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THE McGill Daily

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gothshakira

Double Aquarian talks memes and activism

PAGES 16 & 17

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Demonstration denounces rape culture

Speakers call for intersectionality and government action

MARINA CUPIDO
The McGill Daily

On the evening of Wednesday, October 26, more than one thousand people gathered at Place Émilie-Gamelin for a demonstration against rape culture. Organized partially in response to a series of recent high-profile sexual assault cases in Quebec, the demonstration united a broad and diverse cross-section of the local community in support of those who have experienced sexual violence. Protesters also marched that day in various other cities across the province.

Speeches call for action

At roughly 5:45 p.m., a series of speeches began, as representatives of different movements and organizations from Montreal addressed the crowd from a raised platform in the center of the packed square. First to speak was Natasha Kanapé Fontaine, a feminist activist and member of the Innu people, Indigenous to northern Quebec. Greeting those assembled, she explained the reason behind the demonstration:

“In the context of the case brought against Radio Canada by police officers of the Sureté du Québec of Valdor, in connection to the broadcasting of a report on abuses committed against Indigenous women [...] and with the grave and serious allegations about a [Quebec] National Assembly deputy, thousands of women and non-binary individuals demonstrate with their allies to send a clear message: we’ve had enough of rape culture and of sexual violence. [...] We hope that this day represents a renewal of solidarity between many different struggles for equality, uniting militants from many communities and representing our diversity.”

Like the other speakers who addressed the crowd, Fontaine spoke in French, accompanied by a sign language translator.

Next to speak were three leaders of the recently founded Quebec Against Sexual Violence, Kimberley Marin, Mélanie Lemay, and McGill student Ariane Litalien. Having experienced sexual assault themselves, they spoke passionately and with an understanding of the complex circumstances that often lead people in their position not to report an assault.

Another speaker, Catherine Roy-Goyette, the constituency assistant of Hochelaga’s Member of Parliament and a member of the New Democratic Party (NDP), criticised governmental inaction in no uncer-

tain terms, telling the crowd that change doesn’t come only through bills and parliamentary debate.

“It takes a diversity of actions,” said Roy-Goyette. “Demonstrations, like we’re seeing today across Quebec, journalistic investigations, articles in the media, discussions in our kitchens and on social media. But [...] government also has a role to play.”

“[We need] funding for victims and for the groups that take care of those victims. It will also take a complete revision of the Criminal Code to equip our judicial system to convict aggressors,” she continued. “When I think that for every ten complaints filed with the police, only one results in a conviction, [...] I am sickened.”

Emilie Nicolas, co-founder of the non-profit Inclusive Quebec, also addressed the crowd, beginning her speech by thanking Alice Paquet, who recently accused Liberal member of the Quebec National Assembly, Gerry Sklavounos, of sexual assault in 2014, for her courage in the preceding week. Paquet has been criticised in the media and her story has been discredited on the basis of her support for sex workers.

Importance of intersectionality

Nicolas also spoke strongly in favour of approaching sexual violence intersectionally.

“To all the Indigenous women who carry the weight of feminicide that has been ignored for years, [...] to all those who fear for their security and their credibility in the eyes of the police, [...] to all the women whose [experience] is ignored by those women who claim to fight for all women, [...] to all those who were assaulted by [...] someone responsible for their well-being, and who fear being left without resources if they denounce, [...] to all those who are torn between denouncing sexist violence, and denouncing the racist representation of men of their community, [...] to all those who are afraid of being deported from the country if they denounce, [...] to all those whose financial means or support system [...] don’t allow them to denounce, [...] we believe you, we respect you, we support you.”

The event was open to people of all genders, though cisgender men were encouraged to give space to women, as well as trans and non-binary individuals, as these communities typically experience a disproportionate amount of sexual violence.

Speaking to The Daily in English, Kyle, a student at Concordia, said that as a cisgender, masculine-



RAHMA WIRYOMARTONO | The McGill Daily

presenting person, he felt that he should “definitely [be] taking a step back” at a protest like this.

“I see my role as an ally and as someone who is also taking a stance against toxic masculinity on campuses and in our society at large,” said Kyle, “because it’s not something that’s just restricted to university spaces.”

Kyle also addressed the fact that in supposedly progressive university spaces, insidious forms of gendered and sexual violence can also be present.

“There’s definitely [...] people who can talk the talk and [quote] the literature, but aren’t actually living their politics,” he said, “and I think that there needs to be a culture of both cis dudes calling that shit out, but then also more broadly men need to take a step back and listen to when they’re being called out,” he said.

“My experience is, having been called out for saying fucked-up things, [...] it doesn’t feel good, but it’s also [important] to learn to take a step back and listen, because if people are calling you out there’s reason for it,” he continued. “If you claim to [...] live radical politics, then a key component of that is abolishing patriarchy and recognizing privilege in the spaces that you have and the spaces that you take up.”

The demonstration not only brought together people of diverse ethnicities, genders, sexualities and faiths, but also people of all

ages. A “baby bloc” was organized in which parents of small children gathered to march together, often pushing strollers.

One woman who had brought her daughters – aged three and six years old – to the protest told The Daily in French that she “[came] for them, [...] to change something so that my daughters don’t have to find themselves in uncomfortable situations at some point, and so that they can have all the resources to be able to control the situation.”

Despite the Service de Police de la Ville Montreal (SPVM)’s history of dealing violently with protests, she explained that she hadn’t been nervous about bringing her children along, trusting the organizers and expecting a peaceful protest.

“We’re here to denounce violence,” she said. “Otherwise I wouldn’t have brought them.”

Peaceful march leads to second demonstration

Indeed, the rally at Place Émilie-Gamelin and the subsequent march were entirely peaceful, with an extremely light police presence. After roughly an hour of speeches, the crowd left the square and walked west along Maisonneuve, led by a small group of Indigenous women. Overall, the mood of the demonstration seemed relaxed and cheerful, with most participants chatting among themselves.

The march proceeded west as far as Union, before turning south and circling back east to Place des Arts along Ste. Catherine. Once there, they spread out into a wide circle, in the middle of which the Innu women who led the march performed a traditional song. They then invited the assembled crowd to join in, and dance around the circle holding hands.

At this stage, some of the participants dispersed, while several hundred remained in Place des Arts, dancing and cheering in a display of defiance and solidarity. Ultimately, this group left the square en masse and held a spontaneous demonstration.

Consisting mainly of students, and adopting a far more militant tone, this second demonstration proceeded at random through the lower Plateau, chanting “We believe you!” “Whose streets? Womens’ streets!” and “Your hand on my ass, my fist in your face!” in French.

In sharp contrast to the earlier and more sedate demonstration, this one garnered significant attention from law enforcement, with large numbers of police vehicles following the crowd and rushing to block streets ahead of them. No confrontation occurred, however, and having dwindled to roughly a hundred participants, the protest dispersed peacefully at the Beaudry metro station.

Non-smoking proposal discussed

Students bring up security and stigmatization concerns at town hall

ELLEN COOLS
The McGill Daily

On October 25, roughly 15 students and other members of the university community gathered in the Redpath Museum Auditorium for a town hall meeting regarding McGill's Draft Smoking on Campus Policy.

The policy was developed following consultation with the McGill community that was initiated by the Students' Society of McGill University (SSMU) and the Post-Graduate Students' Society (PGSS) of McGill University.

Robert Couvrette, the Associate Vice-Principal (University Services), mandated a working group to recommend ways to implement a campus-wide non-smoking policy.

Panelists at the town hall included Paul Guenther, senior campus planner at the Office of Campus and Space Planning and chair of the working group, David Benrimoh, working group student representative, and Jenny Ann Pura, PGSS Member Services Officer and working group PGSS representative. The discussion was moderated by Lindsay Duncan, a professor in the Department of Kinesiology and Physical Education.

Developing the policy

Guenther began the discussion by explaining that in developing the policy, the working group looked at similar practices at universities in North America and Europe that mirror McGill's campus dynamics. The group also consulted academic research, which showed that "exposure to secondhand smoke poses a health risk for the entire community."

The policy defines smoking as "the usage of any product that contains or otherwise utilizes tobacco, tobacco-derived substances, and/or emits a vapor or smoke." Smoking would be banned on campus except for a designated area at the Upper Residences and designated areas on MacDonald campus and the Gault Estate.

"Based on best practices [at universities] this policy will be self-enforced by the community," Guenther said. "It's expected that the broader community, including the student outreach teams, university leaders and staff, will educate anyone who is ignoring or unaware of the policy [...] but there is no punitive enforcement."

Speaking to The Daily, Guenther also noted that the working group is consulting the broader Montreal community. "I'm meeting with FACE [Fine Arts Core Education] school [...] on [Rue] University, I've reached out

to John Abbott College at MacDonald campus, I've reached out to Gault Estate and I'm about to reach out to some of the unions as well, trade unions especially, to see how [the policy] will impact them," he explained.

Stigmatization and security concerns

The town hall began with a student asking for the reason behind ruling out punitive measures. A representative from McGill Security attending the discussion responded that this would require "individuals to identify themselves in order to receive punitive penalties [which] is something that is really hard to do."

Guenther added the major universities surveyed by the working group did not use punitive measures.

Another student brought up concerns regarding stigmatization. "For some people, including myself, cigarettes and tobacco products are a way to cope with [...] stress," he said. "[Also], just because I am a smoker, people will harass me, and you're really only encouraging that policy by putting smokers in a corner and alienating us. So how would you respond to this?"

He further said that during exams, having to walk to Sherbrooke, for example, would add stress on smokers.

"We are not, by this policy, mandating students to stop smoking, in any



The town hall.

ELLEN COOLS | The McGill Daily

way, shape or form," Benrimoh said. "I know that it does impose some restrictions on [smokers]. [But] because it is not a technique of stress relief that is only limited to yourself and actually causes harm to others, it's unfair to allow it in an area where it's harming others." He also acknowledged the policy may result in stigmatization.

Attendees also brought up the issue of safety for smokers when studying on campus late at night.

"You're putting students in a problematic situation where [they're] on the streets late at night, away from any security. How do you respond to that?" one student asked.

Another student also noted that there have been security incidents late at night on streets adjacent to campus.

Benrimoh said that the working group could consult McGill Security's patrol routes and potentially adjust the policy, and that, if students feel unsafe at night, this is a bigger concern the University should address.

After the town hall, in an interview with The Daily, Benrimoh reflected that "the comments today were especially useful. I think the most useful one was the question about security and I think that we do have to talk with McGill Security."

Notice of Referendum by the Quebec Public Interest Research Group (QPIRG)-McGill

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Full text of the motions and instructions regarding the formation of YES and NO Committees are available at qpirgmcgill.org/elections-qpirg-mcgill

Campaign & Polling Periods

The Referendum will occur between Monday, October 31st and Tuesday, November 8th. Campaigning may take place between Monday, October 31st and Tuesday, November 8th. Polling will take place from 08:00 on Thursday, November 3rd until 17:00 on Tuesday, November 8th.

Students may vote online at <https://ssmu.simplyvoting.com/>

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McGill's buildings are falling apart

Students' Society of McGill University calls on Quebec to do more

HALEY O'HALLORAN
News Writer

Recently, a provincial government report was released which revealed that many Quebec university buildings are in poor condition, especially those at McGill, Concordia, and l'Université de Montréal.

McGill received the worst grade from provincial building inspectors, with the report showing that 73 per cent of the buildings at McGill are in "poor, or worse condition." In comparison, 60 per cent of the buildings at Concordia and l'Université de Montréal have been assessed as being "in need of urgent renovations."

