

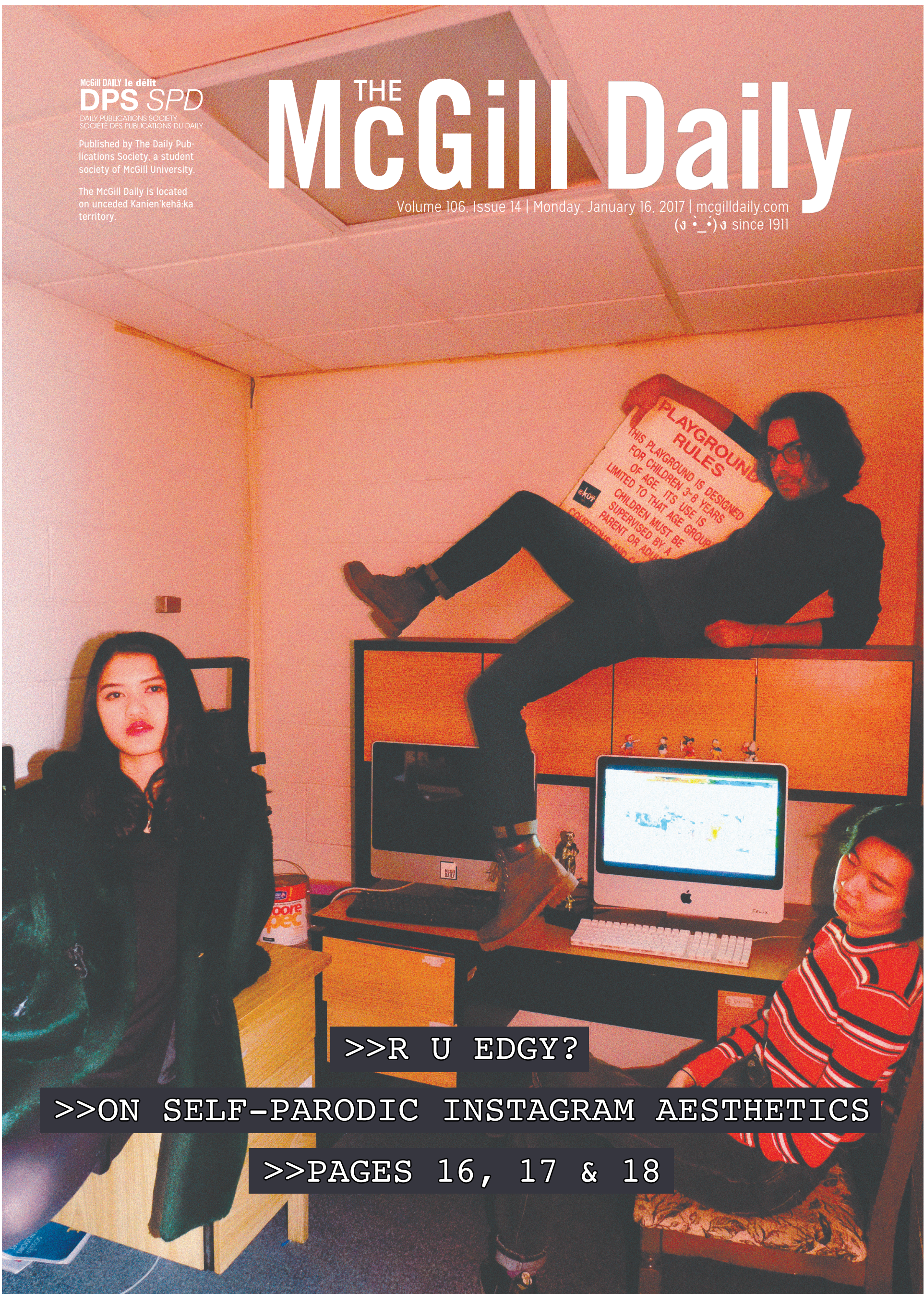
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# THE McGill Daily

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# AMUSE ratifies second agreement

## But many AMUSE members still feel insecure about employment

**XAVIER RICHER VIS**  
The McGill Daily

On Monday January 9, the Association of McGill University Support Employees' (AMUSE) membership ratified a new collective agreement with the University. As the ratification vote is legally binding, AMUSE members were the only ones allowed to be present during the vote, but it is reported that the vote passed with 84 per cent of those present in favour.

The union represents a network of casual and temporary employees on campus: 85 per cent of AMUSE's membership consists of student employees. The collective agreement will expire on May 31, 2020.

### A second collective agreement

The union has been without a collective agreement with the University since May 2015, over a year and half ago. Frustration with the University's intransigence over a \$15 minimum wage for AMUSE employees resulted in the union adopting a strike mandate in late October, resulting in a five day strike from October 29 to November 2.

"The new Collective Agreement will come into effect as soon as it is signed by the two parties — likely in the next few weeks, and changes to pay, job classifications, and other working conditions will come into effect immediately thereafter," reads a press release on AMUSE's website.

"When the Collective Agreement is signed, AMUSE will make available a copy of the full document on our website, and will begin to disseminate hard copies of the Agreement as well," the press release continues.

Claire Michela, president of AMUSE, told The Daily in an interview that she hopes the agreement will be signed before February.

Until then, AMUSE has released a "Ratification Kit" detailing all of the collective agreement's newest provisions, including pay increases, changes to membership list dissemination, and renewed efforts regarding Work Study programs and identification access cards.

### Wage increases

The ratification of a new collective agreement will see a rise in minimum wages for all employees within Unit A. Other AMUSE employees, like Floor Fellows in McGill residences, fall under Unit B.

Class A employees' minimum wage will go from \$10.85 an hour to \$13.75 an hour, a 26.73 per cent increase in salary for many employees. Class B and C employees'



**MARINA DJURDJEVIC** | The McGill Daily

minimum wage will also increase to \$13.75, but will increase incrementally in the years to come.

### Work Study

Under the new collective agreement, both AMUSE and the University have agreed to "organize a meeting twice a year" (once in the Summer term, and once in the Winter term of every academic year) to "discuss topics of mutual interest relative to the Work Study program as it applies to employees covered by this Collective Agreement," according to the "Ratification Kit."

Those present at the meetings will include the Director of McGill's Office of Scholarships and Student Aid, members of AMUSE's leadership, and students who are part of the Work Study program.

Prior to entering into negotiations with the University, AMUSE had made its dissatisfaction with the Work Study program clear.

"The agenda would potentially include topics like the posting of assignments and the duration of postings on the Work Study website," reads the "Ratification Kit." These were both issues students who had participated in Work Study commonly complained of.

### Identification cards

In addition to meetings regarding Work Study, the University has agreed, in coordination with AMUSE, to "establish a joint committee to discuss and review the feasibility of access to identifica-

tion cards for non-student employees." This was another of AMUSE's main bargaining priorities.

The mandate of said committee would be to "discuss and review the current process relative to identification cards for non-student employees covered by this Collective Agreement and to allow non-student employees to have access to Identification Cards."

The committee would in theory eventually provide McGill's Human Resources and Security Services recommendations "to the current arrangement relative to the issuance of identification cards for purposes of on-campus identification, workplace access and uPrint privileges as required."

According to Michela, this committee was struck because the University brought arguments in negotiations that implied it would be difficult logistically or with the system they work with to provide ID cards for non-student employees.

However, she noted that the committee would "have the time and energy to go into those specific details that they did not want to go into during negotiations [...] and hopefully would have the strength to make some changes."

### Membership list

In the past, AMUSE's leadership has had difficulty communicating with the union's membership. For example, in the past some employees have not known they were part of AMUSE.

Under the new collective agreement, the union will now receive their membership list every month. Previously, they only received it three times per year. The University has six months to reprogram their systems to generate said list.

### Bookstore employees

While the ratification vote passed with a majority voting in favor of the collective agreement, many AMUSE employees still fear for their employment.

Last November, bookstore employees (who fall under AMUSE) received an email from their employers announcing that the store's move from McTavish to the new Sherbrooke and Parc locations will prompt a reorganization of how part time employees are scheduled. As opposed to having regular part-time schedules, "casuals" will now only be scheduled during peak periods, drastically reducing their hours.

"We're happy with the agreement and excited for the change of minimum wage in February," said a group of bookstore employees in a statement to The Daily, "however bookstore employees are still concerned over our future employment status."

Last semester, many bookstore employees felt that the reorganization was due in part to the new collective bargaining agreement.

However, a letter obtained by The Daily revealed that the admin-

istration has rejected that claim. McGill's Director of Employee and Labor Relations told an AMUSE executive that "the University's decision to manage the casual's schedule differently is not related whatsoever to the current tentative agreement with AMUSE."

### Floor Fellows

In addition to bookstore employees, many floor fellows have begun to fear for their own livelihoods.

Last week, the Human Resources subcommittee of the McGill Board of Governors vetoed an agreement the University had reached with AMUSE's bargaining team regarding Floor Fellow negotiations last December, which would feature heightened salaries for Floor Fellows in McGill residences.

"The Human Resources Committee has proven that the word of its own labour negotiators is hollow," said Michela in a subcommittee meeting not open to the public. "By renegeing on commitments made at the bargaining table, you have lost our respect and damaged our trusts."

AMUSE has publically stated that it has calculated that the committee's concerns with the proposed Floor Fellow negotiations amount to \$151,000 annually.

"If the University was committed to respecting this agreement and to respecting Floor Fellows, we believe that you would be able to find such a sum in the University's budget," Michela concluded.

# AUS holds first council of 2017

## Arts Student Employment Fund proposal presented to councillors

**XAVIER RICHER VIS**  
The McGill Daily

On Wednesday January 11, the Arts Undergraduate Society (AUS) Legislative Council gathered for its first meeting of the Winter 2017 semester. Council voted on a motion regarding Winter general elections, tabled a motion to create a SNAX committee, and heard discussion about amendments to the Arts Student Employment Fund (ASEF). Council also heard announcements and reports from AUS executives, senators, and representatives.

### Absences from Council

During question period, VP Internal Kira Smith raised what she called an “impromptu question.”

“You can get back to me in email or in person, but we’re noticing that there are quite a few absences from [AUS] council,” she said. “If there’s something that we can do that can make your time easier, so you’re not missing Council, or not forgetting reports, please let me know.”

“I don’t really want to have to follow up with you,” she continued, “and I’m sure everything will be fine in the end, but it’s really important to me that people are at Council, and you are submitting your reports, and you don’t have to be penalized, so let me know if there’s a way to make anything easier in regards to that.” Smith suggested deadlines as a potential measure to help councillors better manage their time.

### New business

The motion to create a SNAX committee was tabled until next Council meeting. AUS President Becky Goldberg moved to table the motion to allow for “more consultation to reflect the committee membership.”

Council also heard a motion to hold the Winter general elections.



AUS Council.

KEVIN TAM | The McGill Daily

Partridge said this seems to have been happening for a “shockingly long time,” and [...] a great deal of that money had been recovered.

“Last year, we pushed up the elections for executives to give them more time to transition into their roles

before the new year,” said the mover of the motion, “so we’ve kept that updated timeline for this election cycle.” The motion passed with no objections.

While new executives will be allowed to campaign between February 13 and 23, with polling stations open from the 16th onwards, departmental elections and the referendum period will remain on the same schedule, to better allow departmental executives to finish the projects they’ve been working on.

### Changes to ASEF bylaws

AUS VP Academic Erik Partridge spoke about changes to the Arts Student Employment Fund bylaws.

“In the past, the Arts Student Employment Fund has given

each new professor in the Faculty of Arts \$5,000, [...] to spend on undergraduate casual research assistants’ [salaries] for the first three years,” Partridge explained.

He then explained how, in the past, after those three years, those funds seemed to “have just been going back to McGill, into their bank account, and we [had] nothing to gain from those funds.”

Partridge said this seems to have been happening for a “shockingly long time,” and since those losses have been discovered, a great deal of that money has been recovered.

In addition to amendments to ASEF allocations and working with Associate Dean Engle-Warnick (Research and Graduate

Studies) over the last nine months, Partridge says he’s been working on a proposal to make the ASEF “one general fund.” This fund would employ people at the discretion of a committee, headed by the Dean of Arts, which would include four student members.

Partridge highlighted that under the new proposal, AUS would allocate money twice a year, once in November, and once in February. Eventually, however, AUS would reclaim money that wasn’t spent to benefit other professors. Partridge and the Speaker then invited people to discuss this proposal before it eventually makes its way to Council in the coming weeks.

