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SSMU Council supports AMUSE bargaining efforts

Councilors also discuss Board of Governor's inaccessibility

ELLEN COOLS
The McGill Daily

The Students' Society of McGill University (SSMU) Legislative Council met on October 13, where they discussed four notices of motion, including a notice of motion regarding the free menstrual hygiene products policy, a fund referendum question for said policy, the Midnight Kitchen's existence referendum question, and the creation of Musicians Collective fee.

Three motions were passed, including a motion regarding the amendment of SSMU's internal regulations of governance, a motion regarding the election of student senators from the Faculty of Medicine and School of Nursing, and a motion to support the Association of McGill University Support Employees (AMUSE)'s collective bargaining efforts.

Council also heard a presentation on SSMU's 2015-2016 audited financial statements and a presentation regarding representation on McGill's Board of Governors (BoG).

McGill BoG Representation

SSMU Alternative and Equitable Governance Researcher Leslie Anne St. Amour presented a report concerning representation on the BoG., focusing on student representation, the appointment of members at large, and lack of transparency at BoG meetings.

The BoG has 25 voting members, 12 of whom are members at large from the community, St. Amour explained. There are two student seats on the BoG, one representing SSMU and one representing the Post-Graduate Students' Society (PGSS).

Members at large are nominated to the Board and approved by a committee, she said, but the criteria used to approve them is not known to the public. Unlike many other universities, McGill does not have public applications to become a member at large.

St. Amour also discussed the lack of transparency at BoG meetings. "In terms of accountability and transparency, so much of what the Board of Governors does is done during closed sessions where interested students and community members can't witness that decision," she said, "and that can lead to a lot of lack of understanding and cynicism."

She further highlighted that a few other universities across Canada have strict consultation protocols with students on decisions that impact students directly, but McGill limits the students' role in decision making.

St. Amour made several recommendations in line with her findings.



AMUSE President Claire Michela speaks to Council.

KEVIN TAM | The McGill Daily

She recommended that the board look into developing consultation with students, and make procedural changes addressing how much happens during closed sessions of BoG meetings and tracking how members vote. She also suggested the Board create an open forum and question period at meetings so students' voices will be heard.

A fee for menstrual hygiene products

Council discussed two notices of motion regarding the potential adoption of a policy that would provide free menstrual hygiene products, including pads and tampons, and approving a referendum question that would ask students to support the creation of a non-opt-outable fee of \$1.68 per semester per student to supply said products.

These products would be provided across campus in Healthy McGill kiosks and in both gendered and neutral gender bathrooms, SSMU VP Student Life Elaine Patterson and SSMU President Ben Ger explained.

There were concerns regarding what would happen with surplus funding if only a portion of the products were used: "The original idea is that if there is a surplus in the fund we would use it to purchase alternative [menstrual] products," Patterson explained. "In terms of the fund continuing to build up, I don't believe any provisions have been made but we can certainly look into that in editing this motion."

Debate over supporting AMUSE

A motion was brought to support AMUSE's collective bargaining efforts.

Currently, AMUSE is engaged in the bargaining process for a new collective agreement with the University.

Over 50 per cent of AMUSE employees work for minimum wage, which is \$10.85 per hour. According to the motion, independent research has found that the average living wage in Montreal is \$15.38 per hour.

AMUSE President Claire Michela spoke to Council regarding AMUSE's bargaining demands, which include "equal treatment [and] respect for casual workers, including hiring priority for jobs you've already done," accurate job descriptions and wages, stable jobs, a \$15 minimum wage, and a better on-line job posting system as well as more student input for work study jobs.

The motion spurred debate regarding the demands for a \$15 per hour minimum wage and hiring priority.

Last year, SSMU didn't take a formal position on the 15 and Fair McGill campaign, which seeks a minimum wage of \$15 per hour for all workers at McGill. Senate Caucus representative Joshua Chin raised concerns, saying "last meeting at Council, I asked specifically why SSMU cannot endorse the 15 and Fair Campaign [...] and the answer I got was that because SSMU itself is not able to pay their employees a minimum of \$15 an hour."

"Given that now we're presented with this motion to endorse AMUSE bargaining positions, is this not kind of counterintuitive, [since SSMU did not endorse 15 and Fair] and would this not also detract from the bargaining itself?" he asked.

Many councilors noted that SSMU, unlike McGill, does not have the bud-

get to pay its employees a minimum wage of \$15 per hour. This is largely because much of SSMU's budget goes to paying rent to the University and the failure to raise the base fee last year.

"We keep making comparisons to SSMU not being able to pay its workers \$15. McGill is not SSMU. McGill has money [...] McGill has a responsibility to pay its workers the minimum wage. That's not an argument," Environment representative Tuviera Okome said in support of the motion.

SSMU VP University Affairs Erin Sobat noted that SSMU could look into adopting a \$15 minimum wage for its employees if Council wanted it to be explored further.

Engineering representative Richard (Tre) Mansdoerfer raised concerns regarding the demand for hiring priority. "I [...] feel very uncomfortable supporting appendix number one [which outlined hiring priority for applicants that had already held the same job] because I feel this really does propose a barrier for a lot of members."

AMUSE employees who are students are limited by the government to performing the same job for three semesters. However, Michela said, many AMUSE employees are doing work study jobs, which essentially act as financial aid, and are often not re-hired after one semester. If they are not re-hired for the same job – which, according to Michela, is a common occurrence – that reduces their chances of having a steady income.

Council voted to approve the motion regarding support for AMUSE collective bargaining with one abstentions and two against.



Mental health in the queer community

Panel highlights conflict resolution

ANNA O'DRISCOLL
News Writer

CW: suicide, suicidal ideation

On Monday, October 10, the QED Journal hosted a panel discussion called “Queer Conversations: Suicidality, Conflict, and Repair” at Le Cagibi. The event was held in response to the recent suicide of trans writer and activist Bryn Kelly.

The panel, hosted by author Sarah Schulman and trans writer and artist Morgan M Page, centered around suicide prevention and conflict resolution in the queer community.

“We are in the middle of a suicide epidemic within queer and trans communities that reaches across all segments of our community and has very disproportionate impacts on the most marginalized in our community, particularly Indigenous people who often cross over with our community and who, in Canada, have the highest suicide rates of any group, as well as Black and other people of colour,” Page said in her introductory remarks.

“It is a large and extremely sensitive topic that we can’t possibly hope to unravel in one evening, but we’re hoping through discussing one person’s suicide [that] this will be fruitful as we all move forward,” she continued.

Schulman and Page both talked about their relationship with Kelly and their involvement with her funeral, including their contribution to the eulogies. Schulman described the process she went through in preparing a eulogy, which Kelly’s partner, Gaines Parker, preferred to call a “political sermon.”

Discussion about the “political sermon” focused on whether to include how Kelly had killed herself. Schulman said she and others close to Kelly felt strongly that it was important information to share.

“Saying the way the person killed themselves was not the same as telling people how to kill themselves,” Schulman said. She added that she hoped including the more graphic and real aspects of what had occurred would discourage other people from doing the same thing.

Page shared that she had also read the political sermon. “The effect on me was very immediate,” she said. “I felt that it dissuaded all of the suicidal ideation that I’ve been feeling for me personally.”

“We are in the middle of a suicide epidemic within queer and trans communities that [...] has very disproportionate impacts on the most marginalized in our community [...]”

—Morgan M Page
Trans writer and artist

She further emphasized that suicides within the trans and queer community happen far too often.

“Suicides happen fairly regularly in the community around me, whether they are friends I have or coworkers or community members that I’ve shared space with,” she said. “They happen with an astounding regularity that I think contributes to many of us who see this happening feel-

ing hopeless and ourselves feeling suicidal ideation.”

Both Page and Schulman read what they had shared at Kelly’s funeral before opening the floor to questions and a discussion.

The conversation that followed touched on many issues relating to suicidality and the queer community. Some audience members shared their own experiences with suicidal thoughts or actions.

Issues that came up many times included de-escalating conflict, conflict resolution, and the importance of solidarity within the queer community. Many attendees also spoke about conflict on the internet, the difficulty of being a leader in the queer community, and the impact of substances on suicidality.

The general response to the discussion was positive. One attendee, Carina, told The Daily she thought it was a very valuable conversation, and highlighted the importance of talking about these issues in small-scale situations like this event.

“These are literally life and death situations,” she said.

Speaking to The Daily, Lana, another attendee, said that for her, the event brought up thought-provoking ideas that she believes are important.

“[The event] dealt with enormously complicated questions in a really relatable way,” she said. “It raises things I’ve been talking about with my friends for years without the vocabulary.”

In an interview with The Daily, Eli, a student at Concordia, highlighted how well the panel and discussion dealt with a potentially distressing situation.

“I was talking to people and they were saying that it was anxiety producing to come into this space, but then it was so healing,” they said. “There wasn’t any conflict, which was really nice, and everyone was listening to each other—that was just refreshing.”

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Demonstrators support Colombia

Marchers stress peace over partisanship after referendum

XAVIER RICHER VIS
The McGill Daily

Approximately 100 demonstrators gathered outside the Colombian consulate in Montreal on Monday, October 10, at the corner of Rue Metcalfe and Sherbrooke. They rallied in favour of peace in Colombia after approximately 52 years of war between the federal government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC).

The FARC grew out of a communist movement which organized grassroots anti-imperialist resistance in rural areas against corporate and state violence, and provided basic supplies and aid to impoverished communities which were effectively outside government jurisdiction.

Since the 1980s, however, the group has engaged in increasingly aggressive paramilitary operations aimed at expanding the territory under its control. These operations have been largely financed by cocaine trafficking, gold mining, and kidnapping for ransom.

Additionally, they have committed well-documented human rights abuses including the torture and killing of hostages, the recruitment of child soldiers, and violence against Indigenous peoples.

