa Wahabi was equally characteristic of psychedelic trance as it was of the personal elements of one's bedtime ritual. In the latter film, the tone of a grandmother reciting an Afghan lullaby to her grandchild created a sense of comfort and security. Though many people would not be able to understand her words,

CLAIRE AVISAR | Photographer

the soft, rolling sounds imparted a nostalgia to the moments between consciousness and the verge of being asleep.

Without narration [...] sensory ethnography leaves space for reflexivity and interpretation.

Despite their diversity of subject and technique, the films were ultimately unified in their exploration of the use of affect and sensation to explore what it means to be human. Not only did each film succeed in showcasing the curiosity of their makers, but they also effectively passed on their reflexivity to those who had the pleasure of viewing them.

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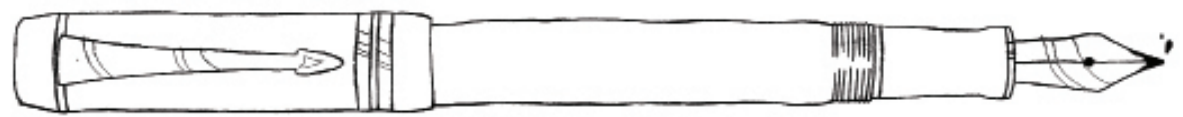
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## No solidarity with Islamophobes

Last Wednesday, an event entitled “United We Stand #NoHate” held on campus invited students to gather at the Y intersection to stand in solidarity with Muslim people. The event was held in light of the current climate of violent Islamophobia and the recent executive order signed by Trump. At the time of writing, the order banned people from seven Muslim-majority countries (Sudan, Somalia, Syria, Libya, Iran, Iraq and Yemen), including refugees, from entering the United States. Initially, organizers banned anti-Trump signs from the event, characterizing such sentiments as hateful, and potentially alienating of Trump supporters. They eventually retracted this statement in response to an outpouring of criticism on the Facebook event; however, the ‘apolitical’ nature of their original stance must still be rebutted. We cannot protest Trump’s racist and exclusionary policies without protesting Trump himself. Unity and compromise are necessary for the resolution of many political disputes, but racism is inherently divisive; we cannot unite with racists.

The key argument for Wednesday’s event was that in this polarized political climate, we should unite rather than reaffirm our divisions. However, in the context of Trump’s executive order, and the very real dangers Muslim people and other vulnerable groups are facing at this time, this response was deeply misguided. By insisting on #NoHate, the organizers of this protest were promoting the idea that an oppressed group is responsible for creating division in society if they dare to denounce their oppressors. By this logic, Muslim people are practicing hatred by demand-

ing accountability from those who enact Islamophobia. Clearly, the opposite is true – it is racists who are responsible for this hatred, and Trump, his government, and supporters, who have legitimized it. We cannot be lenient in the face of Islamophobia, and the first step to combatting this injustice and oppression is to be incisive and uncompromising in identifying it.

Furthermore, in the aftermath of the Quebec City mosque attack, which was perpetrated by a right wing, white nationalist Trump supporter, it seems especially unjust to insist on respecting the feelings of Trump supporters. Muslim people in Quebec and elsewhere are facing serious dangers in the face of a wave of violent Islamophobia. There is no comparison between the alienation of Trump supporters at a politically moderate university and the difficulties Muslim people are facing right now, and it is unconscionable to suggest that both these groups are equally in need of safety and acceptance.

The events of the past few weeks should make it clear to us that the growth of Islamophobia and racism in the public sphere has put Muslim peoples’ lives at risk. Under these circumstances, neutrality is simply not an option, and reaching a conciliatory hand across the aisle to Trump supporters should be our last priority. Instead, we must do all we can to support and protect communities who are at risk, and to actively resist oppression not only abroad, but right here at home.

—The McGill Daily editorial board

## Statement on the Quebec mosque shooting

Last Sunday, January 29, a 27 year old Quebecois white supremacist entered a Quebec City mosque, terrorizing all of its members and murdering six of them. The six Muslim victims were Abdelkrim Hassane, Khaled Belkacemi, Aboubaker Thabti, Azzeddine Soufiane, Ibrahim Barry and Mamadou Tanou Barry. They were fathers, sons, brothers, lovers and friends. The Daily commemorates their lives and the legacies they have left behind in the hearts of the people they loved and were loved by. We extend our deepest condolences to the families of the victims and the Muslim community at large. Grief is especially devastating during these tumultuous political times, when Muslims and people of colour are constantly under attack. As a newspaper, we continue to be committed to dismantling systems of oppression, including Islamophobia, within our publication. Instead, we hope to use our platform to provide the support and solidarity required by the Muslim community in McGill and Montreal.