"On a per square metre basis, 27 per cent of McGill's 850,000 square metres received a D grade," said Associate Vice-Principal (University Services) Robert Couvrette in an email to The Daily. Buildings in Quebec are inspected and assessed using letter grades, ranging from A to E, with E being the worst grade a building can receive.

Several buildings at McGill received an E grade, most notably the Strathcona Anatomy and Dentistry Building.

Addressing the problem

McGill and the province of Quebec are collaborating to restore the relevant facilities across McGill's two campuses, but there seems to be a discrepancy between the two parties' assessments of the resources needed to fix the problem.

The report conducted by the province concluded that the repairs needed at McGill would cost roughly \$600 million, but this number was drastically different than McGill's estimate, which is closer to \$1 billion.

According to Couvrette, this difference is a result of the province's lack of consideration regarding the infrastructure costs.

"Infrastructure costs, such as underground water, sewer and heating pipes, that we have to maintain and repair from time to time [...] would account for about \$200 million of that gap," explained Couvrette. "Our entire deferred maintenance deficit is approximately \$900 million, plus deficiencies that were not identified by a visual inspection."

Ultimately, he argued that McGill cannot provide a completely accurate estimate of the intended construction projects' costs until the administration finishes the remainder of the studies required by the government.

However, Quebec has publicly stated that universities are unable to fund the restoration of the majority



NADIA BOACHIE | The McGill Daily

of their structures. As a result, the province has pledged to contribute \$1 billion to Quebec universities maintenance efforts over the next six years.

"On a per square metre basis, 27 per cent of McGill's 850,000 square metres received a D grade."

—Robert Couvrette
Associate Vice-Principal

Restoration priorities

In terms of future restoration projects, several longstanding plans have been put in place by the University.

When asked about the budget allocated for building maintenance this year, Couvrette wrote that "the provincial government gives us about \$46 million per year for building repair and we spend about \$40 million from the operations budget per year, which includes \$10 million in cleaning maintenance costs. So the total spent on building repair is about \$75 million."

"There are two major priorities we need to address: building envelopes [exterior masonry, windows, and so on] and HVAC [heating, ven-

tilation, and air-conditioning systems]," he clarified.

According to Couvrette, the facilities being prioritized for their failing exteriors are the James Administration Building, the Macdonald-Stewart Building, the Macdonald-Harrington Building, the Strathcona Anatomy and Dentistry Building, and the Macdonald Engineering Building. The facilities that are being prioritized for their HVAC systems are the Macdonald-Stewart Building, the Rutherford Physics Building, Lyman Duff Medical Building, Burnside Hall, the Shatner Building, and the Ferrier Building.

The James Administration Building, according to Couvrette, received an intermediary grade between D and E. With regard to maintenance, the priorities are improving the facade. Construction is set to begin on the building in the next two years and will cost an estimated \$4 million. Additionally, Couvrette says, the reconstruction of the Macdonald Stewart Library is set to take place in the next two years.

"Preliminary work will begin in 2017, with the actual construction slated to start in the spring of 2018," he elaborated. "The project is expected to last between 12 and 18 months. The budget for the masonry work, funded by a special grant from the Quebec government, will be in the \$25 million range."

Plans for the other high priority buildings are still being drafted

by the University, he says, with assistance from the government. This includes the Strathcona Anatomy and Dentistry Building, where the government and the University are working together to find a source of funding.

SSMU and student reactions

McGill students have long raised concerns about the campus's maintenance problems, with many questioning whether the buildings follow the safety codes mandated by the province of Quebec: buildings like the Macdonald Stewart Library are noticeably damaged to students and visitors alike, and worse than being aesthetically displeasing, the reconstruction of these buildings has created accessibility problems for many students.

In an email to The Daily, SSMU VP University Affairs Erin Sobat clarified that SSMU has been attempting to help students who have brought complaints forward about the building conditions, deferred maintenance, general maintenance, and classroom spaces.

In a collective statement to The Daily, SSMU explained their concerns with McGill's building maintenance.

"Deferred maintenance is a serious issue because it limits McGill's ability to invest in modernized facilities and accessibility initiatives, such as incorporating universal design standards into all renovation projects," said the statement. "We need to see a stronger

funding commitment from the government to address these problems at all Quebec universities."

"We need to see a stronger funding commitment from the government to address these problems at all Quebec universities."

—SSMU

This response from SSMU mirrors the reactions of many McGill students, who are frustrated with the University, but also equally frustrated with the city and the province.

In an interview with The Daily, a student who preferred to remain anonymous remarked that building failures are less noticeable because of city construction on campus.

"The exteriors of the buildings appear not up to code, but the insides appear fine," they said. "It is sometimes hard to notice the buildings with the entire campus being torn up by construction."

Mental health Q&A discusses new model

Students question the impact of “two doors, one service”

NORA MCCREADY
News Writer

On Monday, October 24, the Students' Society of McGill University (SSMU) Mental Health Committee hosted a panel discussion on the state of mental health services at McGill. Panelists included Giuseppe Alfonsi, Associate Director of McGill Counselling and Mental Health Services, George Radiotis, a psychotherapist working for McGill Counselling and Mental Health Service, Teri Phillips, Director of the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD), Chris Buddle, Dean of Students, and Quinn Ashkenazy, chair of the Peer Support Centre.

Stepped care model

The discussion began with an overview of recent changes to the structure of the McGill Counselling and Mental Health Services, including the implementation of a stepped care model. The new model is based on the system currently in place at Memorial University in St. John's, Newfoundland. According to Alfonsi, this model will give students more power in determining their treatment plan.

The model emphasizes choice, providing a number of treatment options which serve as intermediate 'steps' to one-on-one psychotherapy – the treatment students typically received under the old system. The changes come in response to the strain put on the counselling and mental health services in recent years, as demand exceeds the availability of psychotherapy treatment.

According to Alfonsi, the McGill Health Clinic has seen “a 30 per cent increase in users over the last five years.”

He added that introducing a “wider menu of options of different modalities” such as group therapy, online therapy, and referrals to other organizations such as the Peer Support Centre will reduce the strain on the service.

The stepped care model also aims to avoid “handoffs,” referrals from one professional to another or from one service to another that made it difficult for the student to access appropriate services, which were common under the old system.

“Two doors, one service”

The model operates as “two doors, one service,” meaning that you can enter through either counselling or mental health, but that both are processed by a single, combined system.

One attendee raised concerns regarding the the implementation of “two doors, one service.”

“In terms of your two different teams have they become one team?” she asked. “Is there now one culture and one training and hiring process, or are they going to maintain two different kinds of philosophies, and therefore this affects the practices and the services, and therefore maybe students still should make a choice about which door to enter?”

“In terms of one culture, we just started this process, so let's be realistic.” Alfonsi responded. “I think it's a long-term goal to have at least one culture [...] to have more communication, certainly to have common needs – which may seem like a small thing, but we didn't have that in the past.”

He added that mental health and counselling staff will have more training and workshops together.

Phillips added that “when there is need, students can be transferred between professionals, and

I would see that being the value of having a spectrum of [diverse professionals in the service].”

The stepped care model also aims to avoid “handoffs,” referrals from one professional to another or from one service to another that made it difficult for the student to access appropriate services.

Ashkenazy also said the new model expands students' treatment options, opening the door to services such as the Peer Support Center, where students can receive help from their peers.

“Treating professionals”

The panelists also discussed the introduction of “treating professionals.” A “treating professional” is the first person a student meets with at the McGill Counselling and Mental Health Services. The “treating professional” meets with the student to determine together what their needs are and what service best suits them.

The panelists were asked whether students could expect

any basic services from these “treating professionals.”

“In terms of the [treating professional], what is this person actually doing and how much time has been carved out for the professionals to deal with that?” one student asked.

“It's more of a collaborative conversation with the student [...] to determine ‘okay, these are the things that are going on right now, which ones do you want to focus on right now?’” Radiotis explained. “The treating professional [...] becomes the point person for that student moving forward.”

“Is there a specific thing you can expect though from your [training professional]?” she asked.

Radiotis explained that that is determined in the first meeting between the student and professional. He emphasized once again that it is a collaborative process, based on what works best for the student.

Alfonsi suggested that the flexibility in this process is a “strength of the system” because it provides more choice for students.

Online therapy

Panelists also discussed the viability of online therapy.

Radiotis emphasized that the service is trying to incorporate online therapy into their treatment plans because it is proven to be an often effective alternative to one-on-one psychotherapy.

Alfonsi suggested that there are virtues to online therapy that don't apply to other forms of treatment, for example, that it's easy to access and involves little commitment from those students who don't feel ready for psychotherapy.

International students

One attendee asked how the service is reaching out to international students. Phillips responded by expressing her own concern

about a lot of international students falling through the cracks.

“The barrier actually comes from some of the cultural differences [...] that disability is something that is not talked about in a lot of students' home country or that it was very stigmatized in their home country. However, that being said, that's where the education part is important to know about the peer services that exist,” Phillips said.

“It's more of a collaborative conversation with the student [...] to determine ‘okay’, these are the things that are going on right now, which ones do you want to focus on?”

—George Radiotis,
Psychotherapist

Alfonsi said that McGill is working to break down barriers between international students and the Counselling and Mental Health Services, saying “that's exactly the population we're most concerned about.” They are also focused on expanding mental health insurance provided to international students and increasing the number of international languages in which treatment is offered.

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Trans women of colour and law

Panel focuses on continued discrimination for migrant trans women

XAVIER RICHER VIS
The McGill Daily

On Wednesday, October 27, OutLaw, a club for queer students and their allies based in the Faculty of Law, and the Women of Colour Collective at McGill (WOCC) organized a panel discussion entitled “Lived Experiences of Trans Women of Colour and Law,” which focused on the difficulties trans women who immigrate to Quebec face.

“With Bill 35 and 103, 2015 has been a year of substantial progress in terms of trans rights in Quebec,” said VP External of OutLaw and event moderator Florence Paré (who authored “Enforcing the deadname,” published October 17), before introducing the panel’s speakers. “Trans citizens, adults and minors alike, are now able to change their legal name and gender marker without having undergone genital surgery.”

“Unfortunately, those rights have not been extended to non-citizens, who remain unable to change their names or gender marker with the Directeur de l’Etat Civil, despite being able to insert your birth certificate into the registry,” Paré added. “Trans women of colour, and in particular those who are migrants, are particularly vulnerable to discrimination, due to their lack of recognition by the state.”

Panel members included Betty Iglesias, who does outreach in the Montreal area, supporting groups who provide harm reduction materials and other resources for trans people, sex workers, and LGBTQ immigrants; and Dalia Tourki, an Arab trans migrant rights advocate who helped organize the 2016 Montreal Trans March.

Panelists were asked about the biggest challenges trans migrants and women in Quebec face: discussion centered around provincial legislation which dealt with legal documentation.

Tourki spoke about Article 71 of Quebec’s Civil Code: “It basically forbids trans people from changing their legal documents [e.g. driver’s license],” said Tourki. “If you’re a trans woman like me, you still have your deadname on the document. You cannot change it, so basically I still have a masculine name [on my documents], [one] that I was given at birth and did not choose.”

Tourki addressed the repercussions of such a law when she needs to go to many places that require photo identification, such as a post office.

“Just [...] asking for any simple service [for me] creates a sense of malaise, an [extreme] sense of embarrassment,” added Tourki. “I’ve never had the level of anxiety that I’ve been having for these last few

months. [...] Every time I show my ID, I’m being outed.”