At various moments in its history, the FARC has faced armed opposition from right-wing paramilitaries, sometimes supported variously by drug cartels, Colombian state actors, and American CIA-backed counter-insurgents. Rural populations have suffered as a result of decades of violence between these factions.

Peace negotiations between the Colombian government and the FARC have been attempted several times since the 1980s, with the latest iteration having come closest to achieving a workable solution.

Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos and the FARC leadership signed a peace deal on September 26, concluding four years of peace negotiations. The final agreement, however, was rejected by the Colombian population in a plebiscite, which the “NO” camp won narrowly with 50.2 per cent of the vote. Only 37 per cent of the electorate participated.

“The purpose of this march,” read the event’s Facebook page, “is to ask the Colombian government and the FARC that they reach a new agreement, if possible this same year [...] and that the bilateral ceasefire is not halted!”

Prior to the march, organizers warned attendees not to bring banners that reflect their positions on the referendum.

The event’s Facebook page specified that “this event should not feature banners that promote ‘YES’ or the ‘NO’ vote of the plebiscite. Let’s bring white flags, Colombian flags, and white balloons.”

Photographs were taken in front of the consulate before demonstrators walked down Avenue Metcalfe to Dorchester Square, chanting “Queremos la paz! We want peace! Viva la paz! Long live peace!”

Organizers had also arranged for rally participants to videotape messages of hope and peace for family members and others back in Colombia.

Organizers on the urgency for peace

In an interview with The Daily, José Camargo, a Colombian psychology and honours philosophy student at McGill and one of the main organizers of the demonstration, explained why the demonstration emphasized peace rather than the “YES” or “NO” votes.

“The conflict between the FARC guerillas and the government has lasted for 52 years at least,” he said, “and for the first time in the history of our country, we have reached [...] a bilateral ceasefire. But since the plebiscite, the bilateral ceasefire might end. We don’t know yet.”

According to the BBC, Santos announced on October 4, two days after the referendum, that the bilateral ceasefire between the FARC and the government will have to end on October 31 if no common ground can be reached.

“The reason why we’re marching is because we all want peace in the country,” Camargo said. “We all want this conflict to end. And at the same time, something that we want to make clear is here [at this rally] we are not taking a stance on the result of the plebiscite. [It] already happened. [...] All Colombians want peace, whether or not they voted ‘YES’ or ‘NO.’”

“The plebiscite was asking for the approval of a specific peace agreement, but not necessarily for peace,” he continued. “So a lot of people who voted against the plebiscite [...] want peace for the country as well. They just want some points in the agreement to change.”

Maria Silgado, another main organizer of the event, spoke with The Daily about the urgency of peace in Colombia.

“We don’t want to wait anymore because not only [do we want the] innocent people, [but] the people



Montrealers stand in solidarity with Colombia.

XAVIER RICHER VIS | The McGill Daily

involved directly with the war—those kids fighting against each other—we want them to be part of our society. We want them to have the same opportunities that we have,” she said.

Silgado went on to praise Santos’ handling of the negotiations with the FARC.

Santos recently was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize “for his resolute efforts to bring the country’s more than 50-year long civil war to an end, a war that has cost the lives of at least 220,000 Colombians and displaced close to six million people.”

“We all want the conflict to end. And at the same time, something that we want to make clear is here [at this rally] we are not taking a stance on the result of the plebiscite.”

—José Camargo,
March organizer

“He wants to end the war after 52 years, and nobody before him could do that,” Silgado said. “He’s the [...] first president who’s there sitting across the table from [the

FARC], and trying to find a way out [of the war]. I think the prize is well deserved, but he needs to keep working. [Peace] has to come faster.”

“YES” or “NO”

While the event put an emphasis on peace over partisanship, many demonstrators had differing views on the referendum and the peace agreement itself.

Juan Diego, a McGill student with family in Colombia, favored the “YES” vote.

“I think the agreement was very fair,” he said. “It took almost 5 years to negotiate [...] Many international organizations thought it was one of the most comprehensive peace treaties in history, and at the same time, many victims of the conflict were for the agreement, because they didn’t want others to suffer what they had suffered.”

“The ‘NO’ vote passed though,” he pointed out, “and we have to respect the democratic decision. People voted ‘NO,’ and we cannot go against that. The treaty needs to be renegotiated again, and [the government] needs to include the NO camp in the negotiations.”

Camilo, another demonstrator, concurred with Diego’s views, and addressed many “NO” camp voters’ problem with the Colombian government’s leniency toward past FARC crimes.

“The agreement was quite fair between the two parts,” he said. “Let’s be honest: if the guerillas would have known they would go to jail for the rest of their lives, they would have never agreed.”

However, Valentine, another student at McGill, pointed out fears of FARC leadership joining mainstream Colombian politics. “I think the [biggest] fear of the people is that if those [FARC guerillas] who committed serious crimes [might] go into politics,” she said.

According to CNN, “under the agreement, FARC would have been given 10 seats in Congress and their votes would have started to count in 2018.”

Camilo noted that “it’s better that they have a voice [in Congress] and fighting for what they believe in [there], instead of fighting with guns. [...] It’s better to fight with words than with weapons.”

In contrast, Valentine said that “it is scary to know that someday someone who killed a lot of people might be President. I know that it might not happen, but it could.”

Peace is not “a political thing”

Overall, attendees of the march felt that the peace process in Colombia has become too politicized and that increased civility in negotiations would be necessary to assure peace.

“It became a political thing,” said Alicia Remont Ospina, a friend of both Diego and Valentine. “Some people voted against Santos for a rebate. The agreement became about politics, not peace in Colombia.”

Diego agreed. “The issue became whether you are for or against peace,” he said. “But that’s not the issue. [It was] simply do you agree with the agreement or not?”

Principal Fortier sits down with campus media

Fortier discusses divestment, student politics, mental health, and more

MARINA CUPIDO
The McGill Daily

On October 4, Principal Suzanne Fortier and Deputy Provost (Student Life and Learning) Ollivier Dyens sat down with members of the campus media to answer their questions about student activism, divestment, and more.

The McGill Daily (MD): Over the past couple months, we've seen Indigenous people from the Standing Rock Sioux community protest the Dakota Access Pipeline project, which threatens their fresh water supply. \$27 million from McGill's endowment is invested in companies which are profiting from this pipeline. Meanwhile, Indigenous communities near Canada's tar sands report unusually high levels of cancers and autoimmune diseases. If this doesn't constitute "grave social harm" on the part of fossil fuel companies, what does?

Suzanne Fortier (SF): The question of [...] social harm is not a simple one in the case of fossil fuels. There are very negative impacts of fossil fuels and some that have been positive. [...] I was reading recently that some members of the First Nations are very much opposed to the pipelines, some are in favour. [...] It's a topic on which there's a lot of difference of opinion, even within First Nations communities, so I would feel out of place in speaking on behalf of McGill.

Le Délit (LD): On the topic of divestment and student activism, are you concerned that there might be a growing divide between the administration and a certain part of the student body, particularly student activists?

SF: In a democratic community, there are differences of opinion, always, and what is important for us as an institution is making sure different opinions are expressed freely, without fear, [...] and that as a community we can move forward in [...] constructive ways. [...] I think that both the administration and our governance bodies have [...] listened to all these topics with great seriousness and respect. They agree as to where we need to be, not necessarily on the path and the specific actions to take. But [...] some of the actions we're taking now are a direct result of [...] the advocacy around topics like sustainability.

The Bull & Bear (BB): What do you think the role of the Principal's office is on the question of student activism?

SF: When it comes to [...] political topics, my role there is to



Principal Suzanne Fortier

KEVIN TAM | The McGill Daily

keep on our campus an environment where different views can be expressed. Freedom of speech is a value that we protect. Respect of diversity, respect of different people's opinion, that people feel safe – that's part of my role. But it is not my role to express my political view on behalf of the community, because those views are diverse, and I must respect that.

BB: In that case, what justification could you give for the email sent out by your office last spring, which denounced the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement as running contrary to McGill's values?

SF: BDS is a good example. There were people [...] who put pressure on me to come out with a view, and I did not, initially, because I respected the government of the student body. [...] There is a part of [BDS] that is very closely linked to our mission, and the mission of a university [is] to stand up and make sure [...] we don't cut our ties with any academic institution or scholars no matter where they live, and what political situation they're in. [...] I was very careful [...] to make clear that [the email] was not representing the views of the whole university.

MD: How would you respond to the allegation that it was a political gesture to choose to respond to the BDS motion, as opposed to other SSMU motions?

SF: [The motion] was prob-

lematic for SSMU itself and I think afterwards they did revisit the wisdom of putting [forward] this motion. So it is not a motion that was, as most motions are, very closely related to life on campus, to issues of our university. It was in the political sphere.

The McGill Tribune (MT): Supposedly we're seeing a streamlining of the mental health services this year, but what will be done about long wait times and lack of space for students seeking help?

Ollivier Dyens (OD): We're working on a mental health and wellness [initiative] that should come to Senate in the fall. [...] Not every student that comes to Mental Health or Counselling or Health Services needs to see a psychiatrist right away, so it will be a process where students will [...] get services very quickly. [...] And for those who have more fundamental issues, then we'll free up time from our psychiatrists to actually deal with these things. [...] This step-care approach has worked in other universities.

LD (in French): What is the current state of French language and culture at McGill, and what could be done to promote French at McGill – particularly to ensure that international students learn French when they come here?

SF (in French): I believe currently more than 65 per cent of students on our campus can

express themselves in French. [...] We have many courses in French, and we'll open as many classes as are necessary so that all students can learn French if they wish. We promote French a lot, for example through the site 'Découvrir le French side de McGill.' [...] We also promote cultural events in Montreal [...] and throughout Quebec. [...] So we're doing a lot. [...] There's been an enormous improvement in the state of French language and culture in the past few years, and we'll continue in this vein, because McGill is an increasingly global university that remains anchored in Quebec culture.