—The McGill Daily editorial board

## ERRATA

“AUS creates oversight committee for SNAX” January 23, News, page 5: a previous version of this article stated that Ollivier Dyens had instigated the creation of a taskforce, which would include student members, and that Couture De-Graft had invited any interested students to get in touch with her. In fact, the taskforce has already been created, Couture De-Graft sits on the committee, and she had asked students to consult with her if they had any ideas they wanted her to bring to the taskforce. The Daily regrets the error.

“Destigmatizing mental illness” January 23, News, page 3: a previous version of this article stated that one of the panelists was Alyssa Rooster. In fact, her last name is Wooster. It also stated that Wooster talked about how the university experience exacerbated her depression. In fact it was an anxiety disorder. The Daily regrets these errors.

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Lies, half-truths, and the sharp click of the delete key – like a scythe

# A solemn goodbye to the 24-hour Second Cup on Parc

We mourn its loss in the Milton-Parc community

**DR. ANDREJA VIJUMIC**  
The McGill Weekly

It is with great regret and sadness that we say goodbye to the 24h Second Cup on Parc, which passed away suddenly on February 1, 2017. The 24h Second Cup was a

place to study, to spend time with friends, or simply to escape the bitter wind. In the winter, we enjoyed the embrace of its torn, misshapen armchairs; in the summer, we lounged on its generous patio, enjoying the view of the empty lot across the street. For many, it

provided something that no man ever could: comfort, warmth, and support, any time of day, any day of the year. There was no better example of the value of perseverance and determination; as long as the 24h Second Cup was serving coffee all night, by God, could we

finish our 20 page research papers by morning. From its improbably steep roof, to its jarringly neon '24h' signs, to its overwhelmingly brown and beige decor, the 24h Second Cup was a shining beacon of hope; it was the lighthouse at the edge of the Ghetto, guiding

McGill students safely ashore. The 24h Second Cup may be gone, but like the gentle, neverending melody of its ambiguous pop rock playlist, the spirit of the 24h Second Cup will never die. The 24h Second Cup is survived by the Milton Urban Eatery.

# White men debate how racialized students should act

Men offer enlightening view based on theoretical lived experiences

**IAWNIA JOHNSON**  
The McGill Weekly

Following the tragic events of Sunday, January 31, as well as in response to Trump's actions since assuming the presidency, crowds have been gathering at vigils and protests in solidarity with muslim people, people of colour, women, members of the LGBTQ community, and other people who have recently been facing increased violence. All of these protests and vigils have been plagued by a similar phenomenon: hijacking by white cisgender men.

Despite the best efforts of organizers, conversations regarding lived experiences are being derailed by white men, who are shocked by – for once – not having the loudest voice in every conversation. This is not just a local phenomenon; throughout the entire West, men (who, until now, have never shown up to a political event) have crawled

out of the woodwork to make sure their voices are heard.

The conversations that they have, amazingly, manage not only to decenter oppressed voice, but are downright self-fellating. At a demonstration in protest of the Trump administration's recent decisions, two white men made their way to the centre of the crowd. "Your dick is bigger," one said; "no your dick is bigger," the slightly taller but equally bland other man said.

They're not only talking about themselves, however: they're also taking time out of their days to decide how students who are affected by the administration's policies should act – white men are wasting no time getting right down to the nitty gritty! They've covered such difficult topics as the necessity of violence, the way to treat supporters of Trump, and how tragically unexpected Islamophobic and racist events are in Canada.

Organizers are so thankful to white men for interrupting and

taking credit for the events they invested emotional labour in – globally, sentiments of appreciation to white men for making sure that these events don't centre upon the lived experiences of those living under oppression are flooding social media.

These white men don't act alone however; spurred by attractive white activists like Justin Trudeau, these men now have the bravery to speak at events which aren't about them. Armed with screenshots of racialized people's blogs, some key snippets of the few books they read for introductory philosophy classes, and ingrained senses of misogyny, white men are ready to protect to the weak – not with violence, of course, but with discourse surrounding the value of it. Or the value of peaceful protest. There's just lots of discourse, really.

People with lived experiences of oppression are quick to thank white men for making sure they didn't have to finish their speeches: "I



**NAAM JANINA** | The McGill Weekly

actually only wrote half of a heartfelt speech," one activist explained. "That's why, when a white man got on stage while I was midsentence, I started to cry – I was elated!" they further explained.

Don't worry, though, white men know of the value of their

work. At the end of his speech, White man #3 made sure to point out how important his activist work was, saying "And I know this is just me as a white guy, but I really like N.W.A., and I feel like I really know what it would be like to be Straight Outta Compton."

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