Iglesias concurred: “We need documents that allow us to have access to essential healthcare, to housing, [so] we don’t have to explain [our] gender, [our] identity,” she explained. “[Otherwise, others] have this privilege, this power, over the decision to give us access or not.”

Both Iglesias and Tourki spoke about their experiences with what it means to not only be a trans woman, but also an immigrant.

“Those of you who are children of immigrants know how lonely it is, how it can be very solitary,” Tourki said. “I mean, we come from countries where our existence was threatened. For most of the trans migrants that I know, [immigrating] is basically escaping.”

Tourki went on to address the struggles that come with adapting to life in another country, and recalled her experience getting into a taxi in Tunisia (her home nation) to go to the airport, on her way to Canada.

“The taxi driver noticed that I was gender non-conforming,” recalled Tourki. “At the time, I [hadn’t] started my transition, and [...] he told me ‘It’s better if you leave this country.’”

However, she later stressed that while she might have escaped from Tunisia, that didn’t mean her new home of Canada didn’t also discrimi-



The panelists and moderator. **KEVIN TAM** | The McGill Daily

nate against trans people, especially trans migrants.

“Discriminating against trans Canadians and trans migrants should not be acceptable in a country that pretends to be fighting for human rights, [with] safe havens for LGBT communities,” she clarified.

Iglesias added to that point by illustrating how trans migrants in Canada are not only discriminated against, but often targeted, especially by law enforcement.

“[I’ve heard stories of] police coming to massage parlors, and they were targeting sex workers who were immigrants [...] They came looking for immigrants to deport them.”

In an email to The Daily, Romita Sur, Co-President of WOCC of McGill Law, wrote about how the event came to be, and why the WOCC felt the panel’s discussion was so important.

“We realized that [a] majority of our events focused on women of colour or Indigenous women, so we wanted to dedicate an entire event to trans women of colour,” she wrote.

“We often [hear] about trans women and the oppression they face in the legal system,” she continued, “but we wanted to take it a step further to learn about the difficulties that trans migrants face and what they [need] from the law itself.”

McGill students fight for global healthcare

Universities Allied for Essential Medicines discusses SSMU General Assembly motion

RAHMA WIRYOMARTONO
The McGill Daily

On October 16, the McGill Students’ Chapter of Universities Allied for Essential Medicines (UAEM) could be seen standing at the the University’s Y intersection, launching their campaign to raise awareness about their upcoming SSMU General Assembly (GA) motion aimed at improving global accessibility to medicine.

UAEM describes itself as a global student organization that seeks to improve innovation, access, and empowerment in the field of international healthcare. If the McGill chapter’s motion passes on November 7 at the GA, the motion will push the University to “adopt an open access framework for all future medicine patents created at McGill and sold to the private sector.”

Peter Grabitz, UAEM’s European coordinator and member of the McGill chapter, explained in an interview with The Daily why UAEM McGill introduced their motion.

“[Our] basic issue is that a lot of research, that is eventually leading to innovation, is done at the university level,” Grabitz explained. “However [...] once the University is licensing and patenting innovation in a way that allows the product to be bought up [and monopolized] by a company.”

“The public is basically paying two or three times [the product’s cost],” he explained. “They’re first paying for the basic research, and then they’re paying for the marketing, and the profit margin of the company afterwards. One easy way to stop this is changing the licensing condition at the university level.”

“What we want to do,” he added, “is to have McGill introduce licensing conditions that ensure global access to medicine and to the innovation that comes out of it.”

While McGill’s UAEM chapter has been active for five years, this is the first time that the student group is bringing forth a motion, entitled “Policy Regarding Global Access to Medicines”, to a SSMU General Assembly

in order to implement concrete action to secure institutional accountability.

“The McGill chapter first and foremost wants to push for the access framework at an institutional level at a General Assembly motion,” said Sonia Larbi-Aissa, Co-President of UAEM McGill and a former Daily editor. “What [the motion] is, is actually a policy that would become an official agenda item for SSMU senators for the next five years.”

The motion overall emphasizes accessibility in the hypothetical event of a humanitarian health crisis. Drawing parallels between the 1990s HIV/AIDS epidemic and the 2013-16 West African Ebola virus epidemic, Larbi-Aissa explained that “in the event of a humanitarian crisis like that, [...] this document that we cite in the motion states [...] that what would happen is that the patent and that drug would be available in the developing country in question.”

“People would never be able to afford the market price of that drug,” she continued, “because pharma-

ceuticals are pricing it at monopoly prices, which are above the fixed cost of producing the drug.”

“People would never be able to afford the market price of that drug because pharmaceuticals are pricing it at monopoly prices.”

—Sonia Larbi-Aissa
Co-President of UAEM McGill

Speaking about the importance of student involvement, Christine Kim, U3 Pharmacology student and Co-President of UAEM McGill, stated that the issue of inaccessibility in in-

ternational healthcare is rarely critically engaged with in academic study.

“I’m a pharmacology major and even the students who learn about this issue, they learn it in a very different manner from how we’re doing it here and during our workshops and meetings,” she said. “I think it’s important for there to be an organization from the students on the other side of things. [...] There’s also a large amount of students that don’t even learn about this in class,” Kim added.

Chloe Hogg, a U3 Arts student who founded three chapters of UAEM in Melbourne, Australia, spoke about the importance of realizing the power McGill wields in how it licenses research.

“The way basic research is licensed off by big research institutions like McGill makes it unavailable to developing countries because the prices are so high,” she clarified. “We want to change McGill’s policies so that medicines are more accessible to all.”

An open letter to the university

Addressing the proposed smoking ban



KEVIN TAM | The McGill Daily

MONA LUXION
Commentary Writer

Dear Associate Vice-Principal Robert Couvrette, members of the University Health and Safety Committee, and fellow McGillians, when I received an email recently outlining plans to ban smoking across the downtown campus, I was deeply concerned. I don't smoke, myself, so I could have waved this off as something that didn't affect me. But the truth is, as a teaching assistant who cares about my students, as a queer person and as a person proposing this policy, I am affected.

My father is a musician whose primary workplace is in bars and restaurants. When a ban on indoor smoking went into effect in my hometown of Chicago, his working conditions improved significantly. Second-hand smoke is a dangerous and unpleasant thing in a contained environment and even outdoors and concentrated second-hand smoke is a serious concern for people with asthma, chemical sensitivities, and allergies. But there are many ways these risks can and should be mitigated that do not involve the banning of smoking altogether.

The reality is that a campus-wide ban on smoking is effective-

tively a ban on smokers themselves. Obligating students and staff to leave campus in order to smoke reduces their ability to participate in on-campus activities. The smoking policy website frequently asked questions (FAQ) claims that nowhere on campus is more than a three minute walk from public property; however if you can get from the top floor of Leacock to a public street in fewer than three minutes with construction, you should get some kind of prize. Those three minutes to and from a smoking spot still take up six minutes of an average ten minute break. While classmates and work colleagues who need a caffeine hit can easily pop downstairs for one in almost any campus building, McGillians who depend on nicotine will be forced to choose between missing class material or work time and having difficulty focusing.

This double-bind is particularly troubling when you consider that low-income students, queer students, and students with mental illnesses, among other minority groups, are all more likely to smoke. These students are also those who are already more likely to face difficulties at McGill, and drop out due to alienation and lack of support. Pushing smoking off campus makes it even more

difficult for such students to fully engage in their education, while sending them a clear message: "you are dirty, noxious, and don't fit into our vision of this university."

The reality is that a campus-wide ban on smoking is effectively a ban on smokers themselves.

The website for McGill's smoking policy pays lip service to the need for smoking cessation resources, but offers no new or additional resources beyond existing counseling services and nicotine gums and patches. Further, there is no indication of plans to increase the level of funding towards these existing resources, which limits the number of students that they can serve. Incidentally, there is evidence to suggest that minority populations are better served by culturally-tailored smoking cessation programs, rather than a one-size-fits-all model. I have seen friends go through successful and unsuccessful attempts to

quit smoking, so I know that it is no easy process and is nearly impossible when combined with a great amount of stress, such as many people experience at a highly-competitive university. Meanwhile, McGill's mental health and counselling services are overwhelmed and difficult to access, making it hardly surprising that many students self-medicate their anxiety and exhaustion with nicotine.

As someone whose former undergraduate institution implemented a similar ban, I've seen this process play out before. At Ball State University, as at McGill, a well-connected group of non-smoking students with public health concerns (and, if I'm being cynical, a desire to polish their resumes) promoted the smoking ban. Most people tacitly went along — after all, we all know that smoking is harmful, and no one wants to be tagged as promoting smoking. Soon the university administration followed suit: a ban fit their desire to look green, healthy, and cutting-edge, and it would cut down on the cost of cleaning public spaces while giving them revenue from fines. The students who could least afford the ban were often juggling work and school and lacked the credibility and organizing skills of the

ban promoters, so as a result their voices were barely heard until it was too late. In the end, the ban lasted two years before smoking was allowed on campus again as a result of neighbours' complaints.

As a student of urban planning, I'm appalled that McGill's proposed solution is simply to push the 'problem' onto public property. The streets around McGill's campus are heavily-used, both for McGill students and staff heading onto campus and for other members of the public. Concentrating smoking in these areas simply pushes any possible effects of second-hand smoke into a more densely-used (and already exhaust-polluted) area, letting McGill keep its pristine lawns and air of moral superiority while pawning off the issues of cigarette butts and second-hand smoke onto the City of Montreal.

I profoundly hope that the committee will reconsider, and that my fellow McGillians will join me in opposing any such ban that doesn't provide for the treatment of smokers as full and supported members of our community.

Mona Luxion is a PhD Candidate in Urban Planning, and can be reached at mona.luxion@mail.mcgill.ca.

Under the gaze of the world

At every stage in life, women find themselves scrutinized

LYNSEY GROSFIELD
Commentary Writer

My first mistake was posting a few ads on the McGill app. My second mistake was uploading a profile picture of my face. I wanted to sell a couple of old phones, and buy an anthropological reader. A day later I got a message from a male student that said, “hi.” A month later came a repeat message that said, “hey.”

While these are not offensive messages in and of themselves, having been an internet denizen for quite some time, I had an inkling of what they were about, and it wasn’t my secondhand Huawei cell phone. I responded, somewhat bemusedly: “so are you looking for something, or are you legitimately using the McGill app to cruise?”

“Cruise cruise. I’m a cruiser.” was the reply.

Owing to my use of the word “cruise,” the rather one-sided conversation mysteriously turned nautical: the persistent campus app romeo cut right to the chase and inquired about a place to, “park [his] ship.” To which I responded: “I’m honestly here to find a textbook, so no docking of your ship here. I have enough ships to contend with.” Six messages followed about how his “ship was full of money,” and how he, the captain, “might buy the shipyard.”

The maritime metaphors — by this point extended beyond reason — began to fall apart. I informed my digital gentleman caller that, as a writer, I actually make a decent amount of money myself. This only seemed to encourage him. He commented on my blonde hair, my visible tattoos, and my supposedly impressive command of the English language, saying he was, “at [my] mercy.”

In an effort to rebuke his advances once more, I informed him of some of my recent styling choices: I had just shaved my head in the late Summer heat, and the golden blonde hair I had before was a mostly trick of chemistry, not genetics.

My lack of ‘femininity’ seemed to dismay him. “U look amazing with hair... come on[!],” “r u kidding me,” “let the fucking ship sink now. No balds on board.”

One minute later, his horror had evidently dissipated: “R u on Facebook.” Thankfully, at the time, I wasn’t on facebook.