OD: We would love for all McGill students to speak French and English perfectly when they graduate. [...] We would like for students to have the choice of whether or not to stay [and find work] in Quebec, and it's not always the case.

MD: What is being done concretely at the upper administrative level to improve hiring equity at McGill?

SF: Pools of possible candidates, particularly for certain types of positions, like professors, are extremely small. [...] If you look at Aboriginal, visible minorities, people with physical disabilities, [universities] tend to actually compete against one another. But on women, [...] I believe its 45 per

cent of new assistant professors are female, so we are close to parity. [...] We also have equity training with our hiring processes, so that is happening as well.

MD: In the spring, a prospective donor decided not to donate to McGill due to our ongoing failure to divest from fossil fuels, and research has shown that the University has effectively lost tens of millions of dollars over the past three years by not divesting. In light of this, how is not divesting a financially viable option for us in the long term?

SF: I'm not sure I'm going to answer that question. [...] We don't accept gifts on the basis of political views. When our donors make gifts to our universities, the discussion is about [...] what are their goals in contributing. [...] We've refused gifts, because either it wasn't in line with our values or [...] we knew that we would not be able to deliver. [...] We've lived through a very tumultuous market. [...] We are not active managers of the endowment. We [...] work with managers from outside the university. [...] Our endowment has been fairly healthy overall. [...] We've done a good job for us.

This article has been edited for length and clarity. A longer version of the interview has been published online.

Agreeing to disagree

Having differing opinions shouldn't prevent conversations

HUGO TARTAGLIA
Commentary Writer

Think of any social issue facing our world today, whether it is #BlackLivesMatter, LGBTQA+ rights, or even Donald Trump's presidential campaign. I won't be taking a position on any of them; instead, I want to address an important feature that ties them together: they have fuelled a longstanding debate over political correctness. I believe that the conversations surrounding freedom of speech and 'political correctness' have been approached in unhelpful ways, rendering them largely unproductive. One conversation leads people to think they can say anything they want, free of criticism or consequence, otherwise it is an attack on their freedom of speech. Another leads people to make claims of bigotry towards any belief that doesn't coincide with their own, followed by attempts to shut down any further discussion.

It's not uncommon to see individuals abusing both of these approaches to argue an issue. In addition, in situations of disagreement, people often seem to forget that it is impossible for an individual to be truly objective. Both fact and feeling are fundamental parts of human nature - they cannot be separated from one another. To expect that anyone would be empirically correct and detached from their own feelings is to deny the investment that people have in social and political discussions, and how deeply these misunderstandings have real, human consequences.

"Freedom of Speech" and "Political Correctness"

Freedom of speech is important. However, just because it is within your freedom to say something, it does not mean what you are saying is, by default, valid. This is a key aspect that goes unacknowledged in the conversations surrounding free speech. Hypothetically, everyone might have an opinion on the chemical composition of water, but that doesn't mean that everyone has an opinion that is both accurate and defensible. You are completely within your rights to claim that water is actually composed of four parts oxygen, 33 parts hydrogen and one part magnesium, but you should be ready to expect staunch disagreement. You should also expect that you may not be given a platform for your views as this is not part of your fundamental freedom of speech. It is necessary to



realize that you can be wrong, and that others are allowed to call you out on your statements if they are not credulous - this is not an attack on your freedom of speech.

The other problem is the complete shut down or censoring of opposing views. It can sometimes be convenient to be sheltered from ideas that we disagree with and to believe that we have all the 'right' answers on a given issue. We have to be willing to admit to ourselves, however, that these two things are just not good enough reasons to cease conversation. Today, conversations that should be open to marginalized groups continue to be dominated by people with privilege. The chance to express your views, concerns, and questions is a right, and not something that should be denied to others based on one's own discomfort with a changing status quo.

That being said, it is necessary to acknowledge that not every conversation is a healthy or productive one. Feeling unsafe or harmed by such conversations is very different and perhaps it is best to step away from them. If people's safety starts being at risk through the use of oppressive language and behaviour, I hardly think we can consider it a conversation anymore - at least not the kind of conversations I am trying to deal with here. Safety and security are rights that should be afforded to all

individuals. Outside of instances of that harm people, however, we need to shift away from a general reaction of thinking it is okay to silence other people. Silencing someone means denying others an opportunity to hear. It means potentially losing an opportunity to learn.

While educating others

It is not the duty of a marginalized person to educate others on their oppression. However, when people voluntarily choose to be educators to others, like if someone signs up to facilitate Rez Project in McGill residences, it is important to note that how we frame ideas matters. Our word choices are important as they can provide better understanding on a given issue. This is why sexually transmitted disease (STD) was changed to sexually transmitted infection (STI) - it is a productive reframing that clarifies what a sexually transmitted infection actually is. Clarification, especially when educating people who come from different backgrounds, takes into account and makes space for different social contexts and foundations of knowledge. How we frame ideas also matters because it can take into account the history of an issue and how it shapes our conversations today. For example, we cannot discuss racism today without acknowledging the state of racism sixty years ago.

This is why I believe we should be focusing on both the framing of ideas and the content of these ideas. To care about what is being said and to believe it is right should mean ensuring that statements made are defensible. It is also necessary to remember that words are received by an audience of human beings with different views, backgrounds or bases of knowledge. When stepping into the role of an educator, to be cognizant of who you are trying to reach can only help with the transfer of the intended message. However, this is a two way street. Caring about a given issue should mean focusing on the content of what the speaker is saying. Disagreeing with someone shouldn't be an end to the conversation. If both sides truly wish to resolve the same issue, then this mutuality should always be an invitation for further conversation.

Working towards good, together

One thing must be very clear: if we care about any marginalized group, or about mitigating human suffering, then we must do away with the fight over "political correctness." We must be mindful of the complexity of human interactions and emotional reactions. We must also be prepared to face reality. It is absolutely imperative to understand the facts - all of the facts, not merely

the ones which suit our preferred narrative. These two things - fact and feeling - are not in opposition to each other.

Sometimes the facts in a situation aren't as clear and as well understood as the chemical composition of water. Sometimes, 'reality' is completely different things to different people, making it difficult to agree on a 'right' answer. But this does nothing to change my point about what should be a collective desire for open and honest dialogue. After all, there are very real costs to not properly understanding these issues.

Yes, I am being idealistic. To be honest, however, I don't think that this is a problem. This is exactly what we should be idealistic about. To be idealistic, here, is to expect more from people, and from society collectively. If we are to be optimistic about anything, it should be our ability to find the causes of injustice and suffering in order to effectively reduce their prevalence and treat their symptoms. If we truly desire to improve the condition of communities and individuals around the world, this must be done through productive conversation and cooperation, and not through complete discord.

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KEVIN TAM | The McGill Daily

Enforcing the deadname

McGill bureaucracy is actively harming the McGill trans community

FLORENCE PARÉ
Commentary Writer

For three weeks during the summer, I had to read my deadname – my assigned name at birth, a name I no longer use – in the McGill Outlook title bar every day, multiple times a day. The name on my email and on myCourses had reverted to my deadname. It tends to do that, and it can take some time to be fixed.

When this happens, trans students are left to decide between avoiding sending emails from our institutional email accounts and risking looking unprofessional, or out ourselves to every single person we message. Emails sent to us by others will inevitably show the wrong name. I opted for the latter option – outing myself – because I had important work emails to send, so now at least a few dozen new people know my deadname. It's not very easy to forget, unfortunately, and all my interactions with those persons in the future will be made more uncomfortable by their knowledge – hopefully, they won't discriminate against me for being a trans woman if the opportunity arises.

Those three weeks, unsurprisingly, corresponded to a low in my mental health, and the fallout is ongoing. The constant reminders of my pre-transition life also took a toll on my mental health. For weeks I had to see this name, multiple times a day – this name which caused me pain for most of my life, and which I am struggling to put behind me.

McGill's current preferred name policy (when it works) is limited to students' classlists, McGill emails, and myCourses. Outside of those three platforms, there is nothing. The policy fails to recognise trans people's lived gender identity, as well as failing to meet McGill's legal obligations to accommodate trans students under the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedom, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender identity. These failures harm trans stu-

dents psychologically and emotionally, and make us vulnerable to discrimination, harassment, and violence.

Currently, myFuture sends the person's deadname with the submitted documentation for job applications. Similarly, official transcripts are not available with preferred names. Trans students are systemically outed, unless they choose to forego using myFuture, or their official transcript. Applying for a job for which only the official transcript is accepted? Too bad. Applying for a job in which unofficial transcripts are accepted? Good luck appearing professional sending in a screenshot or a copy-pasted version as a transcript. With transphobia still being commonplace, it is simply unacceptable for McGill – an institution which claims to hold itself to the highest standards of

social and academic practice – to force its trans students to use their deadnames.

The policy fails to meet McGill's legal obligations to accommodate trans students under the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms.