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# SSMU Council grills Manfredi

## Council denounces Islamophobic Bill 62

**MARINA CUPIDO**  
The McGill Daily

Last week's meeting of the Student's Society of McGill University (SSMU) Legislative Council began with a robust question period: councillors confronted Provost and Vice-Principal (Academic) Christopher Manfredi, who was present at Council, with questions concerning student labour rights, McGill's swamped Mental Health Services, financial aid, and more.

Later, Council passed two motions, one of which expressed opposition to Quebec's controversial Bill 62 on religious expression, and the other of which set up a provisional mechanism through which SSMU's Board of Directors (BoD) will report regularly to Council.

### Question period

Environment Representative Tuvier Okome opened the session by questioning the administration's apparent display of bad faith during contract negotiations with McGill's floor fellows.

Earlier that day, it emerged that a Board of Governors' subcommittee had rescinded their approval of an agreement which would have granted floor fellows a salary in exchange for their work; at the moment, they are simply provided with room and board.

"Floor fellows right now are doing work for free, and the work they do is so immense," said Okome. "These are your students that are really helping first-years, [...] and they're working so hard, and McGill backtracked out of giving them money that I think [they] can afford. [...] I'm just wondering why that decision was made."

Manfredi offered no substantive response to Okome's concerns, only stating that as per standard University procedure, neither he nor any other administrator could comment on an ongoing labour negotiation.

Okome also raised concerns about McGill's limited accessibility to prospective students from lower-income backgrounds. She noted that recent discourse around systemic oppression operating at McGill has often included issues of race, but has paid less attention to socioeconomic class.

"We're not known for being diverse in terms of class at this university, [...] and I was wondering what you're going to be doing [...] to make sure that the school [...] is accommodating to people from higher and lower classes, because I think it's beneficial for people from higher and lower classes to interact and to learn from each other."



SSMU Council.

KEVIN TAM | The McGill Daily

Manfredi agreed, assuring Okome that his forthcoming 'strategic plan' would include "meaningful and achievable targets with respect to increasing student financial assistance," to address this problem.

"Floor fellows right now are doing work for free, and the work they do is so immense. These are your students that are really helping first-years [...] and McGill backtracked out of giving them money that I think [they] can afford."

—Tuvier Okome  
Environment Representative

In response, Science Representative Caitlin Mehrotra pointed out that financial aid at McGill is often contingent on academic performance, which is itself a form of inaccessibility. According to Manfredi, though, the afore-

mentioned expansion of financial aid would be mainly needs-based.

During the rest of the discussion, councillors made it clear that, among other things, they expected McGill's administration to conduct extensive student consultation in improving Mental Health Services on campus, keep the community updated on the progress of the Provost's Task Force on Indigenous Studies and Indigenous Education, and actively implement the recently approved Policy Against Sexual Violence.

### Motion opposing Bill 62

The first motion discussed at Council concerned Quebec's Bill 62, which would prohibit anyone who has their face covered from working in the public sector or receiving public services.

Although framed as a measure which would protect state secularism, the bill has drawn much criticism for Islamophobic undertones. Citing SSMU's identity as "an organization that is committed to leadership in matters of human rights and strives to oppose discrimination," the motion called on the Society to publicly denounce the bill, and "to advocate against any further movement toward the adoption of the Bill as it stands."

Councillors were overwhelmingly favourable to the motion, with several councillors asking to have their names added to it, in addition to the two original movers. The only note of opposition came from Engineering Representative Richard

(Tre) Mansdoerfer, who, while expressing unequivocal condemnation of the bill itself, questioned SSMU for taking positions on some 'external' issues but not others. Mansdoerfer said that the Society had not, for example, taken a position on the ongoing multilateral conflict in Syria.

"I think there's a difference between taking a stance on this bill, which is [...] in Canada, and specifically in Quebec, [...] and [taking a stance on] the complex situation in Syria," responded Mehrotra, dismissing the latter notion as "ridiculous."

Okome concurred, adding that the bill's discriminatory content made it a pressing concern.

"Quebec has always had a strange view of the religion of Islam, and this is what this bill is," she said. "It's perpetuating Islamophobia in Canada, and just to explain, telling a woman to put on or take off clothes [...] there's nothing feminist about either of those things."

"I think SSMU's stance on this is really important, especially in the political era where we are. [...] We should stand on the side of the oppressed," Okome concluded.

Ultimately, the motion passed with 95 per cent in favour, five per cent abstaining, and none opposed.

### Motion on Board of Directors

Last year, Council implemented a series of governance reforms, with the goal of streamlining Council by shifting certain administrative responsibilities to the Society's Board of Directors.

Unfortunately, the reforms, while valuable, failed to put in place mechanisms whereby the BoD could report to Council on the execution of its new tasks. In November, the Democratic Governance Review Committee was founded to address this situation, and ensure the transparency and accountability of both the BoD and Council.

"I think there's a difference between taking a stance on this bill, which is [...] in Canada, and specifically in Quebec, [...] and [taking a stance on] the complex situation in Syria."

—Caitlin Mehrotra  
Science Representative

Several members of the committee were involved in creating the motion at hand, which proposed that the BoD would present a report on its activities at every Council meeting. This interim measure would remain in effect until the end of May 2017.

After minimal discussion, the motion passed with 95 per cent for, five per cent abstaining, and none opposed.

# Women talk about self-censorship

## Salon-style discussion opens up dialogue on silencing

**RAHMA WIRYOMARTONO**  
The McGill Daily

On Wednesday January 11, a salon-style discussion about women's experiences with self-silencing was organized by Imago Theatre, in partnership with Béatrice Média, at Cafe Sfouf, an intimate venue welcoming approximately thirty people.

Hosted by Rebecca Munroe, a radio host at CJLO - 1690AM, the talk featured three panelists: Dominique Pirolo, a Talent Acquisition Specialist for the German multinational software corporation SAP; Tracey Steer, a writer and blogger whose work has appeared in *Today's Parent* and *Reader's Digest*; and Christina Vroom, the Associate Director of University Advancement at McGill's Faculty of Dentistry.

The panel discussion accounted for the first part of the event, in which the panelists explored when and why they censored themselves. Following this, audience members were invited to share their own experiences of self-censorship. Eventually, the conversation progressed into a collective exchange of strategies to combat the entrenched structures that contribute to why women feel inclined to recede and self-silence.

The event was organized as part of the launch of Imago Theatre's *An Intractable Woman*, an upcoming production about Anna Politkovskaya, the only Russian journalist to have covered the war in Chechnya who was subsequently assassinated for her work. Imago Theatre described *An Intractable Woman* as "a story about the inalienable right to freedom of expression."

Speaking to *The Daily* on the importance of organizing such events, Jen Quinn, the Artistic and Administrative Associate of Imago Theatre, emphasized that media has a unique role to play in catalyzing dialogue.

"We always try to create a platform to empower," Quinn said. "Part of the work that we do is always about engaging in conversation and making sure that it is a lateral conversation that anybody is welcome to participate in."

Béatrice Média echoes a similar mission to "[spark] the kind of authentic conversation that boosts empathy and explores new ways of improving the female experience every day," according to its website.

### Panel discussion

Munroe commenced the panel discussion by asking the panelists to think back to an experience when they felt as if they couldn't speak up. The varied answers emphasized different silencing factors, such as family dynamics, gender expectations, and race.

Pirolo reflected on her childhood, citing the expectation of diplomacy as one of the reasons that she censored herself.

"I was a people-pleaser. Most girls want to please and be a people pleaser. So we're not really thinking about forcing your opinion, you want to keep it peaceful, you want to fit in," she said. "And then I started experiencing things later on that changed all that. Back then I was very quiet and now I'm very vocal. I object to everything."

Vroom's reflections similarly pointed to how the expectation of politeness and tact contributed to her self-silencing.

"With my two brothers, I felt very much like I needed to be the peacemaker in my family," Vroom said. "I had an opinion but I didn't know where it fit in or whether I should vocalize it [...]. I didn't like rocking the boat when I was younger. It made me very uncomfortable."

Steer spoke of how being a Black woman influences her experiences with self-silencing. "I live in Westmount - and it's a mostly white neighbourhood, and I've lived mostly among white people my whole life, it's not a problem," she shared. "But it's also a strange little neighbourhood because I've been mistaken for the maid and the nanny all the time, and that never happened before."

"Part of the work that we do is always about engaging in conversation and making sure that it is a lateral conversation that anybody is welcome to participate in."

—Jen Quinn  
Artistic and Administrative Associate of Imago Theatre

"There's also something to be said about not wanting to be 'that person.' I don't want to be the sort of person who's always talking about race, or that angry Black woman," she continued.

Steer further shared an instance of self-silence: "[I was] walking around with my kids, and my baby, and people would fawn over my son and a woman said to me once, 'Is your husband Caucasian?' and I said, 'yes,' and she said, 'Oh he's so beautiful, you're lucky he has white features.'"



Panelists at Cafe Sfouf.

RAHMA WIRYOMARTONO | The McGill Daily

"The thing is, I knew she was trying to give me a compliment. I knew that," she continued. "I was gobsmacked. There was that thing in my head that said, 'say something.' But I didn't, because I didn't want to make the situation uncomfortable for her. But those kinds of things have happened many, many times. And there's nothing really that small about it."

Vroom also spoke about the issue of not speaking up to make sure other people feel comfortable.

She shared that there is "an individual that I have to work with, so if you will, my client, and this individual has made me extremely uncomfortable, this individual likes spending time with me and I'm not interested in anything except the work that we do together. I find myself in a knot when I have to see this individual or spend time with them."

"One of these days I need to stand up to myself and draw the line and say, 'This is our time together, this is what we will discuss, it will not go beyond those boundaries.' I haven't done that yet, and it's been two years," she continued.

"It's like that expression pick your battles. And that expression has been used so often [...]. And I agree with it because there are times when it's not worth it, but at the same time, that's a form of self-censorship. Why shouldn't we say 'that made me uncomfortable, that upset me,' when that happens?" she elaborated.

The discussion concluded when Munroe asked the panelists about how they have progressed from self-silencing to freely communicating their thoughts and concerns.

"When I became much more assertive with myself and not shy,"

Vroom recounted, "a male friend of mine - we're not friends anymore - said, 'you've become very aggressive,' and I said, 'I think you mean assertive,' and he said, 'no, aggressive'. So in his eyes, I was aggressive. And he said, 'I think that's why you're single.'"

"You don't want to be seen as a bitch," Steer added. "If you're still in a place of feeling like you need to please people, you don't want to rock boats, you don't want to make people uncomfortable."

### Audience reactions

The second part of the event involved an audience talkback in which people shared experiences and strategies for navigating difficult situations. Audience members expressed concerns over the talk's perceived lack of attention on systemic structures of oppression that figure in why women are more inclined to censor themselves.

In an interview with *The Daily*, Rhiannon Collett, a playwright who attended the event, shared that she "felt that the conversation had been veering around the ghost of the actual problem."

"A lot of the conversation was about moderating our opinions and behaviour in reaction to a system that constantly [tries] to get us down," she said, "so, the conversations around how to be assertive and not aggressive really frustrate me because what we're actually talking about is a systemic problem."

However, Ocean DeRouchie, Fringe Arts Editor for Concordia University's student newspaper *The Link* still noted that "it was really nice to be able to talk in a room full of women, and just being able to hear their thoughts and

experiences. As another woman working in media, it's sometimes really hard to have your ideas heard and this is that reminder to keep kicking ass."

"One of these days I need to stand up to myself and draw the line and say 'This is our time together, this is what we will discuss, it will not go beyond those boundaries.' I haven't done that yet, and it's been two years."

—Christina Vroom  
Associate Director of University Advancement in McGill's Faculty of Dentistry

Speaking to *The Daily*, another attendee, Rebecca, shared DeRouchie's sentiments: "When [an audience member] brought up the fact that when she was in high school, she was able to put up her hand and be very vocal in class, and in the moment she got to university she all of the sudden stopped talking, that resonated with me."

# Indigenous law course launches

## First-year law students and faculty reflect on mandatory class

ELLEN COOLS

The McGill Daily

The first week of the Winter semester saw first-year students in McGill's Faculty of Law participating in a mandatory week-long intensive course on Indigenous legal traditions.

The course is part of the Faculty's response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) report, released in 2015. (The TRC was organized to investigate the abuse inflicted on Indigenous peoples through the Indian residential school system.) Professor Kirsten Anker told The Daily in a phone interview that the Commission recommended that all Canadian law students take a course on Indigenous issues.

Anker, who taught a session as part of the intensive course, lectures about property, and Aboriginal peoples and the law at McGill. In creating the course, the Faculty of Law built upon the elective courses on Indigenous issues she herself developed.

"The door was open to Indigenous traditions but nothing really robust had been done to build them into the transsystemic program," Anker said. The transsystemic program is the Faculty of Law's unique undergraduate law degree that integrates both common and civil law into a single program.