At some point, I managed to make it crystal clear that I was just on the app to buy a textbook. While I had the option to block my suitor, I wanted him to quit on his own accord: to understand my “no.” For me, this was a glaring reminder that no matter how non-sexual a situa-

tion is — and here I’m talking about merely using the classifieds on a campus app — there is a possibility that, because I am a woman, I can be watched, evaluated, and interacted with in a sexual way.

Before any readers accuse me of over-reacting or making something out of nothing: I was not hurt by this exchange, a little irritated, sure. Humour is my first line of defense in this kind of scenario, so I screen-shotted the conversation and joked about it with friends.

It’s one of thousands of little experiences, however, that characterize what it is like to be a woman in both digital and physical spaces. It got me thinking about public space and how the intersections of our identity define how we navigate our shared spaces.

Ever since I was a little girl, I have felt eyes on me. It started with the hawkish surveillance of adults monitoring my behaviour for hint of anything not befitting of a “young lady.”

Then, as a preteen, it turned overtly sexual: shouts from men in trucks started when I was about twelve. Hoots and hollers on the streets are part and parcel of my daily urban life. On social media, men twice my age manage to find my inbox and pen impromptu verses about the things they’d like to do to my body. Or, if they don’t like something I’ve said, they call me ugly.

It’s these small reminders that my right to personal space is not inviolable, especially within the fuzzy boundaries of the digital sphere; it’s contingent upon what men might desire at a given moment, regardless of context, or my lack of enthusiastic participation. I was decidedly not throwing out vibes that would indicate I wanted a maritime manhood metaphor in my campus app inbox, but that ship has sailed, so to speak.

In the context of academic life — which is why I am here seeking textbooks — this feeling of sexualized surveillance has consequences. Numerous studies have shown that feelings of being observed and objectified greatly impact female academic performance. A 2011 paper by psychologist Sarah C. Gervais, published in *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, showed that women who have recently experienced an “objectifying gaze” reliably performed poorer on a math task compared to female controls and men. Call it an “objectifying male observer effect.”

I know this to be true in my own life. I remember playing volleyball in middle school, and being given my new uniform of spandex shorts. The coach joked that no one would watch women’s sports if the uniforms weren’t tight. I spent my first



AMANDA FIORE | The McGill Daily

few games acutely aware of the fact my body was being looked at and evaluated, and felt clumsy and self-conscious on the court.

The gaze of objectification doesn’t have to coexist with flattering intent. I think most women know that being branded as bangable and being discarded as dumpy are two sides of the same oppressive coin. Make no mistake, my point is not that it’s offensive to be complimented, or that the campus app couldn’t be the site of a ‘Meet Cute.’ It’s that it can go from being annoying to unnerving to know that there are dudes out there cruising the campus classifieds for women to whom they can compose their prematurely sexual textual ejaculations.

The ways in which this objectifying scrutiny is felt are of course contingent upon race, sexuality, class, ability and other intersections of experience, but most women can attest to a background radiation of

sexualized surveillance that pervades across inappropriate contexts, be they educational or professional, digital or physical.

And buying or selling textbooks isn’t a context where I’m out to meet the man of my dreams — also, I’m happily married.

To our detriment, we women often turn this gaze on ourselves. Sandra Lee Bartky, in her brilliant critique of Michel Foucault’s lack of attention to the ways in which institutional power uniquely impacts the lives of women, asserts that through these interactions we become self-policing subjects. Constant glimpses into mirrors and windows to check makeup, hair, or clothing are self-surveillance rituals that are supposed to save us from humiliation, as our value in the world is so intimately attached to our physicality.

Having very little hair on my head to be spoiled, and no makeup to speak of that will cake or run, I’ve undone some of these self-

surveillance habits in my own life. Learning to walk around bare-faced and basically bald can be emboldening. It also deters all but the most dogged of digital wooers.

But still, even as I’m sitting here and thinking of changing my picture on the McGill app to something a shade less flattering, I wonder: if the idea of being watched makes me want to change my appearance and presentation, am I not still self-policing? And as I run through the pros and cons of presenting my face in digital space, I know there aren’t nearly as many men in my situation who need to put this much thought into which photo they should use on an educational app.

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Six years into my battle

Reflections on life with Type 1 diabetes

RYAN JAMULA
Commentary Writer

On October 29, 2010, life handed me a battle: one that I had no choice in fighting, but one that I would soon learn to fight and know intimately.

I'm celebrating my sixth 'diabetes anniversary' (diabetes anniversary) by trying to share some aspects of my battle with a chronic illness. I choose to frame my journey with diabetes as a battle, because everyday, day in and day out, I wake up and fight for my health. It's a celebration because approximately 15,330 finger pokes, 1460 needles, 650 pump site changes later, I'm still strong and I'm still learning about how to best manage my life with diabetes.

"You have diabetes." Three words, one simple sentence. Three words that no one ever wants to hear. Three words that filled the silence of a small office, ripping through the tension and unleashing a whirlwind of emotions in my 15 year-old self. My battle was just beginning.

I remember instantly sobbing. The only things I knew about diabetes were the constant finger poking, the needles and that, stereotypically, it was most common amongst older people with 'unhealthy lifestyles.' My grandparents had diabetes—this wasn't something I had envisioned for myself. But Type 1 diabetes was now my new reality. I was not immune to the ignorance of society in understanding this complex, labour-intensive, and frustrating autoimmune disease.

I spent four days in the hospital, allowing doctors and nurses to monitor my health and learning how to manage my new reality. To say that it was a lot to process would be an understatement.

I was introduced to the world of insulin, needles, nutritional information, blood sugar lows and highs, and eventually carb counting and insulin pumps. What I was not told was that diabetes would take a mental toll on my life.

Diabetes is my battle to understand the seemingly unexplainable.

At 15, I fought to come to terms with my diagnosis—an illness that I had only ever heard spoken of in reference to 'unhealthy lifestyles,' obesity, high sugar intake and death.

It's tough not to fall into a 'why me?' cycle of self-pity when there is no causal explanation for why one of your organs has essentially stopped functioning. Six years later, I sometimes still struggle to come to terms with my diagnosis.

Diabetes is my battle to be understood. I battle to educate people on the serious reality of my illness and to dispel misconceptions.

I battle against the mainstream diabetes discourse that suggests the patient's diagnosis is



KEVIN TAM | The McGill Daily

a result of their carelessness and unhealthy habits. I fight to dispel the myth that in order to maintain my diabetes all I have to do is take my insulin, eat healthy, and walk on a treadmill twice a week. With Type 1 diabetes there is no cure, there is no magic pill. These myths invalidate my lived experiences with this disease and undermine the amount of time I spend frustratingly adjusting insulin-carb ratios, figuring out the right percentage in insulin reduction for my temporary basal rate at the gym, and battling morning insulin resistance. It undermines the amount of time I spend trying to figure out why my blood sugar is too high or too low. Was my carb count off? Is my pump working properly? Did I pick a bad site? Too little or too much insulin? Am I just stressed? Am I sick? Is my physiology changing again? Are you lost yet? So am I. I could go on but I think I've made the point.

As someone with diabetes, I constantly encounter people who think we take a pill in the morning, then go on with our day without thinking about diabetes: this couldn't be further from the truth. I struggle between wanting to accurately present my lived experience and not wanting to generate feelings of sympathy and pity. My battle is personal.

Diabetes is my battle against stigma. I battle against stereotypes. I battle against comments suggesting it's my fault because I

ate too much sugar, or comments suggesting I can be cured with okra and cinnamon. I get tired of correcting ignorant comments about diabetes, and the conflation between Type 1 and Type 2. I battle the assumptions that I'm trying to lose weight when I choose a diet drink or "light" beverage. I test my blood sugar in restaurants, on the street, on public transit, and in class. I try to do so discretely, but I refuse to risk my health because someone thinks a little drop of blood is gross.

Diabetes is my battle against lows. I battle against low blood sugars that leave me sweating, weak, and disoriented, that have me racing against time to consume enough sugar in a state of panic. The dangerous lows I don't feel. The lows from drinking alcohol the night before, over estimating a carb count, pushing myself at the gym, or eating later than usual. The ones that I can't seem to find a reason for.

But I also battle against the emotional lows. All those times when I feel down and want to run far away from a life of diabetes, but can't. I fight the feeling of physical and emotional constraint.

Diabetes is my battle against social isolation.

At times I have felt alone in managing my diabetes. I have felt overwhelmed by a university culture of partying, alcohol consumption and intense academic pressure. At times I have compromised my health to try to fit

in, and I have separated myself to try to manage my health. I have compromised my health to exert myself academically and I have felt myself unable to exert myself academically because of feeling unwell. I battle against shame and self-guilt from having 'bad' blood sugars and worrying about future health complications.

It's tough not to fall into a 'why me?' cycle of self-pity when there is no causal explanation for why one of your organs has essentially stopped functioning.

Diabetes is my battle against fatigue and burn-out. I battle to maintain balance.

People have asked me if I ever get tired of diabetes. The answer to that is emphatically and overwhelmingly yes. Life with diabetes often leaves me feeling exhausted. There

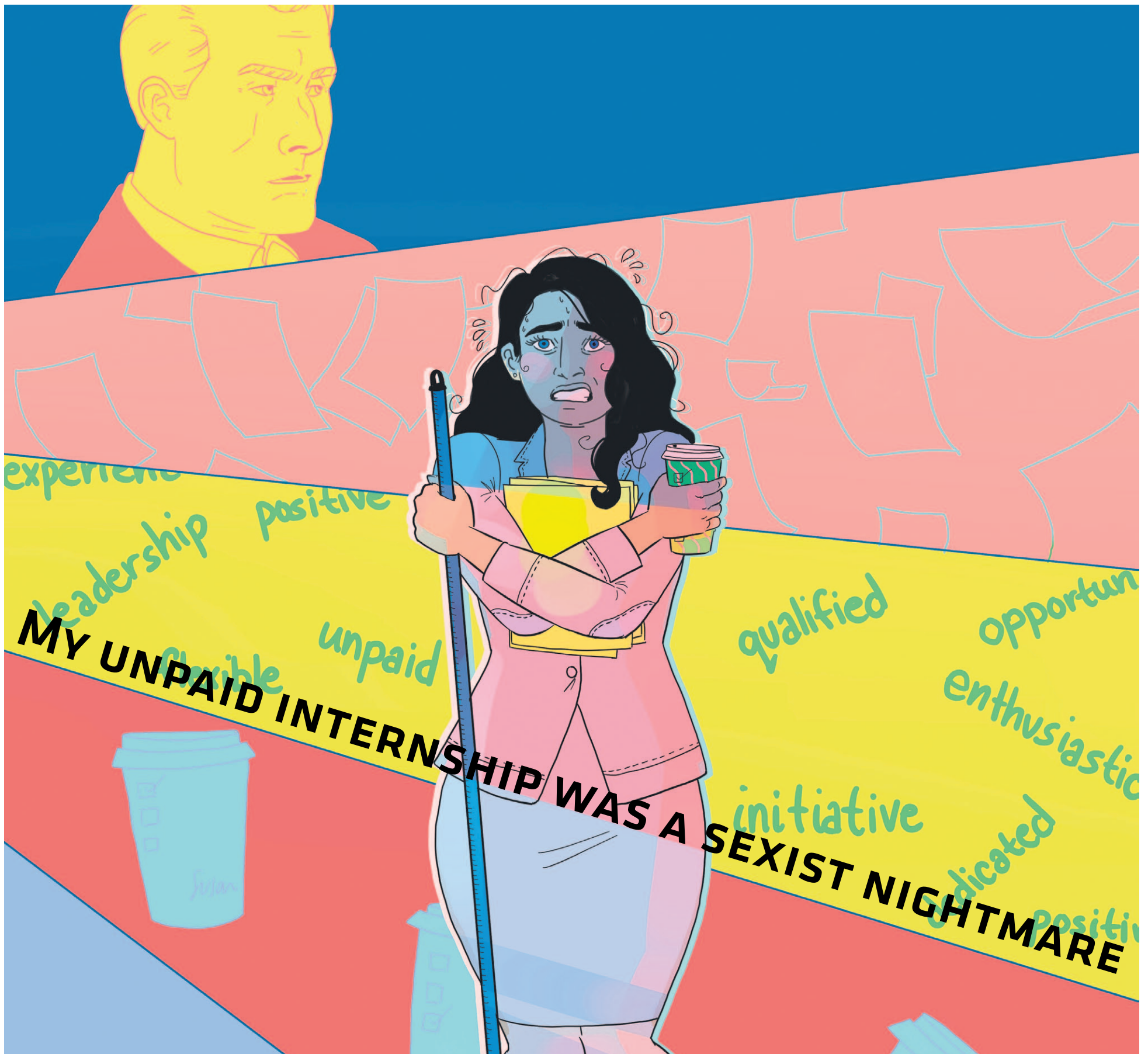
are days I struggle to get out of bed. I can often sleep for ten or more hours and still wake up feeling exhausted.