I think it is important to emphasise that constantly having to see one's deadname in the system is very distressing and

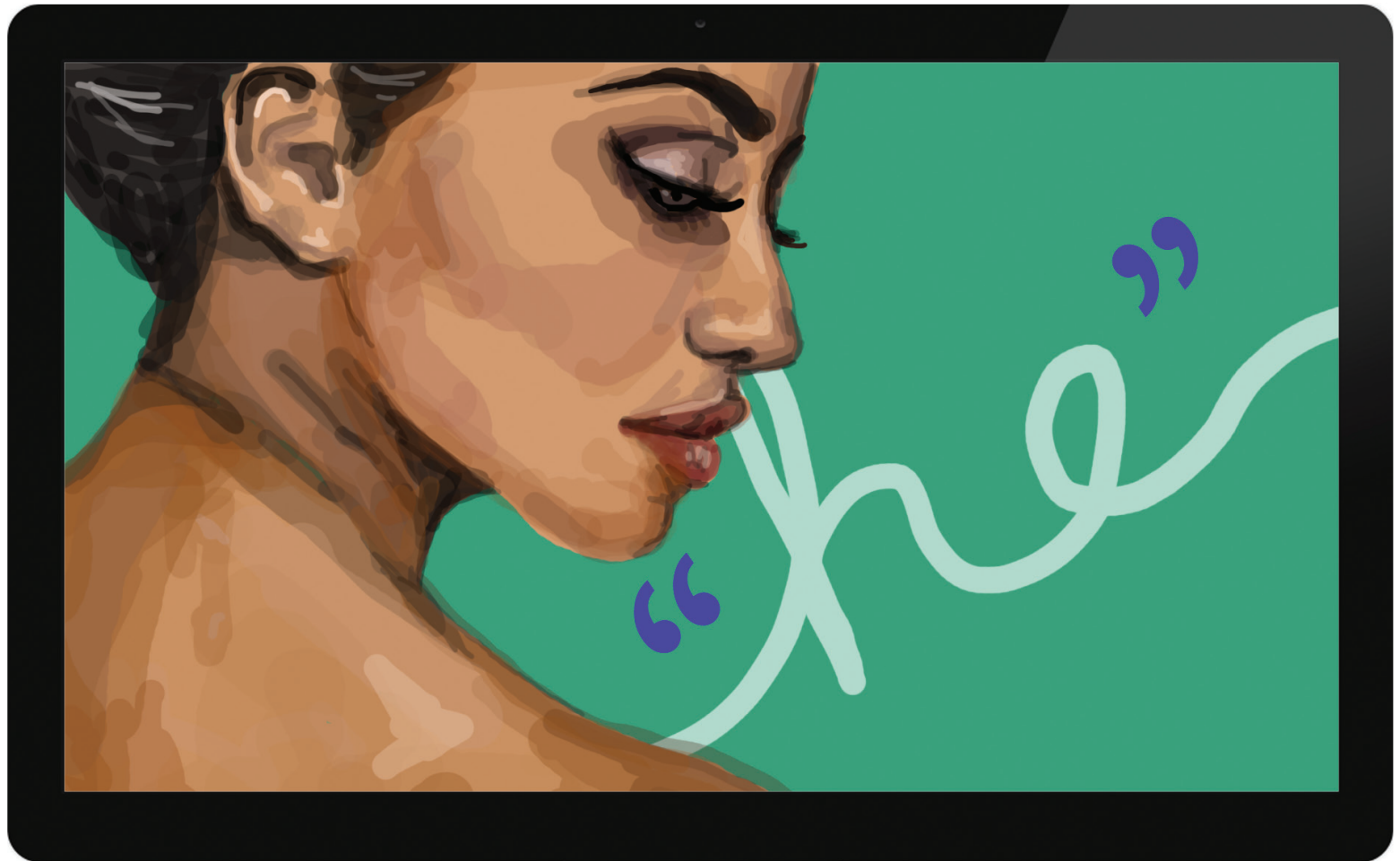
invalidating, whether others are aware of it or not. Since all login systems use the "primary email," which is composed of the person's deadname, trans students have to type it every time they need to use a McGill service, usually a significant number of times per day. It causes much anxiety and discomfort in a student's day to day life, given its recurrence. The Interlibrary Loan system, printers, among other systems, do not use the preferred name and email, either.

The issue is distinctively intersectional. There are many reasons to delay a legal name change or avoid it altogether, and when the process is available and desired, it can take months or years to go through. For a large number of students, however, the process is simply unavailable. Many countries disallow name changes on

the basis of gender identity, or require genital surgery as a precondition for the change. The policy, as it stands, disproportionately impacts international students.

Trans rights are human rights. We should all get to use a name we identify with. Our privacy should be respected. In light of its legal duties and institutional commitments, McGill should foster a respectful environment in which trans students feel safe from discrimination, harassment and violence. The first step of many is to overhaul its preferred name policy so that trans students, staff, and faculty alike, may reliably use their chosen name across all McGill platforms.

Florence Paré is a 4th year B.C.L./LL.B. student. To contact the author, email florence.pare@mail.mcgill.ca.



RAHMA WIRYOMARTONO | The McGill Daily

LETTERS

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Black media magic

Media representation is vital for Black children and adults alike



MARINA DJURDJEVIC | The McGill Daily

CHIDERA IHEJIRIKA
Commentary Writer

As a young child, if someone were to ask me about my race, I would say with great pride: I am Black. Being the daughter of a Women's Studies professor definitely had its educational advantages — by the age of six, I was familiar with heavy terms such as systemic racism, visible minority, and gender politics. This early exposure, untainted by perspectives of my peers, made me proud to identify as Black. Unfortunately, various life experiences caused this pride to waver. It never died completely, but at times it did temporarily burn out.

The first time my Black pride died was in fourth grade. I had just returned from Nigeria, and upon being re-introduced to an environment where being Black meant being Othered, I realized that my identity was bizarre to those around me. At first, I did not realize the slight differences that caused my peers to distance themselves from me. However, when my rude awakening did happen, it altered the picture-perfect idea of my Blackness. It was my first day at a new school, and all I wanted was to be friends with the tattoo club girls, who would always be on the basketball court making cool designs for their temporary tattoos dur-

ing recess. I distinctly remember mustering up all the courage I possibly could in order to approach them; more importantly, I remember my request being politely declined because the tattoos would not show up on my skin. After that, it became difficult to take pride in something that my peers considered strange — so I gave up embracing my identity in order to be accepted by them. I decided that I needed to redefine my Blackness, and I turned to the internet for inspiration. At the time, I did not realize that redefining such an important part of my identity in order to be accepted by my white counterparts would cause me to view being unapologetically Black as something to be ashamed of.

Upon being re-introduced to an environment where being Black meant being Other, I realized that my identity was bizarre to those around me.

As an adolescent, if someone were to ask me about my race, I would pause and quietly admit that I was Black. I was no longer the young Black girl who ran around the house shouting, “sing it loud I’m Black and proud!” The girl who begged her mom to tell more stories about the Nigerian Civil War, and about the history of slavery in Canada, was gone.

This young carefree Black girl was replaced by the Black girl that loved catfish, grape soda, and fried chicken, because the media told her that this was the acceptable way to embrace Blackness. This girl refused to have crushes on Black boys because she thought they would all eventually become ‘thugs’ and ‘gangsters.’ She idolized Cinderella and knew that her Prince Charming could only be white. She identified as stereotypically Black in order to be convenient for her white friends, but wished she was white so that she could be exactly like her idol, Cinderella. The media told her that her Blackness was only okay when it was stifled by the stereotypes created by whiteness to control Black people and Black bodies. Her Blackness was accepted only when she realized that she was ‘other,’ while whiteness was the standard. She accepted this as the truth because Cinderella did not look like her, but the characters who did were servants, an-

tagonists, and clowns. She truly believed that in order to be the princess she wanted to be, she had to somehow achieve this standard called ‘whiteness.’

I know the effect of not having role models that look like you in the media, and for me it was a catastrophe. When you see people that look like you represented in a negative way, you begin to believe that there is something wrong with you. The shift from young pride and innocence is subconscious and slow, but before you know it you have stifled yourself in order to attain a certain standard that the media enforces.

I was no longer the young Black girl who ran around the house shouting, “sing it loud I’m Black and proud!”

In times of self-doubt, I looked to my movie and TV show characters for an affirmation that my Blackness was acceptable. When I failed to find this affirmation, my ten-year-old self watched the movies with the white Disney princesses and began to idol-

ize them. But my ten year old self looked nothing like her idols and this was a problem, because in order to become them, she had to look like them.

I say all this to emphasize the importance of events like the Montreal Black International Film Festival, which took place earlier this month. This annual festival allows Black artists and creators to express themselves in an area where they are often both underrepresented and misrepresented. Representation of Black people in the media is crucial because there are young Black children out there, watching and waiting for their next idol. They all need to know that they are beautiful and destined for excellence. In times when their non-Black peers question their Blackness, they need a Disney princess that looks like them so they know that they too are royalty. And lastly, they need to know that whiteness is not the default, and that Blackness is not the ‘other.’ They need to be able to turn on the television and see a positive representation of someone who looks like them. These young people need to be aware that unapologetic Blackness is not only acceptable, but something to be proud of.

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*Party on the beach while improving
healthcare in [insert country here]*

How to save the world and get a suntan

VISUAL BY ALICE SHEN

WRITTEN BY **AYESHA TARA**

Before I declared International Development Studies (IDS) as my major at McGill, at least three graduates of the IDS program cautioned me against it. They warned me that the program lacked substance, was overly broad, and had few options for specialization. I toyed with their warnings, but as someone with too many high school credits that more or less forced me to pick my major in my first year, and with an interest in many overlapping humanities, I chose IDS anyways. From McGill's description, at least, it sounded interdisciplinary, critical, and varied. But four years later – and many encounters with supposedly well-intentioned saviours – I wish I hadn't.

As an IDS student of colour, practices of cultural sensitivity and checking one's privilege feel more urgent to me than to some of my white classmates.

The doubts started when I attended my first IDS class. The professor began by asking why we chose this major. While many students of colour struggled to explain the complexity of personal experiences that led to their interest in development, some other classmates eagerly raised their hands. "I went to Kenya to build a well," one said, while another added that she had travelled to India to lay the foundation of a school. Almost every person in that seminar who spoke repeated a variation of that same justification: a trip to a country in Africa, Asia, or Latin America to 'build' something – a house, a hospital, a health clinic.