"Instead of just teaching what's called Aboriginal law [...] we started bringing Indigenous law and traditions into the picture and kind of trying to have a [...] dialogue about law between traditions, which is kind of the gist of what transsystemic law or legal education means," she continued. "So it's kind of taken that model, that idea, and brought it into a week for the whole first year [class]."

In an email to The Daily, professor Hoi Kong, one of the creators of the course, explained that the course was also inspired by "discussions, students, faculty, and other stakeholders had over the past few years about how to renew the curriculum."

"The specific content of the course emerged in part from conversations that Professor Napoleon (from the University of Victoria) and Professor Friedland (from the University of Alberta), and I have had over the years, during their visits here and mine at the University of Victoria, and from a course that Professor Napoleon and I co-taught, and another that Professor Friedland taught here," he elaborated.

The content used specific examples from Cree law, and included the "historical context, theories,



MARINA DJURDJEVIC | The McGill Daily

and sources of Indigenous laws, as well as modes of interpreting and applying those sources," he added.

### Reactions to the course

When asked about the response from faculty and students, Anker said her impression was that "students were really engaged and they found it really interesting."

"It was working really well in the way that it's been set up to kind of mirror the integration week they did in first semester: looking at common and civil law about [...] the question of safe injection spaces for [Intravenous] drug users," she continued. "I think that worked [...] really well [...] because one of the challenges of learning Indigenous law is that it's often in the abstract; someone can talk about it, but you don't really get a sense of how it works as law until you try to do something with it."

Anker added that other faculty members are also excited about giving more space to Indigenous issues in the curriculum.

Kong shared Anker's sentiments, adding that he has been "really moved by the sincerity of the expressions of support."

In a phone interview with The Daily, Allan Vicaire, First People's House and Social Equity and Diversity Education (SEDE) Office's Indigenous Education Advisor, shared his excitement about the initiative.

"I think it's about time that the University is pushing to include Indigenous perspectives in the classroom," he said.

"I think sometimes we forget, especially at McGill, there are some great professors out there that are ready to push for Indigenous perspectives, and [ensure] that curriculum is inclusive," he continued.

"I think it's about time that the University is pushing to include Indigenous perspectives in the classroom."

—Allan Vicaire  
First People's House and  
SEDE Indigenous Education  
Advisor

Vicaire noted that this initiative differs from others because the faculty is "ensuring that every student [...] is being exposed to Indigenous issues." He believes the next step is for other faculties to begin thinking of how they can implement that.

However, at least one first-year law student, Isabelle\*, found that the course was problematic, particularly because of a lack of Indigenous voices.

"The instructors told us that was due to several reasons: that we should gain a background knowledge on Indigenous culture and legal systems before engaging with

Indigenous peoples as a symbol of respect, and that there is a significant strain on Indigenous academics right now," she said in an email to The Daily.

"I completely understand and respect these decisions, as well as the importance of putting in the work ourselves, however, it often felt as if we were learning from the wrong people," she continued.

Isabelle further noted that the course content felt introductory, which is useful for students who had not previously been exposed to Indigenous issues, but left others wanting more.

She went on to say that "this week seemed to fit very well with a colonial legal education. It seemed to emphasize voices and analyses of academics who sought to engage with colonial legal systems and who took a reconciliationist approach. It often felt as if many more radical, or even separationist perspectives were missing, those that are often missing in internal legal conversations in law school."

### Future development

When asked what more needs to be done in teaching students about Indigenous issues, Anker highlighted the importance of transforming colonial power dynamics.

"It's not just about giving people information, although that's a really important part. It's also about establishing that pedagogy and that learning environment has to come out of a relationship with communities," she added.

She further highlighted the importance of developing "relationships in which we're building a connection with communities and we're implicated in them and they're implicated in us."

In terms of the course's future development, Kong noted that a faculty committee is working to determine the next steps, such as the possibility of making this type of mandatory course longer.

"This week seemed to fit very well with a colonial legal education."

—Isabelle\*  
First-year law student

Both Anker and Isabelle shared their belief that Indigenous law should be integrated into all of the courses offered by the Faculty of Law.

"Engaging with Indigeneity and colonialism means going beyond the classroom and working towards decolonization in every sense of the word," Isabelle said. "It means challenging the culture of our classrooms and the Faculty in general; challenging its whiteness, its colonial history (and present), its heteropatriarchy. We need to think about and challenge what a legal education actually means within a settler-colonial context."

\*Name has been changed.

# The homework problem

Confronting the realities of mentally taxing homework culture

**ALAINAH AAMIR**  
Commentary Writer

On Sunday night, before the beginning of winter semester, I lay awake in bed for what felt like hours. With five lectures to attend and readings to cater to, I already felt behind. I was overwhelmed — finals were just a moment ago but all of a sudden I already had more readings to do, more poems to unravel and more political theories to memorize. Alas, what is university if one doesn't find themselves panicking over the terrifying pile of books sitting on their desk?

For the purpose of writing this article, I asked a few of my friends, across a host of different majors and faculties, approximately how many pages of readings they had per week. One friend had around 125 pages per week, another had around 250, a friend in science had a hundred while a friend studying chemistry and political science had around 200. As for myself, I have to read a novel, a play, a short book and hundreds of pages of information about political theory every week, which comes up to approximately seven hundred pages of entirely new information I am expected to remember inside out.

You get the picture. College students have a lot of work to do. While some may not have as many readings as others, they make up for it with grueling, never-ending labs, surprise quizzes, and of course, essays upon essays to write. To put it simply, nobody has it easy. This creates a sense of community and brings people closer together — it is okay that you can't go out today because neither can your friends, it is perfectly fine that you just barely passed that quiz after not leaving your room for days because everyone else just barely passed as well, it is no problem that you have forgotten how long you have been in this library trying your hardest to cram seemingly irrelevant informa-

tion into your mind because everybody else is in the same boat as you.

But that's the thing — no matter how much we try, we can't seem to normalize the toxicity that surrounds the unfair amount of work universities expect students to complete weekly. This is not just McGill's problem; the same, if not more, can be said for higher education institutions across the globe. To an extent, this constant pressure is good for preparing students before they are cannonballed into the reality of being a working adult in a potentially corporate environment. But on the other hand, one cannot help but wonder, how much can you really learn while under this stress?

Perhaps it's just me, but having to read and retain information while an invisible clock ticks away, aggressively indicating that I am constantly losing precious studying time, does not exactly make for the most ideal environment.

No matter how much we try, we can't seem to break free of the toxicity that surrounds the unfair amount of work universities expect students to complete weekly.

In the summer, I read upwards of ten novels. I remember details vividly, I can recite quotes from memory, I smile every time a character I like is mentioned, it warms me inside to see something that reminds me of one of the novels.



HAYLEY MORTIN | The McGill Daily

That's just the thing about reading for leisure. It creates an environment where you are able to read without the constant stress of having to be tested on it later — I miss that feeling.

In college, you have to do much more than readings. You have to maintain your GPA, you have to be sociable; sometimes you even have the added stress of some form of employment. The question here is

simple — where does mental health come in? How do you stay sane in an environment that demands you to work every passing moment, that distributes pamphlets about the importance of mental health but fails to give you even a second to inhale, exhale, take it all in? Where does the learning end and the pressure begin? When does friendship become irrelevant, to be replaced with intense competition? They tell

you that you can ask for help, take a bubble bath, or kick back with some Netflix, but it will never be enough to calm the anxiety that will surface when you realize even the action of de-stressing has only augmented your stress levels.

Alainah Aamir is a U1 English Literature and Political Science student. To contact the author, email [alainah.aamir@mail.mcgill.ca](mailto:alainah.aamir@mail.mcgill.ca)

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# Get out of my DM's

## Social media: a source of empowerment or disenfranchisement?

**ALICIA LAPENA BARRY**  
Commentary writer

In today's world, social networking mediums like Instagram have emerged as platforms of self-representation, empowerment and autonomy — but along with this comes the burden of self-surveillance, particularly toward the bodies of women and femmes. These platforms seem to be under the constant gaze of the dominant patriarchal eye, especially through the act of direct messaging in which heterosexual cismen sexualize, demean, and claim ownership of women and femme bodies. Direct messaging culture is becoming more and more prevalent throughout various social media platforms, whether it be on Instagram, Twitter or Tumblr. The openness and searchability that make social media so popular simultaneously serves as a tool men use to seek their 'targets' online.

DMs are saturated with various practices of objectification and disregard for women and femmes in social and cultural contexts, and feed into damaging beauty ideals and stereotypes. In order to further understand this direct and pervasive messaging culture, it is important to understand the contextualization of women and femme bodies as subjects in modern society. Exposure to any form of mass media will prove that the bodies of women and femmes have been presented as an object of lust and desire, catering predominantly to, and for the consumption of, heterosexual cismen. Popular media, through images of hyper-sexualization, has thus effectively conceptualized the 'ideal' feminine self. This conceptualization results in a process of sexualization whereby young women and femmes — as young as teens and pre-teens — experience themselves as objectified, disempowered and de-autonomised. Moreover, the media has forcibly monopolized conventional beauty standards to emphasize the Eurocentric, thin, white, able bodies of women and femmes. Because of these ideals, instances of racialization and marginalization are rampant. Dominant, mass mediated images of Western and Eurocentric beauty furthers white supremacy and conventional white beauty, disabling the social mobility of women of colour and other, marginalized bodies that do not intersect with the 'norm'. These boundaries of the physical self have construed Western society's conventional understanding of femininity and create damaging effects on all women and femmes.

However, women and femme's bodies, especially those largely misrepresented and marginalized in mass media, find empowerment within forms of self-identification and the cultivation of a persona online. Social networks allow women and femmes to assert their feminist politics through labour, either emotional or material, and often monetary, towards a self-brand. This dynamic process of empowerment through, for example, the selfie and personal Instagram curation, often results in the re-sexualization and commodification of the bodies of women and femmes — this time at the consent and effort of the subject, the woman — whereby the subject engages Instagram to produce content as the empowered Other.

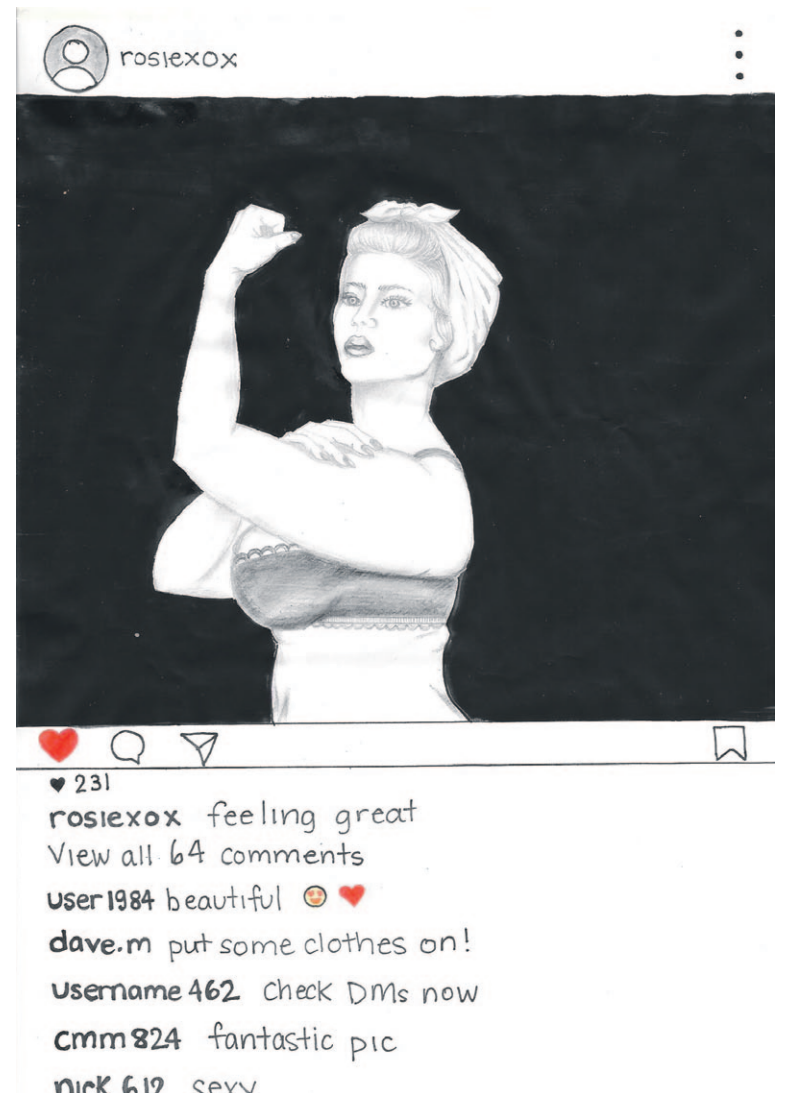
DMs are saturated with various practices of objectification and disregard for women and femmes in social and cultural contexts.