The demands of life on its own can be overwhelming and stressful. Many students struggle with stress during exams. I am certainly not immune from these pressures. Dealing with diabetes on top of being a full-time student at university has pushed me in ways that are hard to accurately describe. I have experienced simultaneous burn-outs from both school and diabetes. That feeling of not wanting to look at another reading, go to another lecture, or write another sentence accompanied by the feeling of wanting to rip out my insulin pump, throw away my medical supplies and drop out of school. On those days I battle to move forward.

My battle wounds are far deeper than the scars from poking my fingers, or the marks on my stomach from changing pump sites. They have become an inseparable part of who I am in ways most people will never be able to understand.

I battle to do more than just survive. I battle to live life on my own terms. Diabetes is an obstacle and a pretty big one at that, but it doesn't stop me from maintaining my ambitions. I get through today, wake up tomorrow and start the battle over again.

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Female interns are the ones cleaning the office, fielding physical advances, and working overtime – and that’s not okay



Author: Anonymous
Visuals: Marina Djurdjevic



For most students, finding a summer job is often thankless and stressful. My case was no different. After many months of applications, and even more unanswered emails, I found myself at the end of the winter semester, with less than hopeful prospects.

Then, my dream job – at an international relations think tank, associated with one of the most well-known intergovernmental treaty organizations in North America – contacted me for an interview. I was thrilled, even though it was an unpaid internship. Thankful to be given something to do for the summer, I eagerly accepted what I thought was to be a life-changing experience.

Our role as interns was to write and edit content about international relations, plan events, and manage external research fellows. These research fellows submitted articles remotely, and our job was to edit their articles, and ensure they were published. We were promised networking opportunities, access to high profile events, esteemed references, and meetings with high-ranking Canadian officials. I thought that if I wasn't going to get paid in money, my compensation would be the contacts, editing experience, and opportunities they promised. But, like so many unpaid internships, it was just another way to exploit young, eager students. In fact, it soon spiralled into a series of at first subtle, but then fairly explicit, acts of sexism, which took a serious toll on my wellbeing throughout the summer.

Alleging discrimination on the basis of gender, and questioning the legality of an unpaid internship, is a serious matter. Each province has its own employment standards legislation, which are enforced with varying levels of diligence. In Ontario, where I completed my internship, unpaid internships that are not part of a school program or professional training must meet six conditions. These include that the training must be "similar to that which is given in a vocational school" and must be "for the benefit of the individual." I've chosen to keep my name, and the name of the organization, out of this article. It's not because I'm unsure about my story, but rather because, as a young woman, speaking up about sexism and pointing my finger at a powerful organization could end my career before it's started.

I recognize that I came to the internship from an extremely privileged position. I am a cisgendered, able-bodied, white woman, who had financial support from my parents throughout the internship. They have always encouraged me to accept positions that could help shape my career, rather than focus on earnings, and I am, and always will be, extremely grateful. Not many students are in the same position as I am. Often, students have to sacrifice unpaid internships that could assist in their career in order to accept paying jobs to finance their education. Even my experience as a white woman differs from the experiences of racialized women, who have to overcome additional

prejudice in order to be given the recognition they deserve for their work.

"Smile more": the male gaze and double standards

At first, the sexism was understated. I was called "my dear" by one of my bosses. Then, senior male staff would comment on my appearance and the appearance of other female interns. However, it seemed that these 'compliments' only came on days where one was wearing a particularly flattering dress, or a full face of makeup. One day, I came into the office in a flowery sundress and bright lipstick, as opposed to my usual black-on-black outfits. Throughout the day, I received comments about my outfit that made me incredibly uncomfortable, especially when they turned into comments about my body. On other days, the comments focussed on my demeanor; if I was having a bad day or was focused on my work, I was told to "smile more."

Speaking up about sexism and pointing my finger at a powerful organization could end my career before it started.

Being assessed and 'validated' according to my physical characteristics was alarming. According to activist and writer Bené Viera, "Men tell women to smile because society conditions men to think we exist for the male gaze and for their pleasure. Men are socialized to believe they have control over women's bodies." It made me feel that it was more important for me to look happy and pretty than to be diligent and competent, and that my work did not matter as much as my male colleagues, who didn't receive this treatment. Although there was gender parity among interns, it was clear that the men were almost exclusively given preferential treatment at the office. In some cases, my boss went out of his way to put male interns in contact with high-ranking professionals, or give them exclusive interviews with prominent people for their articles.

As a nine-to-five unpaid internship, our job requirements were quite demanding – but on top of this, the female interns were pressured to complete other services, such as tidying the office space or going on coffee runs for our boss. This expectation of servitude and pleasing authority is inherently sexist, but sometimes it wasn't as explicit as my boss telling me I needed to clean the office because I was a woman. Over a lifetime of being expected to provide emotional and domestic labour for free, the inclination toward servitude is so deeply ingrained that women often take on

these extra tasks without being told to. But women's internalized sexism doesn't exonerate our bosses from being complicit in enforcing a sexist division of labour. Our bosses averted their eyes from the clear fact that women were doing more work, and avoided calling attention to the situation, or asking male interns to pitch in.

Other female colleagues experienced similar treatment – most commonly, they complained about having their opinions consistently dismissed. At times, there were physical advances, including unwanted touching, and one female intern received an unsolicited gift from a senior male colleague – which turned out to be books about ancient Roman sex culture. Female interns were held to higher standards, with little recognition of the value of our personal contributions. Assignments that would typically take a week to complete, when assigned to a woman, would be "needed by the end of the day." This often resulted in women staying after hours, or working on weekends to make sure such projects could be completed on these unrealistic timelines. Sometimes – after the fact, of course – we found out that these assignments were meant to be done by our boss. Delegating these tasks to women, when our bosses knew women in the office were more inclined to go out of their way to please authority, was capitalizing on internalized sexism rather than seeking to deconstruct it.

On a personal level, addressing workplace sexism is demoralizing and exhausting. It is hard to enter an environment each day, knowing that your work will not be valued as highly as one of your male colleagues. It is frustrating to have your experiences dismissed by those around you, just because they don't feel impacted by the sexism themselves. By the middle of the summer, I struggled to get out of bed in the morning and lost the motivation to participate in social activities outside of the workday, because my time at the internship was both mentally, physically, and emotionally draining.

There were physical advances, including unwanted touching, and one female intern received books on ancient Roman sex culture from a senior male colleague.

Institutional irresponsibility

The easiest way to fit in among my colleagues was to comply with the political orientation of the think tank, which leant heavily towards the right. Despite the fact that

the organization claimed to be non-partisan, it was clear that there would be negative implications for anyone whose politics deviated from the dominant Conservative rhetoric of the office. This enforcement of Conservative politics started, ironically, with restricting freedom of speech. I was tasked with writing weekly blog posts about gender and international relations, which often included analyzing international relations through a feminist lens. I was told by my boss' boss that some members on the Board of Directors "did not feel that my content matched well with their mandate." In other words, I was forced to alter or soften my opinions, because I was too left-leaning. I was also told to replace the word "patriarchal" with "misogynistic masculine" in an article about sexual assault on college campuses, because I was told that "patriarchy could be good." Sexism exists – that isn't an opinion, it's a fact. And yet, my feminism was constantly questioned and dismissed, by a group of directors who were predominantly rich, white men. I felt like my ability to do my job, which included being able to write without fear of repercussions, was being undermined by an 'old boys club,' to which I didn't belong.

I was told to replace the word "patriarchal" in an article, because I was told that "patriarchy could be good."

Despite the instances of sexism I've outlined, my bosses often told me that I should be thankful for the "incredible opportunity" I was being given, and to just ignore these advances. When I spoke about the sexism to friends and family, some even told me that since the president of the organization is a woman, that workplace sexism couldn't possibly exist. However, what people fail to recognize is that just because women occupy positions of power, that doesn't mean that they are willing to advocate for women's rights in the workplace. High-profile women have more to lose, and face even greater disincentives for speaking out against sexism. Often I've found that women in these circumstances can be hyper-critical of young women in their field, out of an altruistic, though misguided, attempt to "toughen them up" – since they know that workplace sexism doesn't cease to exist at higher levels.

The ideal female intern is flexible, submissive, grateful, and people-pleasing. Unpaid interns are often required to show enthusiasm for any task given, regardless how demanding or thankless the job may be. The phrases, "thank you for the experience" or "I appreciate the opportunity" became my





go-to response, even as they felt hollow in my mouth. Unsurprisingly, this expectation of obedience mirrors those that women face throughout their lives, in both personal and professional relationships. While the illicit nature of unpaid internships makes it difficult to collect demographic information, a 2014 study estimated that as many as 300,000 Canadians were working for free, the majority of which were young women.

Unpaid internships, on their own, are exploitative and often illegal (as mine, arguably, was). But they take on an even more worrying overtone for women. In *Dissent Magazine*, Madeleine Schwartz writes, “The insecure and low-paid jobs traditionally associated with women have grown as the type of employment usually associated with men – regular, unionized and stable – has declined.” Unpaid temporary internships are the most recent manifestation of this trend, which “places workers in a historically feminine position,” says Schwartz. There’s an incredibly long history of women being unpaid or underpaid for their work. An online resource developed by Sundari Anitha from the University of Lincoln and Ruth Pearson from the University of Leeds, www.striking-women.org, chronicles how certain jobs became the domain of women, and were thus able to be assigned lower wages. In the post-war reconstruction period of the late 1940’s, “The welfare state created many job opportunities in what was seen as ‘women’s work,’” write Anitha and Pearson. “Jobs were available in the newly created National Health Service for nurses, midwives, cleaners and clerical staff. Banking, textile and light industries such as electronics also expanded during this period and provided women with opportunities in clerical, secretarial, and assembly work. Jobs were still strictly segregated by gender and routine repetitive work was categorized as women’s work for women’s (lower) wages.”

“Routine repetitive work was categorised as women’s work for women’s (lower) wages.”
–*striking-women.org*

Women aren’t simply underpaid, they’re also unpaid. According to a report released in March by Oxfam Canada, women perform almost twice as many hours of unpaid work each day as men do. Domestic work like cooking, cleaning, childcare, and emotional labour – all of which is taxing and requires a high level of skill – is not considered ‘real work’ and is thus supposedly undeserving of pay. Making female interns run for coffee or pick up trash at the office, and then failing to pay them, participates in a legacy of the value of women’s work being downplayed or denied entirely. How can fe-

male interns – already in a precarious work situation – speak up against such deeply ingrained expectations that women should work for free?