To my surprise, the professor treated these students as if they were highly experienced United Nations officials discussing significant development projects, rather than short term visitors on dubiously effective – or even potentially exploitative – voluntourism trips. I

felt even more uncomfortable being one of the few people in the class who had travelled frequently and for extended periods to the 'Third World' to visit family and friends – a part of the world that, apparently, some of my classmates felt they needed to fix. The semester continued without an increase in their humility or self awareness; it became clear that this sort of self-proclaimed expertise was yet another example of unexamined privilege. Many people of colour within the class and the program began to discuss amongst themselves how they had started to feel lesser. Despite our experience with the histories and cultures of the countries we discussed, we felt that if we applied this personal knowledge, we were at risk of being dismissed or disbelieved. Often, when we attempted to clarify, we were met with, "Yes, but...I was there, I know!" It sometimes felt as if students who didn't speak the local language, and could have barely found the country on a map prior to their trip, had now become experts; they posed as spokespeople for issues and limitations in a so-called underdeveloped country. It also seemed as if the class was teaching us little about the limitations of development discourse itself.

As an IDS student of colour, practices of cultural sensitivity and checking one's privilege feel more urgent to me than to some of my white classmates. Even though I was raised in Canada, when I'm in the classroom, I sometimes feel forced to be a spokesperson for the actions of people in my so-called home country. Other times I just feel angry that people are dissecting the complicated, highly politicized situation of the country in such a clinical, simplistic way. I often wonder why there is so much scrutiny given to the supposed failings of other countries, and so little attention paid to the failings of the Canadian state – not to mention the lack of analysis on the connection between the two.

Development as a phenomenon

The first requirement for IDS is INTD200, a massive class in Leacock 132 that provides a very broad survey of development and international aid – perhaps not the best format to lay a critical foundation.

The next are a series of three economics classes which apparently focus on development but mostly deal with explaining and then negating neoclassical claims; it often felt that we were being taught to reduce the complexity of people's social and political choices to graphs and models.

The very serious critiques of development work are only conspicuous by their almost complete erasure from the program.

The vast majority of courses required for an IDS degree are actually part of other disciplines: mainly a mix of anthropology, political science, geography, history, and sociology courses. But without a solid foundation of introductory courses specifically in development, the number of choices can seem daunting and confusing. Granted, I do think it is important to study issues through an interdisciplinary lens. However, within the program itself, there is barely any attempt to come to grips with the history and context of development work, or to understand what makes one country 'developing' and the other 'developed.' The very serious critiques of development work vocalized in the past two decades by activists and scholars are only conspicuous by their almost complete erasure from the program. Is it a surprise that politically and socially critical IDS students are frustrated?

According to its website, McGill's Institute for the Study of International Development seeks to "reflect a renewed commitment to building bridges between McGill and the international development community through our unique focus on multidisciplinary research that is intended to contribute directly to better evidence-based development policies and practices." It all sounds very good on paper. Issues like food security, global health, and climate change are urgent and important, and I do believe that the IDS program is root-

ed in good intentions, and strives for academic credibility. But all the good intentions of modern-day development don't obscure the fact that development work has a history of being used for empire building in the name of progress. Many projects undertaken in the name of development may actually seek to maintain the power imbalance between the so-called 'core' and 'periphery' nations. For example, the 2010 earthquake in Haiti brought an influx of hundreds of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to the country, however, the international aid response was seen as a disaster by groups such as Médecins Sans Frontières. Billions of dollars of funding never reached affected communities, NGOs' promises were left unfulfilled, and Haitian organizations were hardly ever consulted in the rebuilding process. With Hurricane Matthew killing over 1,000 Haitians two weeks ago, we might see this cycle repeat itself.

Western Europe, and more recently North America, considers itself the apex of human rights protections. Thanks to a history of colonization, Western states have the power to create and enforce standards of 'development' that 'underdeveloped' countries must strive towards. Western economic institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank have – and exercise – the ability to put 'underdeveloped' countries in perpetual debt. Western students trained in development feel like they have the authority to tell people from other countries how to 'fix' their societies. And while the catch-all term 'Western society' has historically referred to white people, people of colour living in Europe and North America can also be susceptible to these same skewed notions of Western superiority. As a friend pointed out to me, despite having many international students, the program is structured to accommodate only Western modes of knowledge, and assumes a Western-educated audience. With the rise of IDS programs at schools across North America, development work is now being marketed as sexy and glamorous. The idea that each individual student in the program can go and 'save the world' with

their McGill IDS degree in hand is constantly perpetuated.

Saving the 'Other'

Often, in the middle of their IDS degrees, many students decide to go abroad to do field work. Trips to 'developing countries' are sometimes advertised as vacations-cum-work trips: "party on the beach while improving health care in [insert country here]!" The problem with these trips is that they fail to encourage students to think critically about their own positions and privileges, and how their underinformed involvement in another country might be more damaging than beneficial. A student's experience of being in an Indian village for two weeks, for example, does not make them an expert on anything. It doesn't make them an expert on that village, nor that province, nor that larger region, and certainly not the country as a whole, but too often these students speak and act with the authority of experts.

The idea that each individual student in the program can go and "save the world" with their McGill IDS degree in hand is constantly perpetuated.

Local people's daily realities and lived experiences are highly complex and cannot be simplified to fit into a two-week trip, yet there are countless variations on the image of a Western do-gooder smiling amidst poverty-stricken yet-happy children of colour plastered on posters around McGill. As Teju Cole and others have dubbed this phenomenon, the White Saviour Industrial Complex is alive and well. Are so-called 'developing countries' always to be gazed at and defined by the Western eye? Does that mean that we do not need to respect other countries' histories, traditions, resiliencies, and methods of coping?

Too often, Orientalist and racist assumptions of the 'other' have



made it seem like people in developing countries are ‘stuck in the past,’ and are ‘traditional.’ It is not stressed enough in the IDS program that cultures should not be judged through a homogenous, Eurocentric and Western lens. If one ever wants to provide meaningful help that isn’t inflected with paternalism and cultural essentialism, it’s crucial to ask: what do people in these developing countries actually need and/or want? How can we foster their own sense of agency, and respect their understanding of their own situations? Ideally, the IDS program would provide help IDS students deconstruct what they have learned all their lives – that Western civilizations are supposedly the ultimate metric of modernity and goodness. It should be noted that while the saviour complex is particularly endemic to the Western world, privileges like gender, caste, and class, in any nation can also foster saviour complexes, regardless of one’s race or nationality. White students, due to their immense privilege, do provide much of the driving force behind voluntourism and saviourism. But I’m cautious of using the phrase “white saviours” because within IDS, I’ve noticed even students of colour, privileged by their language, wealth, and education, who are prone to trying to “fix” other countries.

Ideally, the IDS program would help students deconstruct what they have learned all their lives – that Western civilizations are the ultimate metric of modernity and goodness.

Turning the gaze inward

The other day, I met a prospective IDS major who asked me if the program entailed “some kind of internship or volunteering in Africa.” It is this outward-focused and othering language that aggravates me: the assumption that Canada and the U.S. are the utter pinnacles of progress, that there

is nothing more to ‘develop’ in the Western world, and that development happens elsewhere. Wilfully ignoring the whole spate of problems in our own backyards, the IDS major seems to want nothing more than to go on a foreign rescue mission. What about addressing the role of Canadian and U.S. foreign policies, providing millions to oppressive regimes – like Justin Trudeau’s commitment to sell \$15 billion dollars worth of armoured vehicles to Saudi Arabia, even after footage that shows similar vehicles being used against Saudi and Yemeni civilians? What about a larger conversation about the role of Canadian mining companies, like Goldcorp, which foster disruption, violence, and catastrophic environmental damage in many communities in Latin America? As I write this, protestors are demonstrating in Charlotte, North Carolina, as yet more young Black people are fatally shot by police across the United States while the country can’t seem to confront its own problems of racism and systemic poverty. What about talking about systemic racism, precarious work, limited worker protection, and lack of human rights afforded to migrant workers in Canada and the U.S.? Are these not ‘development’ related issues that need to be examined in an academic setting as well?

The IDS program is similarly silent when it comes to Indigenous issues in Canada. Shockingly, I have only come across one Indigenous Studies course that counts towards an IDS degree. It is only in the past two years that McGill has developed an Indigenous studies program through the hard work of students, faculty, and staff. In contrast, the Institute for the Study of International Development’s website boasts that “McGill’s long history of commitment to promoting development studies [dates] back to the creation of the Centre for Developing-Area Studies in 1963.” How many IDS students are willing to acknowledge that this is not our land – not belonging to me, as a settler of colour, nor to white settlers. This land rightfully belongs to its Indigenous peoples, who had it seized from them unlawfully. How many IDS students know that Indigenous peoples were not granted the right to vote in federal elections until 1960? Even now, how many know that Indigenous rights and values are commonly ignored, their food unaffordable, their water and

air often poisoned, their lands ravaged through tar sands and pipeline expansions, their resources neglected? There is little to no discussion about these issues within the IDS program.

If our education systems reflect our society, society is also shaped by ways we teach, learn, and discuss.

We, as IDS students, should examine the shortcomings of our own country before travelling abroad to showcase our know-how to other people. This isn’t just the case for Indigenous issues, but also for cases of discrimination against those who are marginalized on the basis of ethnicity, gender, and disability, to name a few.

This is also not to say the program is all bad. Some IDS professors offer interesting insights, challenges, and research on theories of globalization and development, especially in higher-level courses. Furthermore, many of the program’s shortcomings cannot be separated from the corporatization of education under the Quebec liberal government’s austerity measures, and the fact that our school operates more like a business and less like an educational institution. When academic institutions are strapped for money, they begin to treat students as consumers, which means catering to their demands. And, similarly to the demand for voluntourism trips, students are demanding academic programs that allow them to feel like they can ‘save the world.’