Instagram can be seen as an active agent in rejecting patriarchal, white supremacist dominance through its enabling of marginalized women and femmes to contribute labour in dictating their self-brand. Rather than being presented as passive objects of the male gaze, young women and femmes on Instagram frequently depict themselves as active, independent, and sexually empowered. These platforms exist as a mode of furthering autonomy and bodily agency within a larger construction of the online self. Some could argue that this is a moral obligation: women and femmes on Instagram take up online space through the subject position in response to the sexist societal norms and unattainable beauty ideals forced upon them by the patriarchal hegemony of society, and actively work against these impositions. Despite traditional criticisms of selfies as vain and narcissistic, it is through this medium that many women and femmes actually gain the agency to control this online medium to present their own powerful messages of identification. This concept of women and femme's empowerment is furthered through the practice of immaterial labour— that being the

affective and cognitive commodities produced by work that exist outside the traditional wage-based consideration of labor as a material-commodity-producing activity, as well as the activity of producing this new form of commodity, through the production of content by and for the self.

Unfortunately, through these 'empowered' platforms, women and femmes are still viewed as fetishized commodities in dominant patriarchal, heteronormative, consumer capitalism. Men take up a significant portion of online spaces explicitly to objectify women and femmes, in commenting on their bodies and appearance in selfies publicly and through the act of direct messaging. Conversely, the fear of being marginalized for being outside of patriarchal norms inhibits aesthetic expression for women and femmes. These objectifying discourses are part of a culture of male entitlement, dominance, and ownership. These messages engage women and femmes in a non-consensual sexual manner, which is often explicitly violent, emblematic of patriarchal culture in which men have been conditioned and socialized to appropriate and comment on women and femme's bodies in order to fulfill their heterosexual fantasies and desires. Under patriarchy, men engage these bodies as a form of ownership, thus appropriating their bodies for their own fulfillment. Intrusive, predatory commentary and messages such as these exist as a form of online 'cat-calling' and harassment, and normalize rape culture and sexual violence enacted by heterosexual cis men upon women and femmes.

The instant accessibility and availability of women and femme's bodies in a mediated online sphere becomes an opportunity for sexual harassment in the digital age - this concept of ownership and entitlement is both an archaic and autocratic one purporting to heteronormative interests of power and dominance. Furthermore, the position of heterosexual cis men on Instagram and through these forms of communication is that of the voyeur. Self-documentation, surveillance, and regulation, allows heterosexual cis men access to visual representations of the bodies of women and femmes. Within the process of direct messaging, this openness and availability emphasizes the position of the male as a voyeur: his own self-brand, and presence outside the role of voyeur, is largely invisible, while simultaneously taking up online space to objectify and hypersexualize women and femmes.



CASSANDRA RYAN | The McGill Daily

Thus surveillance happens through women and femmes self-policing, and through the intrusion of the male gaze. This creates a paradox within representational discourses in which women are taught to be themselves, empower themselves, and properly produce their labour within online spaces, while not resisting or rebelling against men's reinforcement of ideal femininity through direct messaging. This paradox echoes gender norms which position men as dominant and women and femmes as the passive 'other.' Women and femmes of all identities, whether heterosexual, LGBT, or people of colour, are being fetishized as the other: however, each of these fetishizations takes place in different ways, concurrent with ideas of intersectionality in which varying forms of identity overlap to create unique lived experiences. For example, a cis, heterosexual woman would not be fetishized in the same manner as an openly queer woman or femme, nor would an able bodied woman or femme in the same ways a disabled woman or femme would, and more.

The consumption and fetishization of the marginalized body as the Other work together to create a pervasive, predatory DM culture. Consequently, men viewing the Insta-

grams of women and femmes tend to project stereotypical feminine qualities onto the bodies of these women and femmes in selfies and other online curatorial portrayals of the self. The men are, in this way, also socialised to hold specific conceptualizations of the ways women and femmes should respond the advances of men — specifically, passively and without resistance. This is what leads to the unabashedly violent and cruel reactions men have when women and femmes reject them.

A question thus presents itself, are these online mediated networks really able to exist within frames of empowerment, surveillance, and self-labour? Are they simply platforms for the subjugation of women and femmes by heterosexual cismen in a heteronormative context? I believe it is an interesting and condemnable paradox, whereby women and femmes are expected to successfully perform empowered and autonomous acts of self-representation while simultaneously falling under the scrutiny and violence of dominance by the gaze of heterosexual cismen.

Alicia Lapena-Barry is a second year Cultural Studies student. To contact the author, email [alicia.lapena-barry@mail.mcgill.ca](mailto:alicia.lapena-barry@mail.mcgill.ca)

On

Wednesday, January 25

the staff of

# The McGill Daily

will elect the rest of

the 2016-17 editorial board.

We hope you'll consider running for one of our open positions. If you are interested in joining our non-hierarchical team, here's a quick guide on the election process for becoming a Daily editor.

## the basics:

Unlike many student newspapers, our editors are elected by Daily staffers rather than hired by a committee. To run for an editorial position or to vote in the election, you must be Daily staff.

## becoming staff:

To be staff, you must have six staff points - contributing articles, photos, graphics, and illustrations count as one point each. Writing a feature or coming in for a production night count as two points. If you're not staff yet, there's time before the election, so email an editor to get involved!

## the editorial board:

Editors share equal voting rights on issues, and work together to produce the newspaper every week. Each editor receives a monthly stipend.

For more information on individual positions, contact specific section editors (emails can be found on page 22 of this issue). You can also stop by The Daily's office in Shatner B-24.

## the positions:

Photos  
Sports  
Social Media/Web

## Candidate statement

January

**20**

**11:59 p.m.**

Submit a one-page letter of intent to [coordinating@mcgilldaily.com](mailto:coordinating@mcgilldaily.com).

## Candidate rundown

January

**25**

**6:00 p.m.**

All staffers who want to vote in the election must attend rundowns in Shatner B-24.

## Elections

January

**25**

**7:00 p.m.**

Candidates will interview in front of all voters at the election in Shatner B-24.

## deadlines:

The Daily requires all candidates to submit a one-page application that includes your qualifications and interest in running, as well as two samples of writing, photos, illustrations, or design.

Email your letter of intent to [coordinating@mcgilldaily.com](mailto:coordinating@mcgilldaily.com) by January 20 at midnight.



# RADICAL CHANGE, STARTING AT HOME

Students are challenging urban isolation and individualism  
through collective living spaces

WRITTEN BY ELLEN GILLIES

Photos courtesy of Rushell Rousseau

I shared an apartment wall with a baby for two school years. On one side of the wall was my bed, and just on the other side of the wall, there was probably a crib. Based on muffled noises, I could tell you that there was a parent or guardian that also lived there, and that the baby's communication skills gradually advanced from giggles and screams to a few more sophisticated sounds over the course of the time that we were neighbours. I couldn't tell you any more details than that, though, because I never really interacted with them, barring one time they pounded on the wall when I was blasting music. Despite living and existing mere feet away from each other, not once did we meet face-to-face.

This may seem inconsequential – in a big city, never meeting your neighbours could even be considered normal. But for most of human history, we have survived and thrived in environments ranging from arid deserts to the high Arctic tundra through forms of group membership and interdependence. It was only relatively recently, with the rise of liberalist ideology and globalization, that the dominant mode of social organization has fragmented to smaller units, like the individual and the nuclear family. We've bought into a myth that we should be able to meet all of our needs relatively independently, despite it being completely contrary to our nature. Of course, we now have technologies that enable us to obtain food, water and shelter with much greater ease than the pre-Industrial humans. But the importance of communities goes beyond meeting our basic needs – there is a growing understanding of the negative impacts that individualistic living has on our mental, emotional, social, and spiritual health. This phenomenon is known as “urban isolation,” or the disconnectedness that is increasingly prevalent in cities.

In many ways, students are particularly vulnerable to the effects of urban isolation. Transitioning to university often means uprooting ourselves from communities which may have once provided a sense

of stability and belonging, such as schools, families, sports, or musical activities. Most of us don't yet have much in the way of stakes in the ground for The Future, and in our early twenties, we're straddling the divide in the normative narrative between living with parent(s) and/or guardian(s) and beginning a family with a partner. During this time, we are under an immense amount of pressure – to build our identities, construct unique professional ‘brands,’ and optimize the limited windows of opportunity that our university years present. McGill's size, location downtown and sense of competition exacerbate this; we are constantly surrounded by seas and skyscrapers of people who constantly seem to be smarter, more sociable, better-dressed, and generally more ‘together.’

Barraged with the imagined success of others and without a firm community or sense of long-term direction in the city, I have felt a profound sense of loneliness at several points throughout my degree, especially while I lived independently. I'm not talking about clinical depression, which can be intimately related to this feeling but deserves separate consideration. I mean the shades of melancholy that thrive under high expectations and in dark winters; in the absence of a sense of direction, of home and of rootedness. I mean the cold feeling of emptiness when there isn't the smell of dinner cooking, another human to tell you about their day, or someone to just say goodnight to when the day is done. I know I'm far from the only one who has felt this at some point during their time at McGill.

Much of the rhetoric surrounding our shift towards disconnection places the blame on younger demographics – those self-absorbed, materialistic millennials. Instead of blame, I look to pockets of our generation for inspiration about alternative ways to exist in a profit-driven, individualistic society, often created as a direct response to the isolation that so often comes with being a young adult trying to figure it all out. Friends, peers, and I have all



voluntarily contributed significant amounts of energy towards building spaces and associated communities throughout the city where the values and principles we wish to see flourish can do so. Many of us, myself included, have experienced first-hand how collective living can break down urban isolation and represent a powerful way to bring our politics and our visions home – literally.

#### “A MICROGOSM OF WHAT SOCIETY CAN BE”

I lived at ECOLE, a student collective centred on social & environmental sustainability which also acts as a meeting space for campus and community groups, during my fourth year at McGill. I went from a quiet 4½ to a home where I was suddenly surrounded by people, where I would walk past group meetings, movie screenings, potlucks and coffeehouses on my way through the house. Suddenly, it was hard for feelings of loneliness to ever be as profound or intense when there was always someone making sure I got dinner, when nine others were depending on me for theirs, when I could always hear a productive meeting or a deep discussion or a song a room away. Going from one extreme to the other made me realize the potential that collective living has to make people and communities more resilient.

A living collective – also known as a communal living space – is a space where a group of individuals shares responsibilities and resources and intentionally builds community around a common interest, identity, or set of values. In practice, a living collective might do this in any number of different ways, such as hosting community events, sharing cooking responsibilities, making collective bulk purchases, distributing rent according to financial need, employing consensus-based decision making, or holding regular meetings to resolve conflicts and discuss each other's

needs. In most collectives, members share a common social vision and many embrace alternative lifestyle practices, such as minimalism, zero-waste or permaculture. In this sense, living collectives are one way of many for groups of people to develop a greater degree of autonomy from externally-imposed systems, norms, and rules, and instead internally co-create their own from the ground up.

Collective living spaces are commonly thought to have taken off in the 1960s in the United States with the emergence of hippie culture. At this time, counter-cultures of young people developed largely in opposition to U.S. military involvement in Vietnam, a movement characterized in large part by mistrust of the government, artistic expression and a desire to exist in harmony with nature. Many members of the hippy movement lived in ‘communes’, or anti-establishment spaces where property, resources, work and income are all shared, and many variations of this model continue to exist in different parts of the world today.

However, it is important to note that while predominantly white, Western hippies brought collective living into white, Western cultural consciousness, forms of collective living have existed in many countries and cultures throughout history. For example, interconnectedness is deeply embedded in Inuit tradition, which is partly illustrated through their sophisticated set of norms and practices related to hunting, fishing and sharing food through social networks. Today, extended families or even friend groups often live together and act as supportive, intentional community, without explicitly calling themselves a “living collective.” The ‘hippie commune’ genesis story of collective living may be the most dominant one, but in addition to being white-centered, it erases the diversity of ways in which various cul-

tures and societies have historically practiced collective living, and bring those practices into society today.