Unpaid internships strip the intern of any agency to advocate for themselves, since from the time they’re hired they’re positioned as worthless and disposable, not even deserving of minimum wage. The premise of an unpaid internship is that ‘you’re lucky to be here,’ rather than ‘we’re lucky to have you.’ This disempowerment is further enforced by a fear of termination, or getting a bad reputation. In small circles of Canadian political think-tanks, earning a reputation as ‘difficult’ or ‘lazy’ early on could be career-ending. And this enforced gratitude implants the idea that young people should be grateful for whatever work opportunity comes our way – no matter how precarious, unrelated to their interests, or badly-paid it is. As a result, many young people hop from one unpaid internship to another throughout their early twenties, never allowed to acknowledge the worth of their work.

How can female interns speak up against such deeply ingrained expectations that women should work for free?

Many people in favour of unpaid internships argue that interns actually cost companies or organizations money, since it takes time to train them and they often only stay for a few months. These people hold that the benefits of experience, contacts, and skills-training are invaluable to the intern, worth far more than money. First, this is incredibly classist – to say that a line on one’s resume is more “valuable” than a paycheque ignores that many people need a paycheque to support themselves. Second, to characterize all young people or temporary workers as a burden is incredibly dangerous, not to mention blatantly false. According to Ontario’s Employment Standards Act, for an unpaid internship to be legal “The person providing the training [must derive] little, if any, benefit from the activity of the individual while he or she is being trained” and “The individual [must] not displace employees of the person providing the training.”

It was clear to everyone at the association that without the interns, the organization would not exist. We did all the work – including tasks not included in our job description, like tidying up and getting coffee – for no reward. The benefits interns were promised, listed on the association’s website, turned out to be nothing more than a sham. At all the ‘networking opportuni-

ties,’ I was expected to be working, rather than talking to people in my field. The only high-profile events interns were allowed to attend were the ones we organized ourselves – without a budget, I should note. I still don’t have the reference letter from the chair of the association that was waved in my face as a key reason to accept unpaid work. Our bosses know that there are droves of young political science students who need experience to progress in the field, and are thus willing to work for free. They exploit that to no end.

Broader implications, and steps forward

If we’re talking about sexism in politics, let’s address the cheeto-coloured elephant in the room. In the 2016 American federal election, Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump’s campaign has been blatantly, unapologetically misogynistic. From his remarks about Fox News host Megyn Kelly’s menstruation, to his intensified criticism of Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton’s campaign based on her husband, former President Bill Clinton’s actions, to his lewd comments depicting sexual assault, his aggressive disrespect for women is unquestionably dangerous. That so many Trump supporters are willing to overlook (or even celebrate) these vulgar comments about women and their value in the workplace, normalizes and condones sexism. Even though both Kelly and Clinton are imperfect, their gender should not be grounds to attack their character and invalidate their capacity to do their jobs.

Why does such blatant discrimination still exist within politics, particularly? In 2012, the Atlantic reported that, on average, female Republican staffers in the U.S. Congress make \$10,000 less than male staffers. A 2015 report by the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies found that only 7.1 per cent of Senate staffers were people of colour. Accordingly, there are even smaller numbers of women of colour represented. In a viral picture of Republican interns posted by GOP Speaker of the House, Paul Ryan, the interns were apparently all white, and mostly men. This sparked the #InternsSoWhite campaign, which addressed the severe lack of racial and gender diversity on the Hill. Although the Democratic interns represented a somewhat more diverse group, the barriers towards achieving success – and being compensated fairly – within politics is far greater for women, and women of colour in particular.

The premise of an unpaid internship is you’re lucky to be here, rather than we’re lucky to have you.

To start, interns should be paid a fair salary for their work. According to an article published by *Rabble*, “unpaid internships are illegal in most provinces, but provincial labour laws protecting interns are poorly enforced. One exception, however, is Ontario – due to pressure from a coalition of groups and student activists, the provincial government was forced to crack down last September.” In Ontario alone, as of April 2016, the government has recovered over \$140,000 CAD in wages owed to interns. Although this is a gross under-representation of how many interns go unpaid, it’s a first step in eliminating the classist component to internships. If internships are made financially accessible to everyone, then the representation of marginalized groups will increase – since racialized, disabled, and LGBTQ youth make up a disproportionate number of Canada’s poor.

If internships are made financially accessible to everyone, then the representation of marginalized groups will increase.

Ideally, quotas wouldn’t be necessary in order to include women and other marginalized groups in internship programs. Quotas often make women feel like institutional placeholders, rather than qualified individuals. Instead, hiring panels should look to hiring a cohesive team, in which individuals with different skills and leadership styles can coexist in a workplace environment. However, I acknowledge that quotas can be helpful when hiring panels are made of people who don’t actively question their own ingrained biases. In other cases, quotas can seek redress for the fact that people from marginalized communities may have grown up without the same access to resources and education that others have.

Lastly, for interns like myself, who find themselves to be mistreated in their workplaces, you don’t have to suffer in silence. Talk to your coworkers, friends, family, or legal counsel. I found that the more I engaged my colleagues with feminism, the more open-minded they became. That being said, for some people – especially women of colour, or those who face intersecting oppressions – “standing up for yourself” means facing a very real threat of violence, ostracization, or punishment. Looking back, I wish I were more vocal in calling out workplace sexism, but I feared professional ruin. I also regret not learning about my rights through the Employment Standards Act earlier, or taking what steps I could to empower myself within an inherently disempowering situation. At the end of the day, your worth as not just an intern, but an individual, is far more important than a reference letter.



What's all the buzz about?

Bee population in steady decline

LOUIS WARNOCK
Sci+Tech Writer

Imagine yourself lying in the wilderness. A cool breeze brushes against the trees, the sun rises above the horizon, and the birds begin to sing their song. All of a sudden, a whirring sound dawns upon you and seizes you out of a dream. Within a patch of blooming daisies is a buzzing honey bee, busy at work helping maintain nature's harmony.

The real nightmare – much realer than being stung by a bee – is the silence that sets in after those whirring sounds fail to reappear. While the daisy ceases to flower, a multitude of other plants – many of which are vital to our own food security – also begin to suffer. Staple crops such as wheat, corn, rice and soybeans require pollination to grow, and bees are arguably the leading insects in this role.

Over the past ten years however, honey bees have been in steady decline across North America and in Europe. In Canada, national bee colony losses over the winter increased from a historical average of 10 to 15 per cent to 35 per cent in 2008, and then ranging from 15 to 29 per cent between 2009 and 2014, according to Health Canada. Although the parasitic mite “*V. destructor*” is the biggest detriment to the survival of the species today, the exact explanation to the bee crisis varies by location and involves a combination of other issues, including environmental management practices and a quickly changing habitat.

Bees spend most of their on to ten month lifespan gathering nectar and pollen. They attract pollen with the electrostatic force generated by their hair. The hair on the legs of a bee is particularly stiff, allowing the bee to groom the pollen into pockets on its body until it has returned to its nest. Through such foraging activity, pollen gets redistributed across the ecosystem and transferred from the male part – the anther, to the female part – the stigma, of a flower of the same species, in a process called pollination. This results in the fertilization of the flower and the growth of seeds and fruits. The plant has produced offspring and the cycle of life is perpetuated.

As world population and the global demand for food continue to grow, the act of pollination is tightly intertwined with our own food security. Between 1961 and 2006, the dependence of the agricultural industry on pollinators in the developed world increased by 50 per cent between 1961 and 2006, and an extra 10 per cent in

the developing world. In the face of this development, recent bee colony losses are forcing us to ask ourselves some difficult questions.

The *V. Destructor* mite must harbour in a bee colony to reproduce. It latches on the body of the bee and sucks its hemolymph – the equivalent of blood in vertebrates. Without treatment, the bee begins to show disease symptoms such as malnourishment, weight loss, and saddest of all, the inability to fly. The German Bee Monitoring Project – one of the most significant experiments on honey bee colony health – studied more than 1200 colonies from 120 apiaries over a four year period and found a clear link between high varroa mite levels and the deformed wing (DWV) and acute bee paralysis viruses (ABPV), as well as reduced lifespan of the queen and weakness of colonies in autumn.

As world population and the global demand for food continue to grow, the act of pollination is tightly intertwined with our own food security.

Professional Canadian apiculturists identify resistance to acaricides – chemical substances poisonous to mites – as being the main cause of mortality among honey bee colonies – most common among these synthetic compound is fluvalinate, which is commercially known as Apistan. This belief among the community is reflected in research published by the *Journal of Apiculture* in 2008: “The level of infestation of varroa mites that cause colony damage appears to have decreased over time.” They go on to say, “in the early 1980s, in Europe, a bee colony could harbor several thousand mites without dramatic symptoms. Today, a fall infestation rate of 10 per cent, corresponding to about one thousand mites in a colony of 10,000 bees, is considered to be a critical threshold for winter survival of the colony.” Attempts to control the pest since it was first recognized have surely been in the best interest, but the fact remains that the threat of the



JENNIFER GUAN | The McGill Daily

Destructor has evolved greatly during this time.

The growing number of extreme weather events across the globe puts unforeseen stress on colonies, both directly and indirectly.

Solutions to the pesticide resistance of Varroa mites have been

explored – such as selectively breeding the honey bees who are resistant to the pathogen or creating non-chemical control methods, but some aspects of honey bee colony loss are inextricably tied to larger environmental and social questions.

The growing number of extreme weather events across the globe puts unforeseen stress on colonies, both directly and indirectly. A lack of precipitation, or an inconsistency in rainfall patterns, reduces nectar production, which in turn can seriously limit honey bee activity. Moreover, when the temperature reaches unusually cold levels, the honeycomb brood – the beeswax structure of cells where the queen bee lays eggs – is chilled, and while some bees become more susceptible to pathogens in the long-

term, others die immediately. On the flip side, warm and humid weather helps sustain pathogen loads in a honey bee colony and foster disease.

Increased international trade over the last several decades has presented additional challenges to honey bee populations – as it has for many other organisms caught in the web of globalization. The Varroa mite migrated from its original host, the East Asian bee *Apis cerana* to *A. mellifera* colonies imported to East Asia, and since then, they have spread across the globe. Small producers used to be the bread-and-butter of the apicultural industry, but in today's changing landscape, the competition is tilted in favor of industrial-scale apiaries, who simply have more resources in dealing with adversity.

DNA sequencing revolution

Evolving technology makes DNA sequencing cheaper and faster

TONY FENG
Sci+Tech Writer

DNA molecules contain the crucial hereditary information of an organism. The building blocks of a DNA molecule are called nucleotides. There are four types of nucleotides, which differ by the nitrogenous base (adenine, guanine, cytosine and thymine) present in their structure. These four bases are like the “alphabet” of DNA. Determining the sequence of the nucleotides in a DNA molecule is like reading a long and meaningful sentence, which requires every single word to be in the correct place. Knowing the sequence of these nitrogenous bases enables scientists to obtain the ‘recipe’ of certain proteins, detect abnormalities possibly leading to genetic disorders, and, when used by forensic scientists, help identify individuals from biological material they left behind.