Perhaps it’s optimistic to expect a change in the IDS program when our educational system does not exist in a vacuum. Neoliberal economic practices – which have pervaded most corners of the globe – are premised on exploiting people in one part of the world in order to make life comfortable for people in another. Some might argue that altering the structure of an International Development program is impossible, as long as the program exists within such oppressive systems. I hear this criticism, but I disagree. I think the two must change concurrently – if our education systems reflect our society, society is also shaped by the ways we teach, learn, and discuss.

Toward a better IDS program

International Development Studies programs at other universities, such as Trent in Peterborough, Ontario, look at current, pressing issues in a comparative manner. They offer critiques and ideas on developmental policies, structures, and systems and have various courses with a wide array of topics such as agrarian reform, food and resource distribution, law and its role in development, citizen’s struggles and rights. While McGill does offer these kinds of classes, the program feels disjointed – it seems to me there is a disconnect between the content some professors are trying to teach, the mentality of many students, and the structure of the program.

McGill’s IDS program should include more Indigenous Studies classes, and other classes focusing on Canadian issues, making them a mandatory component of the program. Given the diverse backgrounds of students majoring in IDS, there should be more avenues for student feedback. A greater number of core courses should focus specifically on developmental theory and critiques thereof. Climate change, globalization, foreign policy, diaspora and transnational studies, policy explorations, research methods are all topics that could be added to make the IDS degree a more meaningful one, making for a more coherent, well-rounded program that grapples with contemporary issues.

Developing countries’ take on the double characteristic for IDS students as both a playground and a regressive wasteland.

I find myself growing irritated in classes, and even more so in conferences. Perhaps I have become accustomed to only engaging with people who share my ideals of social justice and cultural sensitivity. Some have told me that the program itself is a ‘step in the right direction, which starts with incremental change.’ Others have disagreed, with a fellow student reminding me that in some classes, people spend more time sniggering about the professors’ accents than paying at-

tention to the lecture, which, in my opinion, points to the levels of insensitivity and privilege that go unchecked in IDS. If you can’t respect other people’s accents, how are you planning on working ‘in the field,’ with people who speak English in ‘funny’ accents, or maybe don’t speak English at all? These professors come from the international settings that seem to be so enticing for many of these students. Yet, ‘developing countries’ take on the double-characterization for IDS students as both a playground and a regressive wasteland.

I am not trying to say that I hold all the answers, or that the program can change overnight; nor am I saying that I do not contribute to global chains of exploitation and capitalism. And the voluntourism industry is not maintained by students alone – often, it is international aid organizations that actively and sometimes aggressively solicit volunteers because they’re dependent on them. I also don’t want to suggest that I’m ‘above it all’ – to quote Teju Cole, “I involve myself in this critique of privilege.” We, settlers in North America, attending an elite university, wearing clothing produced in Bangladeshi sweatshops, and using cell phones made with minerals mined in Congo, cannot separate our personal lives from global systems of exploitation. This, in fact, complicates matters further, and proves why IDS classes ought to be more critically focussed – in order to illuminate and acknowledge our own everyday complicity in upholding the systems we are supposedly learning to dismantle. I feel that the way the program is structured perpetuates mindsets and practices that we should have all been warned against as first years in the program: the Saviour Industrial Complex, the vacations-cum-helper-trips, the unidirectional notion of progress. Unfortunately, my experience is that the students who first justified choosing IDS as a major because they once participated in a voluntourism trip leave the program without any significant shift in their approach to development.

I hope my essay will not be taken as a wild rant of a disaffected IDS student. I hope that it will be received in the critical but well-intentioned spirit in which it is written. I hope that if, and when change comes about in the IDS program, I will have contributed to the conversation in making that change.





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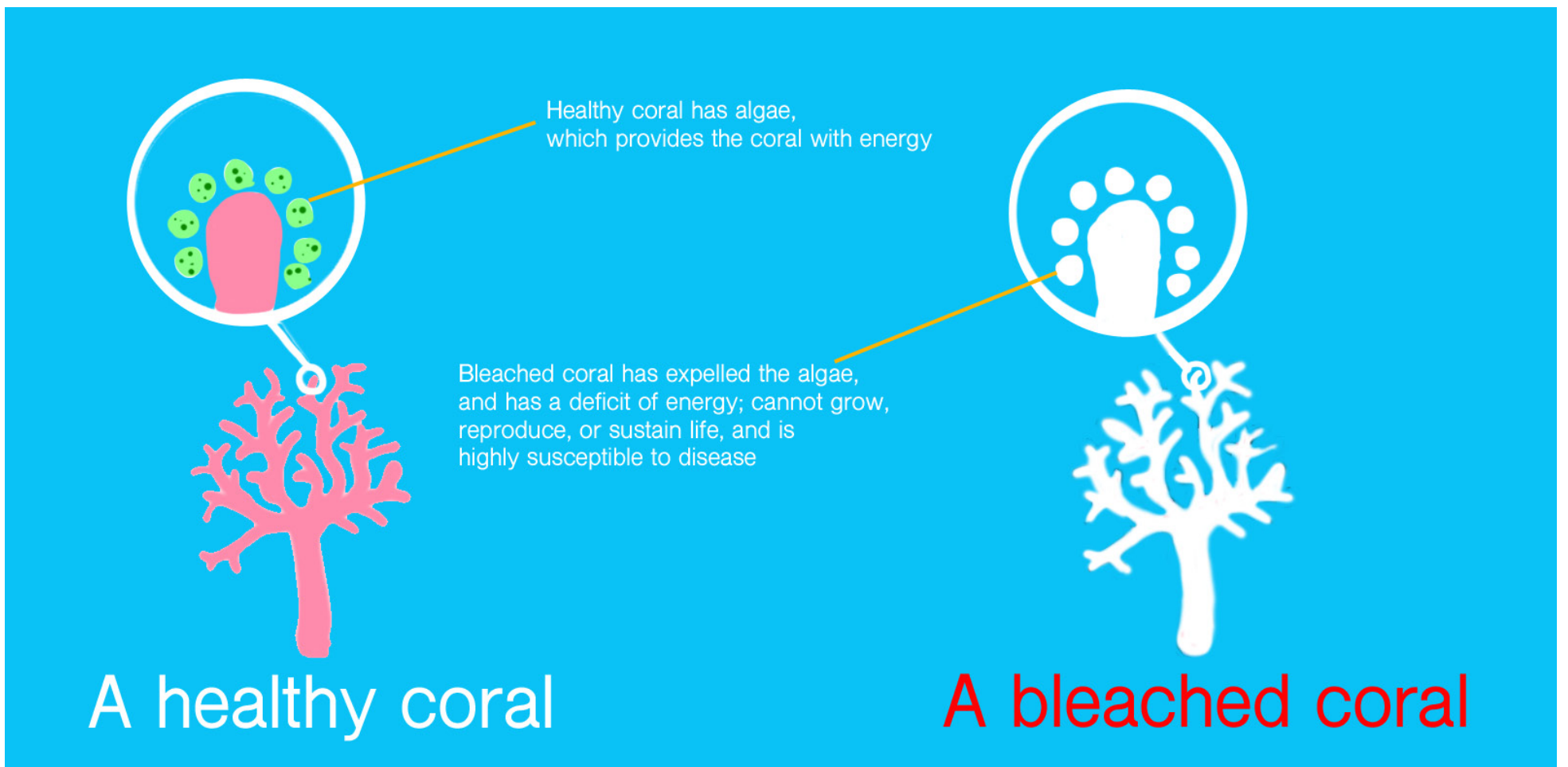
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Stayin' alive

The Great Barrier Reef isn't completely dead yet



SONIA IONESCU | The McGill Daily

SONIA IONESCU
The McGill Daily

On October 11, an article entitled “Obituary: Great Barrier Reef (25 Million BC-2016)” went viral, defying expectations for scientific articles. Although its overnight popularity was a great step for science journalism, the sensationalist article also spread misinformation, making it seem as though the Great Barrier reef had already died, and cannot be revived. In reality, while almost a quarter (22 per cent as of July, to be exact) of the Great Barrier Reef has died due to coral bleaching – which is the expulsion of marine algae from coral tissue, which leaves coral completely white (hence the name) – that still leaves 78 per cent which amounts to about 270,000 square miles still alive. Given this mass, the Great Barrier Reef can continue to be the only living structure visible from space. While this coral might not be healthy, it is salvageable if changes are made.

What is coral?

When you think of coral, you probably think of an interestingly shaped rock, right? Wrong. Coral is actually a marine animal in the phylum *Cnidaria*, which also includes jellyfish. Much like jellyfish, corals start their lives as minuscule organisms called polyps; as they develop, the polyps secrete calcium carbon-

ate, a mineral compound also composing the shells of sea snails, oysters and mussels. This mineral layer acts as a protective exoskeleton, as well as bonding the individual polyps together, ultimately forming what we know as coral. As more and more corals, often as different types, connect skeletons, they form large units that are referred to as coral reefs, the most famous of which is the Great Barrier Reef.

The Great Barrier Reef is unique both for its size and biodiversity. Larger than the size of Italy, it is composed of 2,900 individual reefs and 900 islands. Thirty species of whales, dolphins, and porpoises, over 1,500 fish species, seventeen species of sea snake, six species of sea turtles, and countless more organisms consider the Great Barrier Reef as their home – many of these species are endangered, and some are endemic to these reefs.

The reefs and climate change

When we think of climate change, we rarely think of the oceanic wildlife. We think of polar bears, the melting ice caps, and rising sea levels, but not what's going on underneath the sea. However, there are two major outcomes of climate change that are devastating for marine life: increases in oceanic acidity, and increases in water temperature.