In Montreal, you can hardly throw a rock without hitting a living collective – each with their own ethos and set of practices. Many of them were created or sustained by McGill students and graduates, who shared their experiences of collective living with me. Nimra Bandukwala, a U3 Psychology and World Religions student, lives in a collective loft called Les Échelles on St. Laurent, which she started this year with five friends. “In a way, it's just a microcosm of what society can be, because urban isolation and things like this all just stem from the individualism that we're forced to believe we are in,” she said. She told me that living collectives allow for a community to control the use of resources, in a way that is often lacking in society outside of them. “The moment we realize that you can trust others with things we usually do ourselves like cooking, I think that's the most revolutionary. Others care about you, and people aren't selfish.”

Kristen Perry, who graduated from McGill last year with a degree in Agricultural & Environmental Science, started her own collective called GreenhouseMTL with a small group of friends this year. “The main thing for me is that you're trying to build a community that really works for everyone that's involved. Everyone has different needs and boundaries, so the goal should be to make it a place where everyone can feel safe and comfortable and is benefiting. For a collective to work, it should be a lot easier to live than when you're on your own.”

Perry elaborated on how collective living can be made more financially accessible by distributing rent according to financial need. “We have different levels of income, or ability to pay, so we try to communicate openly about our needs and have a system in place to help mini-



mize financial stress for the people living in the house,” she explained. “It’s a matter of equity, because it’s a redistribution of resources based on who needs them and who can provide them. But it goes beyond just money – everyone’s bringing what they can to our home, whether it’s time, art, experience, food, skills, or anything else.

Danji Buck-Moore, who graduated from McGill in 2012, has been involved in The Plant, a long-established Mile End loft and collective living space centred on arts and music, for several years. “It’s a really interesting moment in the world of collectives in Montreal,” he told me. “There have been a lot of these spaces closing down over the last few years, more than in the few years before that. But new ones keep getting started, and the only way that happens is if people are throwing themselves into it.”

BUILT-IN SUPPORT SYSTEMS

There is a mental health epidemic on university campuses, with record numbers of students being diagnosed with depression and anxiety. Loneliness can certainly be an effect of mental ill-being, but it can also be a cause of it. Many collective members I interviewed told me that collectives can often act as built-in support networks during times of need or stress. Bavna Bhagavat, who graduated last year with a degree in Anatomy & Cell Biology, also spent a year living in ECOLE. “I think collective living is really conducive to better emotional and psychological well-being,” Bhagavat explained, noting that ECOLE residents would often discuss how to best support one another through difficult times.

Sharing space and resources with a handful or dozens of other people may seem overwhelming, especially for those inclined to introversion – but having a network of support does not necessarily mean constantly having to engage with others. “I personally really enjoy the possibility of being surrounded by people, but also the possibility of being by myself in my room,” explained Bandukwala. “We become very perceptive to each other, so the moment something’s wrong, someone immediately senses it and will ask. There’s something very special about being able to give support to your roommates, really feeling like they’re siblings or family. You don’t only see them in the bright light and stars, you also see them when they’re really struggling.”

Shared meals are the keystone of most collectives, alleviating the stress of constantly grocery shopping and cooking for one. A system inspired by the Beehive Collective House in Vancouver involves members taking turns cooking dinner for everyone else, choosing their cooking nights at the start of each cycle, which has as many days as there

are people. The collective sets parameters for their meals in advance, such as dietary restrictions and what time it should be ready. If someone isn’t home for dinner, the collective will save a container for them for later, so the system lends itself well to student schedules, which are often extremely busy and unpredictable.

It is important to note that while predominantly white, Western hippies brought collective living into white, Western cultural consciousness, forms of collective living have existed in many countries and cultures throughout history.

Alan Chen, a U4 Sustainability, Science & Society student who lived in the GreenhouseMTL collective last semester, was particularly excited to begin this system with his roommates when they started their collective last fall. “[When living independently], you get anxious about when to buy groceries, how much they’re going to cost, what you’re going to make, and whether or not it’ll last you the week,” he said. In addition to a meal-sharing schedule, Chen also noted that one of his roommates would frequently bring home fruits, vegetables and other food from dumpster diving trips. “I had a realization that this is what food security felt like,” he said. “Cooking one big meal every five days is much easier than five smaller ones.”

SEEDS OF CHANGE

Collective living can also be used to promote environmentally-responsible living habits, such as zero-waste lifestyles, vegetarian/vegan eating, and DIY projects like fermenting or pickling. This is not to suggest that simply changing our living habits is a panacea for our current environmental crisis, nor that everyone is equally able to prioritize and access opportunities to do so. However, living collectives can facilitate a lifestyle which is less environmentally destructive than the status quo. Perry noted, “It’s more efficient to live in groups than alone, in terms of waste, energy, and consumption. So even

if the goal of the collective is not sustainability, it’s likely going to be more sustainable, environmentally speaking, anyway.”

Katie Friedman, a U3 Linguistics student, elaborated on ECOLE’s environmental practices, including worm composting and maintaining a garden in the front yard to grow some of their own food. “In the fall, two of us would split one Community Supported Agriculture basket, so among the whole house, we shared three or four baskets of vegetables and fruits from the Macdonald Campus farm,” she said, also noting how sharing made the baskets more affordable. Friedman further explained how collective living can be more sustainable than living independently. “Sharing one big meal between ten people creates less waste than ten different, smaller meals. Also, buying things in bulk or making bulk products, like cleaning and personal hygiene products, can greatly reduce the waste we produce,” she said.

“We’re trying to look at water use a little bit this term, but I don’t know how that’s going to work, because we don’t take showers collectively,” she laughed.

Collective homes can also act as alternative learning spaces for individuals to improve their knowledge, skills and habits with regards to sustainable living. Robert Ishimwe, a U3 Pharmacology student, joined the ECOLE collective this year. “When I first joined, I was very much interested in learning about sustainability, and a collective environment lends itself very well to that,” he said. “We try to create an environment where we understand that everyone is learning, and constantly work to improve, rather than one where people live in constant fear of making a mistake.”

ACCESSIBILITY

None of this, however, is to present collective living as any kind of panacea. There are all kinds of barriers that might prevent a person from feeling comfortable in a collective living environment. For example, racial and gendered power imbalances often result in racialized people and women – particularly Black, Indigenous, and women of colour – performing a disproportionate amount of (unpaid) domestic and emotional labour. Many collectives are also physically inaccessible, located up or down a set of stairs, which render many of these spaces completely exclusive to people with mobility restrictions. Collectives tend to have open-door policies, with a revolving door of roommates, friends, and semi-strangers, which poses a serious barrier for people with chemical sensitivities or other personal limitations. Collective living can be an ongoing, high-level time commitment, which is often unrealistic for people with more



than one job or children.

Additionally, this is not to present collective living as ‘the next frontier’ of activist culture. There are all kinds of legitimate reasons why the idea simply might not appeal to someone, such as valuing independence, having other priorities, or finding community elsewhere – and that’s okay. No one gets ‘social justice cred’ for having experience with a radical home arrangement, just as no one is lacking in it if they decide that collective living is not for them. Collective living is a lifestyle choice that enables some people to live healthier lives and/or bring their values home, but it is certainly not for everyone.

STARTING POINTS

For those that the idea of collective living does resonate with, there are a number of different ways to get started – either by starting something explicitly referred to as a collective, or simply introducing simple collective living practices to your current roommates. “Think of what you need and what you can offer,” said Perry. “Try and find people who share similar values to you, but with a diversity of skills, ideas and backgrounds.”

Bandukwala highlighted the role of word of mouth. “Talk about it and reach out to networks,” she said. “People think that it takes a lot of work, but it’s just about finding one or two people who want to do a similar thing, and then finding a place. Make posts, perhaps with what values you have and what kind of things you’d want to do with the space, and find people who share that. There’s so many that exist, and we always welcome people to come to our events. If you’re interested and you know of a collective, just drop by and talk to some people – they will know of other collectives, and will be an excellent resource.”

Have lots of meetings when you get started to establish norms and systems and work through the kinks in them. Find a roommate questionnaire online, have everyone answer it, and compile and/

or discuss the responses. Revisit them frequently, especially during times of stress or conflict. Visit the Wordpress sites called ‘Collective Houses’ and ‘Blooming in Space’ for free resource toolboxes. Finally, don’t get caught up in meeting an external vision of what a living collective should be like. Living collectives do not need to conform to anyone’s ideas of how they should be except those of the people who are a part of it.

CARE AND COMMUNITY AS RESISTANCE

When living collectives took off in the U.S. in the sixties, it was largely in response to the Vietnam war – a major social and political event which galvanized mass anti-establishment mobilization and the development of legible counter-cultures. Today, we see parallels – dangerous ideologies are finding homes in the highest offices of power, and wealth has become concentrated on unprecedented levels in the hands of corporations that profit from activities that destroy the Indigenous lands and waters upon which we all depend. The urgency for alternatives is at a peak. In an economic system predicated on self-interest and environmental destruction, collectives are caring for each other and for the Earth. In a political climate infused with hatred and division, collectives are opening their doors to build big and diverse communities. In this sense, the everyday, personal acts which take place within the walls of these spaces are political in humble yet significant ways.

Living collectives are spaces where a pile of rotting veggies can be turned into a hearty soup and shared together over many laughs, where you can message your roommates when you’re having a breakdown to say that you just need someone to hold your hand, where you can come home from a soul-sucking night at the library to a Tupperware of homemade food with your name on it. In a world that values profits over people, these are nothing short of centres of resistance, and such communities have never been so necessary.

# China's air pollution crisis

A case study in health hazards, energy policy and the environment

**CÉDRIC PARAGES**  
Sci+Tech Writer

It has been five years since the overwhelming haze frequently covering China's major cities, such as Beijing began to be taken seriously by The Ministry of Environmental Protection. Today, the true blue colour of a clear sky may become a myth to children born in the capital city Beijing if the situation continues to worsen. Their reality could be wearing gas masks to avoid inhaling the dense and polluted air which on some days they will not be able to see past a couple hundred metres. This is already the case during red alert periods, when factories are shut down and airports are closed. However, the truth it contains sets a precedent of widespread environmental damage and health hazards that we must strive to face head-on now, and ultimately work to avoid in the future.

The air pollution looming over the heads of the 1.35 billion people of China contains particulate matter (P.M.) at 2.5 micrometers, which is a diameter size small enough that enables being absorbed by the lungs and into the bloodstream. The most common sources of P.M. 2.5 are coal combustion, vehicle exhaust, and general burning of wood materials. These particles are more likely to congregate in areas where there is low surface wind speed, something China is particularly prone to. The highest amounts of smog are present during the winter, as more and more coal is combusted to heat people's homes. In 2008, before Chinese officials had publicly acknowledged the dangers of the air pollution, the U.S. Embassy in China started measuring the air quality index and posting the results on their Twitter account.

Their measurements were generally way above expectations (51-100 being considered 'good'), leading to a public outcry and pressure on Chinese officials. Knowing very well that this could not be swept under the rug any further, the Chinese government introduced legislation to begin taking measurements all around the country in its Five Year Plans, from just a few major cities in 2013 to almost every city in 2015. Previously, out of the ten most polluted cities in the world, seven are found in China, according to an analysis published by Tsinghua University and the Asian Development Bank in 2013. To date, cities in India such as New Delhi, and Saudi Arabia, have overtaken Beijing as the top most polluted cities in the world, according to a World Health Organization (WHO) report from 2016.

To understand the severity of the air pollution during winter in China,

we must compare concentration of P.M. 2.5 (in micrograms per cubic meter area) to see just how stark the difference is between North American and Chinese cities. In 2010, the U.S. Embassy in Beijing measured a reading of over 500 micrograms, and strongly advised U.S. citizens abroad to stay indoors, while Chinese authorities remained nonchalant. By January 2013, the average daily P.M. concentration in Beijing was over 300, and measurements up to 700 and 755 were taken on different occasions. In October 2013, a record shattering measurement of 1000 was taken in the city of Harbin, forty times the amount the WHO deems safe. Meanwhile, in the same time frame, the average concentration of New York City P.M. 2.5 hovers around 10 micrograms, with relatively extreme days reaching 15. To put it into perspective how it feels to breathe this much densely polluted air, a study by the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention tested the P.M. 2.5 level of the average airport smoking lounge, which they finalized to be around 166.5 micrograms per cubic meter, making the Beijing average twice as hazardous to inhale in comparison (without taking into account other carcinogens). The air is becoming so polluted that clean mountain air from Alberta is currently being sold to China, and is reported to be selling out during red alert periods.