Over the past forty years, DNA sequencing technologies have been advancing rapidly. It all started in the 1970s, when British biochemist Frederick Sanger first developed a technique to sequence DNA. This method used radioactive markers to indicate the type of each nucleotide. With the aid of polyacrylamide gel and X-ray, scientists were able to visualize the sequence of the nucleotides in DNA, giving them the very first look at this very important molecule.

This October, Catherine Offord a writer for *The Scientist* spoke to various researchers on the development of DNA sequencers.

“It was all very manual,” recalled Richard Wilson, at the McDonnell Genome Institute at Washington University in St. Louis. “We used to get the sequencing gels running, go have dinner and probably a few beers. Then we’d come back to the lab around two in the morning, take the gels down, put X-ray film on them, and develop them the next day.” Richard noted that after the gels were developed, his team would gather in the laboratory: some people would read the gel aloud, some

people would type the sequence into a computer.

The Sanger method was widely adopted, and carried out manually around the world for a decade. Things were soon about to change. Sequencing instruments that were much faster and cheaper would soon be developed.

“It was clear to us that automating DNA sequencing was really going to be key to the future of biology,” said Leroy Hood, who co-founded Applied Biosystems Inc. (ABI) in 1981 to develop some of the sequencing machines that would drive this revolution. “Molecular biology was coming to the fore, and it was clearly central to understanding biological information in living organisms[...] Sequencing was going to become very, very important.”

“It was clear to us that automating DNA sequencing was really going to be key to the future of biology.”

—Leroy Hood
Co-founder of Applied Biosystems Inc.

ABI announced its first automated DNA sequencing instrument in 1986. Although it was based on the Sanger method, coloured, fluorescent labels were used to replace the radioactive labels. Instead of running the DNA through four different lanes, they ran them through only one lane because each nucleotide could be distinguished by its colour. A laser detector was used to determine the sequence, in place of the X-ray film. Though this technique was not cheap, costing between two to five dollars per sequenced nucleotide, sequencing became more practical and required less manual labour. Scientists not only were able to sequence a segment of DNA, but



JUSTINE TOUCHON | The McGill Daily

also the entire genome of a multicellular animal, such as *Caenorhabditis elegans*, a type of roundworm.

“We thought it would be transformative,” noted Kim Worely, a geneticist at Baylor College of Medicine, who was involved in the Human Genome Project. “Every lab around the world was spending lots of time analyzing one part of one gene. Giving people all the genes, all at once, so they could just do the biology would be a tremendous benefit.” As a result of the Human Genome Project, an international team of researchers were able to sequence the entire human genome by using this technique after spending ten years and three billion dollars.

The next wave of sequencing instruments that soon followed involved massive parallelization. Leroy Hood, described them as being able to produce “millions of different sequences simultaneously, but with very short reads.” The first commercially successful machines

using parallelization was released by biotech company 454 Life Sciences in 2005. With a cost of less than one-sixth that of the conventional methods, these newly developed machines could sequence 25 million bases with 99 per cent accuracy in a four-hour run.

As a result of the Human Genome Project, an international team of researchers were able to sequence the entire human genome.

The following year, biotechnology company Illumina bought Solexa, the most widely used sequenc-

ing machine today. Solexa was a cheap and effective sequencer for research and clinical labs. In 2014, Illumina released the HiSeq X Ten system, and reduced the cost of sequencing a human genome to less than a thousand dollars.

The latest research on DNA sequencing instruments focuses on using the motion of electrons to identify nucleotides. Researchers from the National Institute of Standards and Technology have proposed a design for the nanoscale electronic motion sensor, which can detect motions as tiny as those of an atom. This device is predicted to sequence at a speed of 70 million base pairs per second.

Leroy Hood, reflected back on the last thirty years of DNA sequencing, “Living through it, you were very impatient, and always wondered when we’d be able to move to the next stage (...) But in looking back, all of the things that have happened since ‘85, they’re really pretty astounding.”

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Married to the game,

gothshakira discusses memes, friends,



gothshakira.

SONIA IONESCU | The McGill Daily

Supporting a baby pink top bun that matches her sweatpants, gothshakira exclaims, “I love it!” as she steps into the apartment where our interview will take place. “So cute and cozy.” She lounges on the couch while discussing creating *Girl’s Club*, a blog that arose out of a need for women and femmes of colour to own creative spaces. In other equally impassioned moments, she delivers an in-depth analysis of the rivalry between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump based on their astrological birth charts.

gothshakira is best known on Instagram for “intersectional feminist meme-making,” a description that publications and fans alike have coined to try and encapsulate her work. What began as a self care practice during a challenging Montreal winter evolved into a semi-career, with over 36,000 Instagram followers at the time of this writing. Initially an attempt to process her vulnerabilities through laughter, her memes gained traction as they connected and represented marginalized voices. As a nonbinary person of colour (POC), gothshakira’s memes represent a new wave of “internet activism.” They create dialogue around the nuanced nature of identities – the ways in which they are shaped by history, personal experiences, and perceptions of others – in an easily consumable way.

Memes, by definition, are shared content; they exist to be reproduced, reacted to, and altered in online communities. Thus, they can be studied as a way to gain insight into the politics of the communities in which they circulate. For instance, in the recent U.S. presidential elections, candidates from both parties have tried to capitalize on the viral power of memes, leading to Hillary Clinton declaring Pepe the Frog a hate symbol due to its appropriation by Trump supporters. For gothshakira, meme-making reconstructs the complexities and contradictions of society in a format that is accessible and allows for dialogue. Her large following shows just how influential these seemingly innocuous images can be. She regularly receives private messages of gratitude from people who see their identities and experiences validated through her memes.

However, her work is not without controversy. This June, gothshakira came under fire for a photo published in the *Fader* that showed her with blonde hair and pale skin. The accompanying article hailed her as “The High Priestess of Intersectional Feminist Memes.” Black feminists on social media took issue with the fact that a white-passing, middle-class content creator – was being idolized as a trailblazer, while Black people have been making politically conscious memes “way before” gothshakira came along.

gothshakira emphasizes that she is proud of being Latinx and a child of immigrants, but acknowledges that those aspects of her identity are complicated by her privileges. Growing up, she saw her father, speaking English in a thick accent, deal with racist violence. Witnessing how immigrants are othered and punished is a key motivator for her anti-oppressive politics.

Critical self-reflection is difficult, but it is necessarily involved in understanding the power imbalances woven into the framework of society. gothshakira creates a shared sense of belonging among marginalized communities, while highlighting the complexities within one’s personal experience. Her memes evoke learning and healing – for not only herself, but also the wider community.

Coco Zhou and Taylor Mitchell



devoted to the memes

intersectionality, and being a double Aquarius

The McGill Daily (MD): What is it like being a “double Aquarius” [having both Sun and Moon signs as Aquarius]?

gothshakira (GS): Being a “double Aquarius” means that I vacillate between being a robot with no emotions and being really passionate about the world. Although Aquarians may have difficulty relating to people emotionally on a one-on-one basis, we find it very easy to be emotionally attached to causes, and bring up the underdog, and give people voices. But we are very eccentric – the weirdo sign. There’s a joke that says that if aliens ever came to earth, the first people we should thrust at them would be Aquarians, because they’d know how to communicate with them.

MD: Do you consider your work a form of activism?

GS: That’s a good question. I’m not sure. I would call myself an “internet activist” but when that goes through my head I begin to think, is that a thing? Is there activism on the internet? Is it activism if it’s not done in real life? But, at the end of the day, at a time when more parts of our existence are lived through the internet, what is real life? Is what’s happening on the internet not “real life?” I don’t know what I would label myself at this point, and a lot of my interests coincide with those of activists, and I do participate in acts of activism in my life, but I’m still not sure.

MD: Are you involved in any other artistic projects?

GS: I’m involved with quite a few creative projects right now. I’ve been doing commissions for galleries and events, and I’ve just started branching out into digital art. I did a piece, that’s not a meme, for a book that’s curated by Molly Soda. The book is coming out in November, and I’m really excited about that. But I’ve always been a writer, and I’m working on some pieces for different publications right now, and that’s kind of what I want to branch out into. But I mean, I love memes and I love making them. I’m not making as many as I did before because I have a lot of stuff on my plate, but I think I’ll always love memes, you know! “I’m married to the game,” as a great philosopher once said.

MD: Do you find that there are differences between these different platforms you mentioned – your writing, your memes – with regards to how they facilitate discussions on intersectionality?

GS: The main thing about memes is that they’re accessible, and that’s what attracted me in the first place. The reason I started introducing more complex ideas like intersectionality is because I thought I should use this platform to say something productive about what I believe, the way I’ve thought for a really long time, and the reality of my lived experiences. It wasn’t super intentional. “Intersectional feminist memes” was kind of a label that other people put on me. I was just making memes about my life and what I’ve been through as a person who’s identified as a woman, as non-binary, as a child of immigrants, as Latina.

“I don’t know what I would label myself at this point, and a lot of my interests coincide with those of activists, and I do participate in acts of activism in my life, but I’m still not sure.”

—gothshakira

MD: You’ve talked about representation of people of colour in memes before. Can you elaborate on the complexities of this kind of representation?

GS: It’s always been really close to my heart to represent the voices of people who aren’t otherwise heard, because I’ve felt like that person at a lot of points in my life. I know that I am white-passing, and I know that I have privileges that a lot of people don’t have, like how I speak English fluently with no accent. My dad doesn’t. He has experienced so much discrimination over the years, and I saw that from a really young age. I try to only speak for myself and my experiences, because I’m not trying to claim that I know anything about the experiences of other people of colour. I have come under fire for being privileged. There’s a lot of critique

about this one press photo in which I happen to be blonde, and I looked very pale because of the photo editing, and there was a lot of dialogue on the internet about it. People were saying, is it okay that this person is being called an intersectional feminist meme creator, when a lot of Black people have been making political, intersectional memes for a really long time.

MD: You’ve made memes before about being white-passing and middle-class, and having friends with similar identities. How do you navigate your positionality?

GS: I grew up in Calgary, which is predominantly white. A few years ago, a lot of my friends were people who grew up in smaller cities and moved to big cities like Vancouver, Montreal, and Toronto. We were all kind of into the same thing, and our social circles were white in a lot of ways. It’s been difficult learning to critique different aspects of this culture, which are things that I’ve seen my entire life: marginalization of people of colour in different communities, as well as women in creative spaces. That’s why we created *Girl’s Club*. It’s really difficult trying to critique these things in a way that’s funny, but not slanderous – but still incisive and still constitutes social commentary. I just feel like, if nobody says it, I gotta say it. When I first moved here two or three years ago, I was like “the new kid” and I did feel a very cold front, like I wasn’t cool enough. But now, since I’ve somehow gained this big Instagram following, and most of the people in these communities are down with what I’m saying, I’ve found that people’s attitudes towards me have changed, and that’s really unfortunate. But that just goes to show that what I say is important if it’s my personal lived experience, and I see that people like me have gone through the same feelings of being an outcast, and I do it for them. I do it for us. We deserve to be heard, right? We deserve to be heard in creative spaces as artists as POC, as women, as non-gender conforming individuals.

MD: A lot of your memes address dating in Montreal. What is the dating scene like, in your experience?

GS: A lot of those memes were about experiences I had from 2013 to 2015. I was a lot younger then and was going through a lot of part-

ners – both lovely and questionable ones – and I was noticing certain trends. I don’t know if there’s a definitive dating scene. I don’t date a lot anymore. I’m pretty introverted and have become even more reclusive since the Instagram thing happened. This sounds weird coming out of my mouth, but people will actually want to fuck you just because you have a lot of Instagram followers. It’s really weird, and it makes me suspicious of everyone’s intentions now. I used to be a lot more free-spirited because I was allowed to be, but now I feel like there’s something I have to protect, so that’s a little sad. Sometimes I wish I could be as free and gloriously slutty as I used to be.