The process of ocean acidification begins with the accumulation of

atmospheric carbon dioxide, which then dissolves into seawater. This leads to the formation of carbonic acid, which lowers the pH levels of the oceans, making them less hospitable for marine life. The increase of sea temperatures indirectly has a similar effect on coral through what is called ‘coral bleaching.’

Both of these outcomes are devastating for coral reefs. More acidic seawater will wear down already existing corals, as well as slowing down new growth; increased temperature results in coral bleaching. The marine algae and coral have a symbiotic relationship – the coral provides the algae with a safe home, and the algae provides up to ninety per cent of the coral’s energy, which the coral then uses to grow and reproduce. When a coral is stripped of this algae, it starves and ceases to be able to grow and reproduce, further contributing to the reef’s decay.

In recent years, the health of the Great Barrier Reef has been steadily declining. Since the Industrial Revolution, ocean pH has dropped from 8.2 to 8.1 – while this might seem like a minute change over hundreds of years, the pH acidity scale is logarithmic, so this variation actually represents a thirty per cent increase in acidity. This March, Australia’s National Coral Bleaching Task force reported the most severe bleaching on record: 93 per cent of all coral reefs were affected – even

the hardest species had turned completely white.

While the state of the Great Barrier Reef is disconcerting, anything but total death is reversible, and some corals are particularly resilient. If the temperatures which cause coral bleaching revert to their normal levels, algae can return to their coral homes, and corals will feed, grow, and regain their normal colour. They will experience stunted growth and increased susceptibility to disease for a time, but they will not necessarily die.

More acidic seawater will wear down already existing corals, as well as slowing down new growth; increased temperature results in coral bleaching.

Ocean acidity is also not a sure mark of death. Some coral can use bicarbonate rather than carbonate ions to create their exoskeleton; as bicarbonate concentration increases

as oceans acidify, this substitution can then serve as a buffer to the weakening effect of acidification on coral exoskeletons. Some coral are also adapted to a wider range of pH’s, while some can even survive without a skeleton and restore their exoskeleton once a comfortable pH is reached.

The Great Barrier Reef’s future

Although it is not likely that the pH of the ocean will rise back to what it used to be, or that the average temperature of the Earth will decrease, if these factors are kept from worsening further as much as possible and additional stressors such as pollution and overfishing are mitigated, the Great Barrier Reef will survive.

Ocean acidification can be lessened by decreasing atmospheric carbon dioxide levels, something we can all contribute to by having a smaller carbon footprint. Driving less, using a more fuel-efficient vehicle, taking the bus, biking, or walking are all great ways to do this, as are using eco-friendly fluorescent light bulbs, unplugging your devices when they’re not in use, and buying local products. While the effects of climate change are severe and often irreversible, it is important to realize that changing our habits in order to be more environmentally friendly can have an impact; it’s not too late for the Great Barrier Reef, so we shouldn’t give up quite yet.

Change does not come quietly

Laurens Grant discusses Black Lives Matter in new documentary

ROSIE LONG DECTER
The McGill Daily

Is this a moment or a movement? Historian Keeanga-Yamahatta Taylor poses this crucial question six minutes into *Stay Woke: The Black Lives Matter Movement*, a new documentary directed by Laurens Grant that screened at the Montreal International Black Film Festival (MIBFF) this month. Grant's answer to the question is in the film's title, but the film itself serves as her argument: *Stay Woke* weaves tweets, protests, and interviews together to chronicle the birth and evolution of one of the most important social movements of the 21st century.

For Grant, who has worked on several social history documentaries, including the Emmy nominated *The Black Panthers: Vanguard of the Revolution*, this is a familiar challenge in a new context: with Black Lives Matter (BLM), the historical subject is also contemporary. "[Black Lives Matter] isn't a movement that has occurred and landed and now we can excavate it," she told The Daily after the *Stay Woke* screening. "What's exciting is that it's still happening." Indeed, the same week that *Stay Woke* screened at the MIBFF, protesters were on the streets in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Grant, however, is uniquely suited to the task of balancing contemporary urgency and historical context, having worked as a journalist in Latin America before becoming a filmmaker. "I love telling stories," she explained. "I wanted to be a foreign correspondent – my idols were Langston Hughes and Ernest Hemingway, because they covered the Spanish Civil War."

Stay Woke weaves tweets, protests, and interviews together to chronicle the birth and evolution of one of the most important social movements of the 21st century.

Foreign correspondents need to be able to distill ongoing events into coherent narratives, a skill that Grant clearly demonstrates in *Stay Woke*. The film focuses on

key moments in the BLM movement – George Zimmerman's non-conviction, the Eric Garner video, the military in Missouri – while also telling a larger story that firmly establishes BLM as a new kind of 21st century social movement. BLM, *Stay Woke* suggests, is grounded in social networks and leaderless defiance, and has as much in common with the Arab Spring and Occupy Wall Street as it does with the Civil Rights Movement. One particularly stunning scene makes this link explicit, when activist Michaela Angela Davis recounts how activists from the Arab Spring tweeted advice to BLM activists on how to treat tear gas. "They were coaching them from the Arab Spring to Ferguson, making that connection organically," she said, "And I thought oh snap, this is different. They're in solidarity, uprising."

The comparison soon becomes concerning, however. After charting BLM's growth from a hashtag into nationwide protests, *Stay Woke* heads into existential territory, asking how the movement can remain strong amidst harsh racist backlash. Watching footage of mainstream media pundits decrying the "violence" of BLM and co-opting the movement's narrative to paint it as an aimless group of hateful millennials, it's hard not to hear an echo of Occupy's failure.

For Grant, though, this backlash is just part of BLM's evolution, not a sign of defeat. "I don't want to pretend like I'm speaking for them, but it's like, it was bound to happen," she said. "Any movement in history, if they're gonna grow or gain traction, then they're gonna have some sort of blowback. That's the nature of movements, of changemakers – change does not come quietly."

Grant envisions the shift from "moment" to "movement," then, as a kind of coming of age. "I think that was a part of [the] learning curve," she explained. "How to grow up, in a way. Each movement has its infancy, and if it lasts, then [the question is] how do you sustain yourself?"

This is the question that Occupy never answered. But *Stay Woke* suggests that where Occupy faded away, Black Lives Matter has branched out – into a global network with over thirty chapters worldwide. Instead of following a more traditional path that might have led to a national organization with a headquarters in one major city, BLM multiplied into a series of locally-based grassroots groups.



Stay Woke panel. COURTESY OF THE MONTREAL INTERNATIONAL BLACK FILM FESTIVAL

[Black Lives Matter] isn't a movement that has occurred and landed and now we can excavate it [...] What's exciting is that it's still happening.

—Laurens Grant,
Director of *Stay Woke*

"[There's] this whole criticism of leaderless movements," said Grant. "But this power of local allows the local community to take ownership and tailor things to their needs – be it a different country, a different language, or a different jurisdiction. How [Black Lives Matter] figured that out is astonishing – they were able to tap local leaders to curate the conversation and bring changes forward locally. Now we're seeing people running for office and local jurisdiction being called [on] to [make] changes, the department of justice trying to make indictments in different districts and saying this isn't law and order, this is disorder. That is a testament to the power of local. The power is right where you stand."

For Grant, this power of local extends beyond activism to film as well – this is part of the strength of festivals like the MIBFF, which encourage discussions about art and

politics outside of elite Hollywood circles. "I know a lot of people say, well, why do you need this kind of festival, a festival just spotlighting women directors or minority directors or the diaspora," she said. "[It's] because these issues matter, these communities matter."

Indeed, the importance of this local contextualization of political issues was evident during the panel that followed the *Stay Woke* screening, as artists and activists brought a Montreal perspective to the BLM movement. Activist Will Prosper discussed police brutality in the city, pointing to the death of Fredy Villanueva, while comedian Eddy King shared his own experience of police harassment last summer. This festival screening-and-panel format is thus essential for a film like *Stay Woke* as it allows the film to go beyond a static depiction of a social movement by actually engaging with the members of that movement. *Stay Woke* is not a film to be watched independently but rather a collective, community-building experience.

Grant agrees. "Film festivals allow that additional richness, where the community can come out together to actually talk about stuff and tailor the conversation to how things affect them," she said, reflecting on the *Stay Woke* panel. "The conversation today was absolutely heart-wrenching and lovely at the same time, [seeing] how [anti-blackness] is felt and seen and experienced every day here. And that's what Black Lives Matter is trying to tell you: each community has this, but in a different way."

Given the ubiquity of systemic racism and police brutality, is she optimistic about change?

"Being from the U.S., we are always criticized for having humongous egos, so yes, I am very optimistic," Grant responded. "I think things will get better, because look at history, look at my career, look at who I am. Things have improved, incredibly so. Just the fact that I made a documentary on what some [might] say is an important or contentious matter, I think that's a huge change. But is the work finished? No. And how do you keep going? Well, we're learning from these activists."

"[Black Lives Matter] is a testament to the power of local. The power is right where you stand."

—Laurens Grant,
Director of *Stay Woke*

Stay Woke reflects this optimistic tone. Though it depicts violence, oppression, and heart-break, above all it is the story of a radical coming together, a simultaneous convergence and dispersion of resistance. *Stay Woke* is the story of an uprising that does not fall back down, an uprising that is not just vertical but horizontal, spreading its roots across the continent and laying the foundations for change.

Wild and wacky, with corset tops

Blowfish Theatre's *Matt & Ben* is subtly subversive

DEANNA DUXBURY
The McGill Daily

According to Blowfish Theatre, “theatre is life.” Composed of eight McGill students from various faculties, the new theatre company hit the ground running with comedy *Matt & Ben* which ran from September 29 to October 1 at Players’ Theatre. Originally written by celebrity friends Mindy Kaling and Brenda Withers, the play parodies two struggling young actors from Boston that receive a kind of divine intervention. The screenplay was initially inspired by the 1997 drama, *Good Will Hunting*, written by childhood friends Matt Damon and Ben Affleck. Starring Shannon Snow as Matt and Jo Murray as Ben, Blowfish Theatre’s production shows how the academy award winning film literally falls into the laps of two unsuspecting friends in a hilarious, subversive comedy.