The amount of pollution currently over China's skies is unparalleled today, yet it is difficult to actually blame them for their current disposition. While China is the world's number one leader in total greenhouse gas emissions and coal combustion, it is not even in the top five for emissions per capita. An analysis from the World Resources Institute in 2014 finds that not only do Canada and the United States occupy the first two positions for top emissions per capita, China ranks in the seventh slot, barely above the world average. China has to endure obscene levels of air pollution because of their total pollution and population density, which are much higher than those of the United States and Canada. Many countries' dependence on China for cheap exports, manufacturing and labour also prevent them from making policy changes too quickly, as economic development is still rising in many parts of the country. While China can be used as a case study for the consequences of lowered standards of living brought by high air, water and soil pollution, it is by no means a country which we should demonize as they are non-arguably becoming a world leader in clean energy transitioning, means of production and investing.

## Health

General short-term symptoms of exposure to high levels of P.M. 2.5 include shortness of breath, irritated eyes and lungs, sneezing, coughing, and it can worsen medical conditions such as asthma and heart disease. However, this pales in comparison to what we now know about the risks and effects of long-term exposure. Long-term exposure has been documented to account for much higher rates of chronic bronchitis, lung disease, heart and lung cancer. A new study published in 2016 in the *Journal of the American Society of Nephrology* led by Chinese researchers has also identified much higher rates of damage and disorders of the kidneys which correlated with higher particulate matter in urban areas. One particular disease, membranous nephropathy, which includes symptoms such as inflamed blood vessels in the kidney and can often lead to kidney failure, has doubled in frequency over the past ten years in China per capita, following rising trends in air pollution levels.

A 2016 study published by the American Heart Association compared data between the United States and China looking at the number of strokes per year compared to particulate matter in the atmosphere. They came to the conclusion that the number of strokes per capita rises 11.9 per cent for every 100 micrograms of particulate matter in the air. In 2013, an eight-year-old girl in Nanjing was diagnosed with lung cancer, the youngest age ever recorded in China. The doctors were deeply troubled with the diagnosis, as most cases of lung cancer are caused by cigarette smoking. Even more worrisome, is the finding that in China, twenty to forty year olds are the fastest growing group of cancer patients, cases that are less easily related to cigarette smoking. Long-term exposure to P.M. 2.5 particles not only increases the rate of lung cancer from the airborne carcinogens they contain, but also increases the risk of mortality.

We cannot yet know the full extent of how many more people will be affected by diseases from air pollution in the future, but we do know approximately how many are dying each year from it. The WHO has detailed data about deaths directly related to P.M. 2.5 in each country per year, and China leads at one million people per year dying from air pollution, followed by 600,000 per year in India. Another study from University California Berkeley in 2015 estimated 1.6 million deaths in China every year, with 4,000 deaths every day from diseases related to and caused by high air pollution. In general, air



**ALICE SHEN** | The McGill Daily

pollution lowers life expectancy significantly according to a new Massachusetts Institute of Technology study published in 2013, providing an estimate that every additional 100 micrograms of particulate matter in the atmosphere lowers life expectancy by three years at birth, effectively shortening life span by nine years for those born in area with an average of 300 micrograms such as Beijing.

Pregnancy can also be affected by severe air pollution. As the fine particles from the air are absorbed from the lungs into the bloodstream, and are shared with the fetus through the placenta. David Rich et al., from the University of Rochester Medical Center published a study in 2015, where they compared birth weight between babies born during the Beijing Olympic Games of 2008 and those born before and after. The reasoning for the comparison is that China undertook many policies to reduce carbon emissions in the weeks leading to the Olympic Games in order to clean up the air, such as shutting down factories, stopping construction, seeding clouds to increase rainfall by firing silver iodide rockets into the sky, and restricting traffic. The results suggest that babies born in 2008 during that time were on average 24 grams heavier than babies born in 2007 and 2009. The final stages of pregnancy are incredibly important to the development of the baby, and these results suggest that air pollution may impede fetal growth, nutrient delivery and alter placental function. Air pollution also increases the risk of babies being born with asthma, as a study from the University of British Columbia demonstrated by comparing average asthma rates between mothers living close to, and far away from highways. Those closer to highways had a 25 per cent higher chance of developing asthma before the age of five.

A different study from Columbia University in established a dose-dependent relationship between prenatal air pollution and reductions in white matter development in the brain (seen later in childhood), important for learning and communication between different brain regions. Slower processing of information, attention-deficit disorders and behavioral conduct disorders were more common in those exposed to higher rates of air pollution. A study by Columbia study conducted in China confirmed these findings, as they compared childhood development in a town where a coal plant shut down in 2004 over a period of ten years and reached the same conclusion that as the air pollution lessened, the rate of brain development in young children rose.

## Energy Policy

On New Year's day 2017, China issued a red alert for air pollution in Beijing and neighbouring cities, the most serious alert that can be issued to the general population. Seven hundred businesses shut down production, all intercity buses stopped, more than four hundred flights were cancelled, schools were closed and all traffic was restricted. The red alert generally lasts for four to five days, and is only issued in the worst of circumstances. The last red alert before this one was on December 21st, 2016, and the one before on December 8th, 2015. Even during these periods, many people go on with their daily lives and go outside, a lot of them without masks. The majority of those who are wearing masks, are not wearing properly effective masks, according to a physician from Beijing United Family Healthcare, who is trying to test over two hundred different masks. Saint Cyr, a doctor based in Beijing, is quoted as saying: "It disturbs me that people are walking around thinking wearing

these things are safe, but they almost certainly are not.” The biggest problems with masks, he mentions, are material, fitting and the presence of an actual functioning filter. Creating the illusion that you are safe while actively harming yourself should be taken seriously by health officials.

To compensate for their children’s health and futures, many private schools and universities are now building and using air lock doors and air filtration systems, especially for sports and recreational buildings. The Principal of the British School of Beijing commented on the school’s new sports and recreational dome saying “We are delighted that the dome has come to fruition, meaning that students can now play in safe, healthy air, whatever the conditions outside.” However, not every school can afford new technology and to build these new structures. Many public schools have old and decaying infrastructure that can not support these additions. These kinds of short term solutions, while preventing health hazards, also promotes a mentality that we can continue to live in comfort and ignore the source of real long-term problems. Individuals instead need to focus their attention on what they can do to lower polluting emissions and increase pressure on their governing officials to provide new legislation.

In June 2012, the P.M. 2.5 readings by the U.S. Embassy in Beijing and the Chinese Observatory diverged greatly, and the U.S. Embassy declared the air as “very unhealthy” depicting 199 micrograms. The Beijing Municipal Environmental Protection Bureau on the other hand refuted the data and said they had measured good levels between 51 and 79 micrograms, and asked the embassy to stop publishing inaccurate and unlawful data. However, the Chinese government has come around to begin transitioning to clean energy and investment in new technologies. In September 2016, China signed and ratified the Paris Agreement, a climate change accord which sets out to lower global emissions and contain rising temperature levels to 1.5 degrees Celsius to prevent melting of the ice caps and possibly devastating changes to global weather patterns. Xi Jinping, China’s president, spoke of the agreement stating: “I have said many times that green mountains and clear water are as good as mountains of gold and silver. To protect the environment is to protect productivity and to improve the environment is to boost productivity. We will unwaveringly pursue sustainable development and stay committed to green, low-carbon [...] and to China’s fundamental policy of conserving resources and protecting the environment. In promoting green development, we also aim to address climate change [...] We will make China a beautiful country with a blue sky, green vegetation and clear rivers so that our people can enjoy

their lives in a liveable environment with the ecological benefits created by economic development.”

To accomplish the goals of capping global mean temperature deviation at 1.5 degrees Celsius and plateau global carbon emissions set out by the U.N., China needs to cut carbon emissions by sixty to sixty five per cent per unit of GDP by 2030 and allocate twenty per cent of its energy consumption from clean energies. China’s relatively new stance on clean energy follows suit from revisions on the country’s environmental regulations in 2014, which were the first changes to its legislation in 25 years, and president Jinping’s bold claim that he has declared war on pollution. The most notable changes from the revisions were ways to make businesses and individuals accountable for violating environmental laws by substantially increasing the fines for breaking them. Previously, fines were cheap enough that paying them off was much cheaper than actually complying with the laws set in place.

By 2020, China has planned to spend 350 billion dollars in clean energy, creating thirteen million jobs, mostly in mass scale solar plants. Even though China’s energy mostly comes from unclean coal and oil at the moment, it is still the world’s largest generator of solar energy, and broke the world record for most solar power capacity installed in one year. In 2015, they added one and half football fields of solar panels every hour for the whole year. In 2016, they doubled that to three football fields per hour of solar panels. The rest of the spending will be allocated to wind farms, hydro power, tidal and geothermal energy sources. Their goal is to establish 15 per cent of total energy consumption from clean renewable energy by 2020, and even if that seems like a small percentage, they will have built the foundation and paved the way to transition quickly at a larger scale than any other country in the world. Most importantly, coal consumption is slowly falling every year, and there is now official recognition that the energy potential of coal is not only less important to the Chinese economy model anymore, but that China officials also recognize the energy output potential of clean energy will eventually be more efficient and cheaper than unclean energy. From the current statistics of the speed at which China is installing solar panels, they could very well go beyond the 15 per cent target of 2020 and may even reach 17 per cent according to Greenpeace representatives in Beijing and research from The New Climate Economy Report in 2016. In comparison, United States clean energy accounted for 13.5 per cent of total energy consumption in 2015, while Canada’s clean energy accounts for nineteen per cent.

As it stands, the future is looking brighter than ever before for China’s

development of clean energy. While the U.S. and China were both supposed to invest into new clean technology and transition their energy consumption sources, the U.S. will be looking to back out of the Paris Agreement following Trump’s U.S. Presidential victory, given his climate change denying Environmental Protection Agency and Energy Department appointees, as well as the Republican majority in the House and Senate. Donald Trump will most likely succeed at rejecting the legislation and ratifications that Barack Obama just signed as they have not been voted on yet. What this means for China is that they have a golden opportunity to overtake the U.S. not only in economic growth and sustainability, but also as the global innovator in new, efficient, clean energy and as an leader in experimenting with pro-environmental legislation at a very large scale, only rivaled by California. Five of the six largest solar module manufacturing firms globally are Chinese, and the costs of production for the panels have decreased thirty per cent in 2016. In 2015, China already overtook the U.S. as the largest market for electric vehicles and have automobile companies striving to challenge the likes of Tesla in the industry.

However, the current importance and dependence on coal, still producing sixty per cent of the country’s electricity, imposes challenges on Chinese clean energy and its efforts to create the foundation to eliminate its air pollution challenges. There are documented cases of coal energy taking priority over clean energy creating surpluses which are wasted. In the first half of 2016, 21 per cent of wind power and 12.1 per cent of solar power went unused and could not be stored in Northern China, while coal had no problem finding its way to people’s homes. The good news is that the Chinese government is already hard at work to make sure this does not happen in the future by introducing legislative changes to the functionality of the power grid and its technology. The federal government has completely halted projects to expand coal power construction in 13 provinces, has delayed approving new ones in 15 others, and has demanded provincial and local jurisdictions to suspend all approval of these projects. They have also set out a minimum purchase guarantee for wind and solar energy creation, ensuring that any new clean energy infrastructure production is monetarily covered and subsidized by the government and given priority. Continuing their work at the local and provincial level, they have various detailed goals and targets for each province to meet minimum clean energy consumption and generation as incentives to create more. Other incentives include tax breaks on businesses switching to clean energy.

**Environment**

Besides P.M. 2.5, there are also aerosols in the atmosphere above China, which together along with the haze has been blocking sunlight from breaking through and decreasing sunlight radiation. The most notable effect of decreased sunlight is that it lowers efficiency and rate of photosynthesis in plants, a serious problem for agriculture if the concentration of air pollution continues to increase over time. Following potential future problems with agriculture in China, a 2009 study from Pacific Northwest National Laboratory also discusses the links between air pollution and light rainfall. The research describes a 23 per cent decrease in light rainfall over the last fifty years caused by air pollution, and a high frequency of contaminated acid rain. Light rain is essential to agriculture and crops in comparison to heavy rainfall, which can cause flooding. Air pollution is also linked to lower amounts of photosynthetic chlorophyll pigments in plants, and slower growth from seedlings, according to He Dongxian, associate professor of China Agricultural university, whose research is yet to be published.