MD: Have you learned to care for yourself through Instagram?

GS: When I started making memes, I was going through a really rough winter and was feeling like a loser in a lot of ways. I realized I had a lot of self loathing that I needed to work through and I figured – well, that my tactic was always to laugh at myself – and I love memes. I think they’re hilarious. I love the absurdity of them. I figured that if I were to write all my feelings in this relatively innocuous format then I’d be able to see myself more as who I actually am – someone who is strong and beautiful and powerful, and that’s exactly what has happened. Every day I’m learning to love myself more and take care of myself more. I’m also really getting into cooking for myself more, and I’m not really a big cooking person. But I’m really getting into the ritual of preparing a meal and nourishing my body. And letting myself feel things.

“It’s always been really close to my heart to represent the voices of people who aren’t otherwise heard, because I’ve felt like that person at a lot of points in my life.”

—gothshakira

MD: You’ve mentioned the kind of stages that you’ve gone through. What stage would you say you’re at right now?

GS: “Ethnic aunt!” When I first moved here, I was in my early 20s and I was still a kid. Now, I’m slowly coming to this stage of my life where I’m like: “I wear loose pants, and cook to Erykah Badu, and I found that I’ve accumulated children.” I always happen upon people who are like 18, 19, 20, who’ve just moved to Montreal. They’ve started to call me “mom,” or “auntie,” which I think is really cute. There’s so many amazing, young, artists of colour who are just killing it! I feel like I’m transitioning into a more mothering, nurturing role which is really new to me but really exciting. Though I still try to live life like a teenage girl, which I think is the secret to life.

“I see that people like me have gone through the same feelings of being an outcast, and I do it for them.”

—gothshakira

MD: Memes are supposed to be silly but have become increasingly politicized. Can we analyze them in a serious way?

GS: I think that’s what’s most important and powerful about memes. There’s always some social commentary within them. I do think that memes should be open to analysis, just like pop lyrics and the Kardashians should be open to discursive interpretation. These fast things that we consume for immediate gratification – they constitute a big part of what entertains us. And the lowest common denominator of what entertains the generation – that, I believe, is indicative of the culture as a whole. If a meme can make people discuss, “hey, how are we portraying certain communities of people?” then that’s incredible. And in that case, I’m so happy to be alive in 2016.

This interview has been edited for length and clarity. Tune in to *Unfit to Print* for a filmed version of this interview at The Daily’s website.



The grand balcony of capitalism

The Montreal Biennale undermines art through institutionalism



Standout works by Haegue Yang

TAYLOR MITCHELL | The McGill Daily

JOSEPHINE BIRD
Culture Writer

With a roster comprised of both international and domestic contemporary artists, a large and dynamic exhibition space, and the expertise of curator Philippe Pirotte, the Montreal Biennale opened on October 19 with “The Grand Balcony” as its theme. While many participating artists attempt to subvert the commercialized relationship between the viewer and the art object, the ways in which their pieces are displayed, specifically in the context of the museum, ultimately undermine their message.

The possibilities of “ethical hedonism” and “joyous utilitarianism” the exhibition aims to celebrate are undercut by virtue of the way the art is displayed.

In his curatorial statement, Pirotte states that the conceptual inspiration of the exhibition is French dramatist Jean Genet’s 1950s play “Le Balcon,” set in an unnamed city during a political uprising. The balcony serves as the illusion of stability for the cloistered elite, estranging them from the reality of a revolution which threatens their existence. The relationship between the elite and the balcony proves to be an illusionary moment of affluence before their privilege is overtaken by revolution. However, the artist’s choice to freeze the balcony in the moment before chaos

suggests the destructive fate of the elite, while continuing to uphold the hierarchical motif of the balcony. As the balcony hovers above the viewer, and the elites maintain power on an unstable framework, the deconstruction of capitalism is indicated – but never fulfilled.

South Korean-born, Berlin-based Haegue Yang challenges the exhibition’s overarching theme of contradictory social and moral impulses by making everyday objects seem unfamiliar. In doing so, Yang demonstrates how pursuing an ethical lifestyle is challenging, considering our current economic model. The show’s press release states the concerns of the Biennale as emphasizing “a materialistic, sensualistic approach to the world” and advocating the development of “an ethical hedonism and a joyous utilitarianism.” Yang responds to this by rendering common household objects unfamiliar, thus refusing a literal imitation of the real world. Her strategies speak to the ways in which the evasion of representation can be both productive and stimulating.

In *Can Cosies Pyramid – Tulip 34 og Silver*, Yang yokes together haystacks with clusters of rainbow yarn. She stacks food canisters encrusted with gaudy diamantes, and decorates a plush stool with colourful, lurid beads. The whole display has a garish yet inexplicably alluring quality. Anytime a viewer contemplates an art object, they are thinking about the relationship between their bodies, the object, and the space in between. The strangeness of Yang’s hybrid sculptures intensifies the viewer’s desire to physically touch, explore, and experience them. Her sculptures advocate a sensual comprehension of objects, rather than a cognitive one – a relationship that, in one sense, compels viewers not to make sense of the object in terms of its utility or provenance, but instead leads them to feel its aesthetic magnetism.

Yang liberates her objects from their functional context, subverting our desire to possess them by demonstrating the integrity of mean-

ings they have which go beyond our understanding. By refusing the viewer’s authority to monopolize the meaning of her artistic elements, Yang allows these everyday objects, now made unfamiliar, an agency to take on their own meaning. In doing so, Yang gratifies the viewer in another way – allowing them to apprehend the object sensually, but within a framework of alienated distance.

Artworks that critique or posit alternative models of object relations in capitalist society actually feed back into that very cycle of capitalist ownership.

Luc Tuymans’ otherworldly *Doha* paintings concur with Yang’s interpretation of art as partial and subjective. Allusion and suggestion are fundamental to Tuymans’ aesthetic, which questions the possibility of objective representations of reality. He shows how memory, for instance, always taints the reproduction of an image by employing blurriness in his paintings to capture the fading quality of memory. By recreating and altering existing photographs and film stills, Tuymans demonstrates that the painting process already represents an idea of imitation loss of time, and that the artist’s desire to precisely render an image is unattainable – creating a sense of loss and disconnect between the artist’s intent and the work itself.

Rather than trying to erase this loss, Tuymans’ work emphasizes it.

Artists such as Yang and Tuymans deconstruct the relationships between consumer/object and, spectator/artwork – made pervasive due to capitalism and ideas of private property – by purposely obscuring an artwork’s meaning through partial representation. These works seek to de-familiarize objects or images in order to detach them from their contemporary capitalist utility. Our attraction to objects for their potential to be consumed suggests fixed, a priori meanings of objects, which are marketed to appeal to the spectator who exists within this system of commercialization. However, these artworks suggest that new relationships with objects are possible: sensual ones that are subjective, individual, and original.

Nevertheless, the possibilities of “ethical hedonism” and “joyous utilitarianism” the exhibition aims to celebrate are undercut by virtue of the very way that the art is displayed. While artists such as Haegue Yang effectively refuses the art object’s ability to be possessed by consumer society, the very context in which her sculptures are exhibited subverts the validity of her argument.

The contemporary art market is fixated on the art object, thus marginalizing other experimental and intangible forms of art, such as internet-based artworks or conceptual and performance art. “The Grand Balcony” promulgates the coveting of the art object as a marketable commodity through its placement in a museum – a legitimizing institution that determines its perceived value. As a result, artworks that critique or posit alternative models of object relations in capitalist society actually feed back into that very cycle of capitalist ownership in their presentation. The legitimizing powers of the museum and of the prestigious Biennale further increase the economic value of those artworks and their potential to be monetized.

Within a gallery, the artist, as the producer of these objects, gains sta-

tus and exposure. For instance, up-and-coming artists such as Nicole Eisenmann’s paintings are exhibited alongside the prestigious *Doha* series by Tuymans, a strategy further placing the artist in service of the very economic model they seek to critique. Despite the creative possibilities that non-representational painting and sculpture offer, to what extent do depictions of faded memories in Tuymans’ work, or hybridity as in Yang’s work, actually subvert the visual paradigm of consumerism?

The very context in which her sculptures are exhibited subverts the validity of her argument.

Eschewing objective representation in art is one way to recuperate relationships with objects and space that have degenerated through capitalist ideologies of ownership and property. The artworks in “The Grand Balcony” are provocative in the ways they play with the dynamic relationship between the viewer, the art, and the gallery space. While visually stimulating, the art is ultimately undermined by the display rhetoric of the museum. For a moment, we are so enthralled by these elusive and sensuous works that we almost forget to consider the contextual significance of the museum and the ways in which it undermines their message – leaving the viewer to uncomfortably wonder if they have had a meaningful experience of the art or have reinforced its commercialization.

The Montreal Biennale runs until January 15

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Physical accessibility should be a priority, not an afterthought

Since June 20, major roadwork has been taking place on the main streets within and adjacent to McGill's downtown campus. The construction is part of Montreal's "Promenade Urbaine Fleuve-Montagne" project, a city-wide renovation marking Montreal's 375th anniversary next year. The project, which is expected to be completed by May 2017, has worsened the barriers which existed for people with mobility restrictions even before construction began. Disability is not innate; people are rendered disabled by constructed physical environments that refuse to accommodate them. McGill's campus should always be physically accessible for everyone, and this should be at the forefront of the administration's decision-making process, both during and after on-campus construction.

McGill doctoral candidate Stephanie Chipeur, who uses a wheelchair, told the *CBC* that the construction on McTavish blocked a ramp to the Brown Building, making it inaccessible. The construction forced her to miss a doctor's appointment, and an important event for doctoral students. But even before the construction, McGill has long failed to prioritize accessibility on campus. Those with mobility restrictions face obstacles across campus on a daily basis, including inaccessible bathrooms, only one adapted transport bus in the downtown area, steep hills, snow and ice not being cleared throughout the winter, and a lack of ramps to navigate buildings with stairs. While discussions about accessibility do take place at McGill, the administration has made few visible efforts to improve physical accessibility on campus.

McGill claims to have worked with the City of Montreal to improve wheelchair access on McTavish crossings, which are rough, uneven, and narrow. However, wooden ramps and debris-littered pathways along McTavish and Doctor Penfield are still difficult or dangerous for people with mobility restrictions to navigate, and leave us skeptical towards the sincerity of McGill's efforts to accommodate people with limited mobility. McGill's Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) has been consulted by the Facilities Management and Ancillary Services for the past several months on the issue. The OSD is McGill's official resource through which students with mobility limitations can voice their grievances, but it has little ability or influence over the University's policies.

For most people, having to take extra stairs, a longer route, or having to navigate an uneven sidewalk is an annoyance, but little more. For others, it can mean pain or discomfort, missing classes or appointments, and being barred from campus life and activities. As Chipeur said to *The Daily*, "This is a moment for McGill to be proactive." We call on the administration to make the necessary changes to ensure physical accessibility during this construction period, to make this a priority in any future construction plans, and to constantly and actively work toward creating a universally accessible campus.

—The McGill Daily editorial board

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ERRATA

"AMUSE votes for strike mandate" October 24th, News, page 7, attributed a quote to Maxim Bru. In fact, the quote should have been attributed to Maxim Baru. The Daily regrets the error.

"In search of the Shadowman" October 24th, SciTech, page 14, credited the author as Saishree Badri. In fact, the author was Saishree Badrinarayanan. The Daily regrets the error.

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