Even though the smog covering a vast swath of the country, which can prevent sunlight from getting through, a new study suggests that it can also trap heat from getting out. As solar radiation hits the earth’s crust, some is reflected and some is absorbed by the surface. A 2016 study from Yale School of Forestry and Environment measured urban cities in China as warmer than their rural metropolitan areas due to the amount of haze in cities that trap the heat in. The warming from the trapped heat currently results in a net warming of one degree Celsius compared to rural averages, which can become more as the global average deviation temperature from anthropological climate change increases. The amount of air pollution does not only affect China, as the pollution has been observed to blow over the Pacific all the way to the Western coast of the United States. According to research from University of California, Irvine and the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, Los Angeles in California experiences one extra day a year of smog pollution exceeding federal pollution limits directly from China. Another 2010 study from the journal of Environmental Science & Technology has estimated that around 29 per cent of air pollution in the San Francisco Bay Area are also of Asian origin, most likely from China. Japan and South Korea, whom for the most part enjoy very clean air and very low levels of pollution, have started to notice changes and are also becoming concerned about Chinese pollution leaking over. In 2013, unusual smog covered Japanese cities of Ichihara and Tokyo, while South Korean sales of filtered masks

jumped 481 per cent in sales over a one-week period.

China’s air is not its only polluted natural resource, as just in the last two years, officials have started opening up about both groundwater and soil pollution and contamination. According to state media reports, close to sixty per cent of groundwater systems across the whole country are unfit for drinking and are polluted, with only three per cent classified as clean. This is hugely problematic in conjunction with air pollution as one third of China’s resources rely on groundwater while most people especially in urban areas depend on either bottled water or boiling their water, which is ineffective at removing non-natural contaminants and pollutants. An example of such a contaminant would be the carcinogen benzene, which was part of a 2014 chemical spill in Lanzhou, a city of two million people. From a 2014 nationwide governmental survey, 16 per cent of soils tested in populated areas tested positive for other contaminants such as cadmium, mercury and arsenic. While this synergy of polluted air, water and soil will have untold negative effects on the health of many Chinese people, it must still be considered a step forward that federal powers are now releasing this information to the public.

China has a very long road ahead of them to clean their environment. The widespread contamination of the air, water and soil systems will continue to snowball down a very dangerous path that will prove fatal to humans, plants and wildlife alike. Wildlife and insects have lungs, gills and tracheal systems that also absorb these pollutants into their bodies and bloodstreams. Organic life with lower mass than human beings has the potential to be more greatly affected by the same concentration of pollutants as it is less diluted in their bodies. The only difference between plants, wildlife and us is that, they don’t have short term solutions such as air filtration systems and filtration masks. There is no doubt that the Chinese government is finally taking a position that will enable them to slow the rate of increase of air pollution and emissions in the future. The real question that every Chinese official and citizen must ask themselves is: Will it be enough? Can we do better than lowering dependence on coal by only a few percentages every five years? Will future generations live in a world worse off than the world we currently enjoy? These are burdening questions that are not only pertinent to China, but that we must all face on an individual level in the face of climate change and a quickly deteriorating planet. My personal opinion on the matter is, the jobs of people in outdated unclean energy and damaging agricultural practices do not outweigh the survival of our planet nor the health of tens of millions of people.



# on edgy

marginal aesthetic, queer nostalgia

words by arno pedram, visual by coco zhou

I arrived in front of my mother, dressed in a blue jacket with mathematical symbols on the sleeves – bright, quirky, thrifted from Eva B. – which I knew she disliked. Confronted by my failure to dress in button-downs and polo shirts, she eyed me up and down, lips pursed in silent judgment in her typical condescending, French sort of way. Normally I would've ignored her attitude, but in that particular moment, as I stood facing a set of familial expectations that I could never live up to, I felt a burning sense of rage. Couldn't I do what I liked, wear what I loved, follow what I believed in? The anger woke me up from the dream. Why wouldn't she, for all that is good and holy in the world, let me be edgy?

I probably do have family issues, but I'd rather talk about what I meant by being "edgy."

## Unsettling, but not upsetting

The edgy aesthetic is growing in popularity, largely through curated, carefully crafted Instagram accounts. It makes the dirty mirror selfies and pixelated pictures of the 2000s hot. It turns cat videos into something more than casual bliss. It makes

Windows's lagging visuals cool and Apple's Photo Booth backgrounds an actual trend. How does it do that?

The style involves weird, disturbing, out of place props, creating an effect that is unsettling but not upsetting. It's an aesthetic about being aesthetic. It involves unique poses and facial expressions, unconventional settings (moderately dirty bathrooms are the best), low picture quality, bad framing, overexposed lighting, with lower case and abbreviated captions. When properly presented, it should seem instinctive, unprompted, natural, but also intentional. While all selfies could be said to be staged to some degree, the edgy aesthetic is about the art of staging itself. It is, in part, a parody of stereotypical Instagram selfies: the edgy selfie will care more about the pose than the posing. The edgy picture is no less than a vision – not everything that is haphazardly mixed and displayed can be called edgy. It requires an eye, a sense for the odd, the asynchronous, the nostalgic.

Not exclusively, but overwhelmingly, the edgy aesthetic can be found in queer communities, where questions of identity and desynchronization with the mainstream is

widespread. Indeed, the experience of sexual marginality may allow one to see more clearly the artificiality of normative social relations – such as heteronormativity, devalued friendships, marriage, et cetera – that allow for their caricature. Edgy aesthetics could be seen to embody an alternate construction of time with its use of nostalgia and passé. The aesthetic challenges normative conceptions of time and the dogma of progress insofar as it doesn't see an object's value in what it is or was, but how it aged. The edgy aesthetic refuses to shed those objects away as progress would suggest they should be. Since the object was supposed to be shed away, it not only finds a new use but a new identity. In fact, edgy culture challenges consumerism by reverting the capitalist course of obsolescence: consumerism usually accommodates 'retro' by reclaiming objects or things from the past and make them worth consuming again. What edgy challenges is obsolescence, the idea that some objects and techniques are replaced by things more technologically advanced through the allegedly unstoppable mechanic of progress. In doing so, it challenges the idea of replacement at the core of consumerism.

## An edgy culture?

More than adhering to an aesthetic, one can 'be edgy,' or rather, 'act edgy.' Insofar as performances of edginess circulate as social capital in given communities, there exists an edgy culture. My friend was acting edgy when he announced that he'd bought a projector for the sole purpose of having the Windows aquarium screensaver on his wall. As typical of the aesthetic, his behaviour breaks expectations of just about everything.

Nevertheless, the edgy act is edgy not because it takes home the stranded, but rather because it enjoys the gesture itself of venturing one's social capital in doing so. Edgy behaviour is more about the movement than the action – it is about the beauty of going into the depth of awfulness, embodying it, and knowing one would not be associated with it and its social estrangement, all the while reaching new heights of social recognition. Nevertheless, the mainstream and the successful can never be edgy. Edgy is the style of the marginal: one can gain popularity as an edgy performer but risks losing their edginess if it is popularized outside of the subculture.



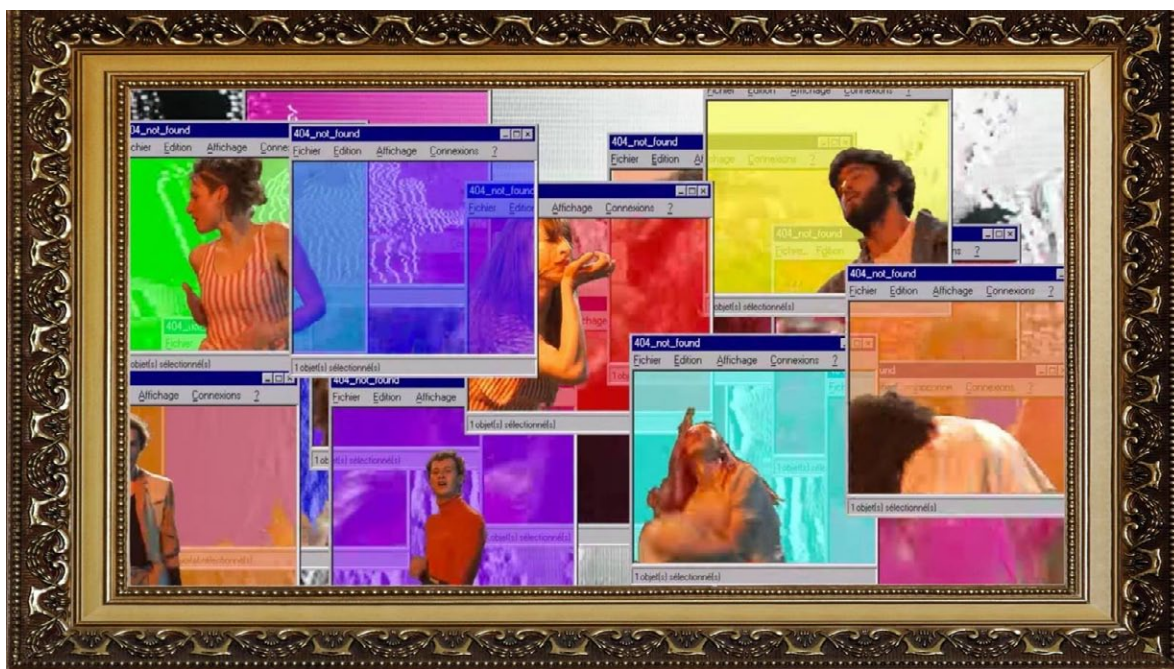
Bee mastering the overexposure, odd prop choice and positioning, while adopting a detached, peaceful expression – one that you wouldn't expect anyone to make in a such a seemingly awkward situation.

—Photo courtesy of Bee @lipstickhell



The leg up bathroom picture is one of the meccas of edgy aesthetic: the fake seriousness of one of the most unnatural pose in the world typically reflects the parodic aspect of edginess. I want to focus here on the edgy behavior, notably, in the comments put forward. The abbreviated words and verb omissions are definitely edgy-inspired. Moreover, the use of old teen expressions “too cool for school” rebooted in an edgy fashion executes a complete parody of the teenager's seriousness when pronouncing such a sentence, further parodying the extended leg's apparent seriousness. Finally, the Wilde-y epigram adds the final touch of edgyness: comic maxims deliver an apparent assertiveness towards the world that is actually cynicism in the face of an ever-failing world.

—Photo courtesy of Maddie @familyfuckup



Mansfield.TYA's video bleu lagon is 2:44 minutes of pure edgy. Alternating between VHS and early Windows designs, the video is an ode to bygone technology as well as its surprising aesthetic potential. Badly Photoshopped figures of people dance in browser windows as if stuck in the past, but they don't seem to be very worried. Their neon outfits match perfectly with the transparent background colours in an unexpected fashion. The error message, “404\_not\_found,” combines all these components as if speaking to the design of the entire video. In fact, the the 404 error itself becomes a metaphor for the aestheticization of Windows 95.

—Video screenshot courtesy of Mansfield.TYA “Bleu Lagon” videoclip. Philippe Roger (Author, Director, Assemble)r, Julien Grosvalet (Co-Author, Choreographer)



Akiva is rocking a once-in-a-lifetime pose – one he will probably never be able to intentionally recreate – with the caption, “From when I was with a tree.” Although it does not respect the lower case rule, the caption succeeds in being edgy: the sentence isn't clear as to when and why he would be with such a partner, and the nature of their relationship. Light is unequally distributed with a strange halo at the bottom that could've been easily corrected. His arms gesture toward – awkwardly enough – a hug, but not quite. And where even is he? Did he go to the back of a garden to hug this tree? His uneasy facial expression makes him appear as if he is anticipating something, as if he is literally on edge.

—Photo courtesy of Akiva



The plants are fake, the vase is as cheap as the pixel resolution, the framing is tilted, someone forgot to clean after themselves, the vinyl player suggests nostalgia, and the kitschiness of the unicorn sculpture is surreal.

—Photo courtesy of Becca @selenagonads



j'ai acheté un projecteur

11/24, 7:43pm



pour projeter l'écran de veille aquarium de windows sur le mur

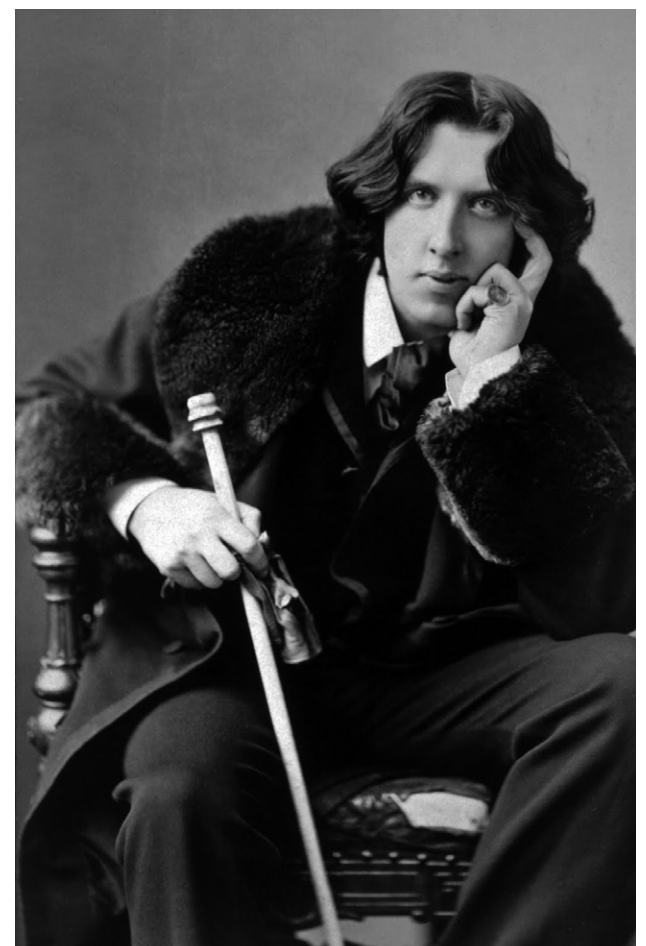
Translation: "I bought a projector/to project Windows' aquarium screensaver on the wall." In other contexts, Matthieu's purchase would be seen as a fatal lifestyle faux pas for adoring one of the 'worst' aesthetics of this time - Windows' screen savers, which embody trash pragmatism - in contrast to Apple's neat and clean simplicity. No one would dare to brag about Windows products anymore. Even nerds have come to recognize the supremacy of Apple's simplified, streamlined approach to products and are less prone to admit their guilty Windows pleasures. Edgy behaviour dives into these depths of shame, takes on the disregarded, the left aside: angsty teenagers, Windows nerds, non-humans in the selfie age, and caricatures their behaviour by pushing it to the extreme.

—Taken from a Facebook discussion with Matthieu



The city of Montreal itself is camp. It's a city stuck in the utopian nostalgia of the Expo 67, the seventies olympic games, Jean Drapeau reforms and projects to make the city an international attraction, as indicated by a badly ageing stadium, strange architectures and the metro's sixties aesthetic. One cannot but feel 'off.' Montreal is of the wrong era, but isn't that quite enjoyable?

—Photo courtesy of architectureofthegames.net



The prophet of dandy lifestyle, Oscar Wilde, was the epitome of camp culture at his time and maybe the campiest person of all time. A most renowned and controversial artist, he famously wrote at the end of *The Picture of Dorian Gray's* preface: "All art is quite useless."

### A modern expression of camp

In her "Notes on "Camp," Susan Sontag attempts to define camp culture. In fact, her article gives room to interpret edgy culture as one of the contemporary manifestations of camp, just as dandy culture was a 19th century manifestation of camp culture. Susan Sontag writes that camp "is not a natural mode of sensibility, if there be any such. Indeed the essence of Camp is its love of the unnatural: of artifice and exaggeration. And Camp is esoteric - something of a private code, a badge of identity even, among small urban cliques."

So - is edgy culture the same as Camp? Camp is the love of the exaggerated, the "off," of "things-being-what-they-are-not." Edgy culture is exactly that: it is harsh and exaggerated self-reflection, nostalgia for things past, rebooting of things left aside - all of those creating that "off."

Sontag also writes: "What is extravagant in an inconsistent or an unpassionate way is not Camp. Neither can anything be Camp that does not seem to spring from an irrepressible, a virtually uncontrolled sensibility. Without passion, one gets pseudo-Camp - what is merely decorative, safe, in a word, chic. [...] the two things - Camp

and preciousness - must not be confused." Edgy culture is full of intention - it's a cold determinate cynicism (see unicorn/vase photo, avocado photo, and instagram comments) and/or the elaborate planning of style (see cover picture, Mansfield.TYA videoclip, and messenger discussion). A failure of edgy intent could be seen in high pixel resolution, perfectly aligned framing, a setting too conventionally ordered or disordered, but also a too obvious attempt at being edgy/camp. The last gesture would seem grossly serious - like be pretending to be edgy when one can only act as such. The gesture should always seek to be the

opposite of what it is doing: posing by not posing, intending without the appearance of intention, not weird out by acting weird.

Even if this is true of other aesthetics, that they should not try to mimic canons of their respective aesthetics, it is even more important for edginess. Since edgy and camp aesthetics are about the gesture and the style, missing the gesture is missing the culture's essence itself. So how can one still be edgy after reading her essay and this article? Maybe by managing to remove oneself once or more again from the gesture. It is up to you to show you can remain meta-natural, edgy. So... r u edgy?

So... r u edgy? 🙄

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McGill DAILY le délit  
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## Unite behind the unions

On Monday January 9, the Association of McGill University Support Employees (AMUSE) voted in favour of ratifying a new collective agreement drafted by the union to address the need for better and more equitable pay and labour conditions for many on-campus jobs. AMUSE represents many student and non-student employees, all of whom occupy temporary or ‘casual’ labour positions at McGill. These employees are perhaps the most susceptible to an infringement of workplace rights by the University. The vote passed with an 84 per cent majority, and while the content of the proposed agreement was not perfect, significant progress was made in gaining fairer working conditions and wages for employees. This is a victory. However, within the same week, the Human Resources subcommittee of the McGill Board of Governors rejected the agreement they had arrived at with AMUSE’s bargaining team on the matter of Floor Fellow negotiations, which included agreements on the establishment of a salary for floor fellows. In the face of tumultuous relations between AMUSE and McGill administration, it is crucial that non-AMUSE students, staff, and community members actively support the union’s demands and initiatives, and work to recognise the obstacles faced by AMUSE in gaining employment equity.

However, opposition from the University is not the only challenge AMUSE has had to face. For instance, during the general strike, which took place last semester between October 21 and 25, demonstrations held just outside campus had their visibility considerably reduced by construction in the vicinity. Additionally, short term contracts for AMUSE members have made it virtually impossible for the union to keep track of its membership, and to communicate with them in order to organize an effective

movement. Moreover, last fall’s Edward Snowden lecture was a testament to how quickly the student body can turn against a union strike when that strike appears to inconvenience them. The delays of entry, which were aggressively blamed on the AMUSE picketing, were actually caused by the choices of McGill security and the organizers themselves. Students at the Snowden event were not simply annoyed – some even threatened violence, and many were quick to voice their distaste for worker’s rights. The prevailing feeling that night was that personal inconveniences shouldn’t be tolerated in any capacity, not even when one of the largest unions on campus is attempting to fight for their rights.

This hostility must be left in the past – there is no space for it, nor for apathy, at the negotiation table among AMUSE, the University, and the non-AMUSE campus community. There is a role for non-AMUSE members in the forthcoming stage of the union’s struggle. This role is one of support and solidarity, one that allows for a greater movement towards employment equity at this university. Although it may not seem significant, the solidarity of non-AMUSE McGill staff and students is key in, firstly, boosting morale among AMUSE employees during negotiation and demonstration, and secondly, pressuring the University to meet the union’s demands for greater rights. As AMUSE president Claire Michela said to The Daily: “We’ve gotten stronger as a union and the biggest challenge that we face will be continuing to grow. With short term contracts we are precarious both individually and as a union. I believe that we will continue to overcome that challenge as we continue to fight for our rights through pay equity.”

—The McGill Daily editorial board

## ERRATA

“Cancer cells play Jekyll and Hyde,” January 9, Scitech, page 11, stated that “According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 2012 saw 8.1 million people have cancer-related deaths.” In fact, that information was released in a GLOBOCAN report. The Daily regrets the error.

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Lies, half-truths, and living for drama.



Ralph JH Oh my  
Like · Reply · 1 · December 2, 2016 at 6:50pm  
Ralph JH GOD  
Like · Reply · 1 · December 2, 2016 at 6:50pm



I can't believe this radical left-wing article



Comments for this thread are now closed. The McGill Daily  
www.mcgilldaily.com

Student newspaper at McGill University in Montreal.

Marina Djurdjevic  
November 28, 2016

I am screaming!!!!!! Did we do this on purpose????

- About Us
- Commentary
- ThisIsNotHelping
- News
- Paniz Khosroshahy
- Contribute

Alexel · What is this anymore  
Like · Reply · 48 mins

People of r/McGill, I give you...

## The McGill Daily drinking game!

### Rules:

Take a drink when any of the following words or phrases are mentioned:

If any of these words are chained together, take two drinks for each additional word.

- |                           |                       |             |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| "sexual objectification"  | supremacy             | racism      |
| "culture of violence"     | "male chauvinism"     | classism    |
| "rape culture"            | "lack of sensitivity" | homophobia  |
| "Israeli lobby groups"    | "gender binaries"     | transphobia |
| "safe / accessible space" | "sexual assault"      | xenophobia  |
| oppression                | "police brutality"    | anarchy     |
| anti-oppression           | "police state"        | misogyny    |
| "71 cents"                | genocide              | colonialism |
| elitist                   | ablist                |             |
| capitalism                | feminist              |             |

If the article takes a behaviour that is generally innocuous and tries to spin it as an example of supremacy or chauvinism, take two drinks

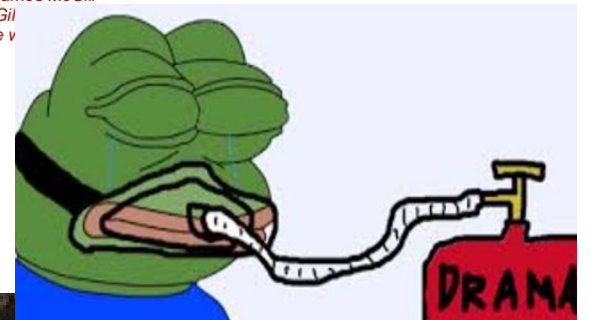
If the article takes a common word, phrase, or concept and complains that it discriminates by "implying" that there are only two genders, take two drinks. Take an additional drink if it has nothing to do with the article and was shoehorned into the middle of a paragraph.

Take a shot every time the article mentions the historical mistreatment of natives  
...take a double shot if it specifically mentions James McGill  
...and three shots if it mentions that James McGill  
... and another if it specifically mentions that he v

Enjoy and remember: drink responsibly.

by SpikeMF Joint CS/Biology '14

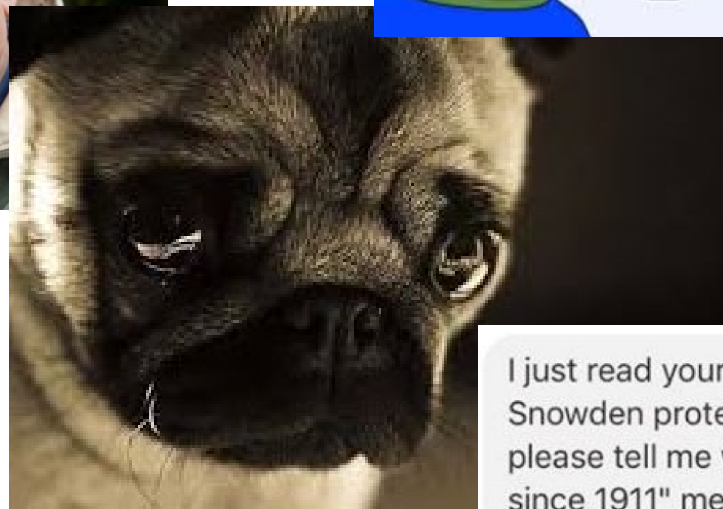
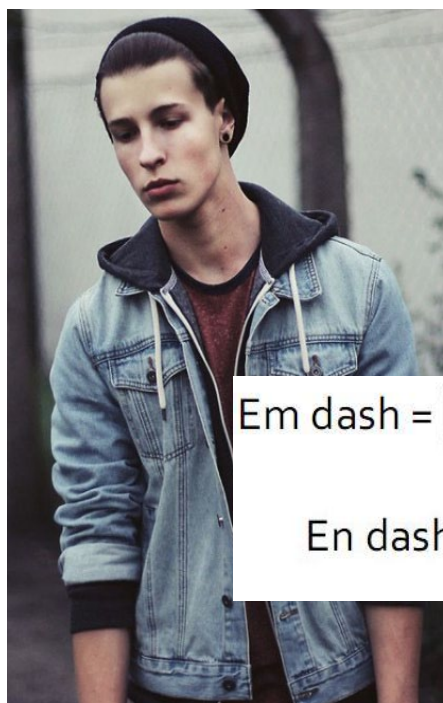
## THE McGill Daily starter pack



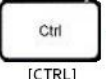
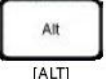

-the editorial has not yet been written (yikes)

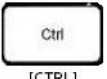

Dear McGill Daily,

This is perhaps the most ridiculous, misinformed editorial



I just read your story about the Snowden protest. Would you please tell me what "Spooky since 1911" means?

Em dash =  +  +   
[CTRL] [ALT] [minus sign]

En dash =  +   
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