The play follows Matt Damon and Ben Affleck as they try to decipher what their award means. Is it a gateway to sin? Their ticket to stardom? Have they been cursed? At this point in their careers, Matt and Ben are trying to get the rights for a screenplay of *Catcher in the Rye* and are auditioning for small time roles with no “real” responsibilities. Matt is an over-cautious, sensitive type, and Ben is his loud, raunchy, and ridiculously funny best friend. From the moment Snow and Murray danced onto the stage, the audience knew that the performance would be anything but half-assed.

Shannon Snow’s humour was on point, playing Matt as a lovable, quirky, and terribly awkward character who just wanted to break free from his irresponsible other-half. On the other hand, Jo Murray was the rowdy Ben Affleck. Though their characters were intensely dramatized, they came out refreshingly funny. Everything from crossdressing quips to pop culture references came off flawlessly as the actors showed the struggles of two guys just trying to get their break. Favourite moments included Matt and Ben’s talent show flashback performance of “Bridge Over Troubled Water,” and the cameos made by Gwyneth Paltrow and J.D. Salinger.

At intermission, the audience was kindly asked to leave the theatre, only to return to Matt and Ben reinvented in black leather, studs, heels, corset tops (“titty-cages”), and metallic capes, created by costume designer, Erinn Farmer. They were



Shannon Snow and Jo Murray in *Matt & Ben*.

dressed for the first read-through of *Good Will Hunting*, and it was better than anything the audience could have imagined. There was nothing restrained or understated about this play and people loved it.

Everything from crossdressing quips to pop culture references came off flawlessly as the actors showed the struggles of two guys just trying to catch their break.

This production, in particular, experiments with characterization that goes beyond the traditional idea of masculine and feminine. Snow, whose acting career “thus far has her typecasted in lesbian, dystopic adaptations of Shakespeare” and who was excited to “break out of this role to play the Straight Male,” and Murray, whose theatre credits includes *The Vagina Monologues*,

make a fantastic pair in a show that redefines gender stereotypes and showcases women’s comedy. Through creative costume changes and sexual humour, the characters of Matt and Ben become more than any one kind of stereotyped, heteronormative comedic role.

The Daily spoke to Blowfish Theatre about the company and the creative process behind *Matt & Ben*.

The McGill Daily (MD): What made you chose *Matt & Ben* as the opening production for Blowfish Theatre?

Blowfish Theatre (BT): Well, actually, Blowfish Theatre was born from us wanting to do *Matt & Ben*! [This play] was the collaborative brainchild of a bunch of us that felt that [it] was a perfect clash of popular culture and high culture. We jokingly named this “the renegade project” before Blowfish was created because we couldn’t find a pre-existing organization on campus that was willing or able to partner on *Matt & Ben*, so we said fuck it – we’ll do it ourselves!

MD: Your version of *Matt & Ben* was much more rowdy and wild than original clips of the Mindy Kaling’s and Brenda Withers’ production (particularly costumes, the rock band etc.). What made you take this direction with the play?

BT: With the greatest respect to Mindy and Brenda, we felt that

approaching the play realistically lacked dimension. We are lucky to be able to see some clips of the original play [...] Our own version [is] grounded in the original version [though it has] blown past our conceptions of space and time and [become] something wacky. For the first six weeks of rehearsal, Anni [Choudhury, the Director] didn’t even touch the script, instead choosing to develop the actors’ respective clown personalities. That says a lot about our approach; the band, the costumes, the staging and props, all complement the absurdity of clown.

MD: This play does amazing things with women playing male characters. How does this play, for you, make an impact in terms of its innovative and creative character representation?

BT: We have enough performed masculinity [by men] in our culture and we don’t need anymore of that. Mindy and Brenda threw themselves on stage dressed in men’s clothes, but made no attempt to change their voices, bind their chests [...] in the original *Matt & Ben*. That is what attracted us to the play – two chicks pretending to be dudes. And not just any dudes, but the golden boys of Hollywood. It’s subversive in its subtlety. And it’s hilarious seeing the caricatures

COURTESY OF SHILEI ZHANG

Through creative costume changes and sexual humour, the characters of Matt and Ben become more than any one kind of stereotyped [...] comedic role.

of Matt Damon and Ben Affleck super-imposed on women.

MD: Is there anything you’d like to add about the play that made it a memorable experience to be a part of?

BT: Having the opportunity to work with such creative people really made this experience memorable. Everyone on the team helped create this crazy explosive dynamic play. We had students from all backgrounds: from music to law to mathematics. We are extremely thankful to our diverse cast and crew for their positive energy, imagination, and sparkle.

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

Nature in the archive

Faithlessness of art in Charlotte Moth's ambivalent film sketches

JOSEPHINE BIRD
Culture Writer

“It’s supposed to be spooky,” the gallery assistant tells me as he leads me through a maze of tunnels in the dimly-lit basement where I’m told that Charlotte Moth’s film is being screened. For the first time in Montreal, Parisian Laundry is showcasing Charlotte Moth’s “Choreography of the image: Filmic Sketches.” On show until October 8, the exhibit was originally produced in collaboration with the Tate Archive and retells Moth’s story through a series of sketches that display places that are important to Moth in a state of haunting abandonment. In the brief nine minute film, Moth explores the way our experiences are influenced by art, thus impacting how we interact with nature.

Moth explores spaces where human intervention has left them bereft of life. The film begins with closeups of a verdant landscape accompanied by the ambient hum of birds and splash of water, then zooms out into images of brutalistic architecture as intense, orchestral music begins to play. By contrasting two uninhabited settings, Moth explores how emptiness proves tranquil in nature, yet beleaguering and desolate in the city. Moth uses photographic stills to amplify the spectral quality of these buildings, populated by empty chairs and vacant hallways.

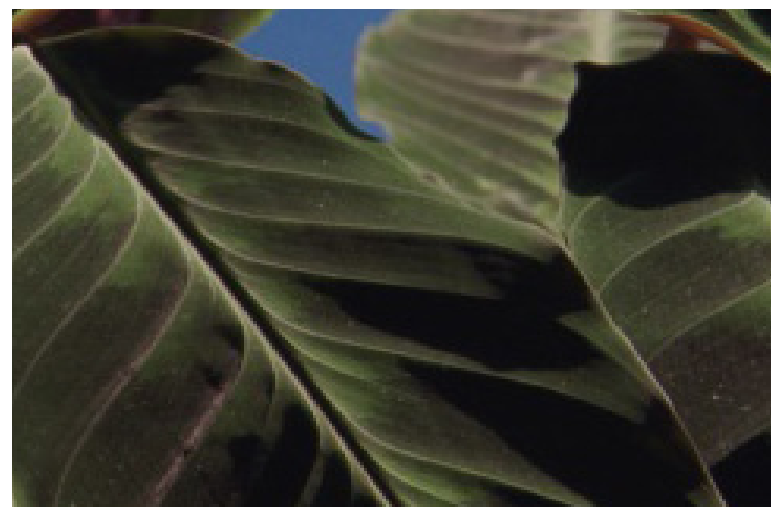
The only dimension of the film that gave life to these uninhabited spaces was the operatic music. Unlike the natural, diegetic sound that emanated from the previous landscape, the superimposed music was used to obscure the silence that underscores these man-made spaces. Moth exploits the medium of film by editing in sound and contrasting interior and exterior fragments to demonstrate how these edits are necessary to make palatable what we have perverted.

Moth also interrogates the potential for art to be deceptive, showing how nature can [...] elude our desire to capture, imitate, or perfect it through art.

Towards the middle of the film, there is an abrupt scene change accompanied by what sounds like the smoke monster siren sound from *Lost*. A leafy plant is dramatically staged against a blue, velvet curtain. This scene, heavily cho-

reographed, makes me think of the work as a dance. Instead of bodies defining space, Moth evinces how architecture frames spatial experience, and how the lines between architecture and sculpture are in fact blurry. If we can see dance as living sculpture, bodies presenting and configuring themselves to display the beauty of the human form, monumental architecture can be seen as a choreographer itself, in its mediation and shaping of bodily experience. The film-maker is also a choreographer, in mediating our perception of the architecture that patterns our movements.

Moth also interrogates the potential for art to be deceptive, showing how nature can sometimes elude our desire to capture, imitate, or perfect it through art. The hyperrealistic shots of the plants cast doubt upon whether these are real plants, or spurious replicas – the image appears so real that we suspect it might be false. Is this a documentary image of an augmented reality, or does its augmentation make it completely fake? Of course, our perception is filtered through the reflective medium of film; nothing we see is a first-hand image. The documentary approach with which Moth works focuses on geological features of the land, and their resistance to her desire to confirm the existence of the real, to categorize and typify them, also shows how the natural world



Screencap from film.

COURTESY OF CHARLOTTE MOTH

elides both our archival and artistic impulses. The faithlessness of art to produce an image of the real is an age-old question that Moth reopens with fresh eyes.

The minimalist language of the film makes it a pleasure to watch, as viewers are entered into dialogue with the objects presented. However, unlike minimalist sculpture, it is not the viewer who is authoring their own experience of the work. Instead, the experience is mediated by the camera. This enables us to gain insight into the persona of the intermediary, calling to mind avant-garde films that emphasize the voyeuristic gaze of the person behind the lens. We learn about what Moth chooses to zoom into or pan away from, and

what details they think are important or irrelevant.

I left the exhibition most curious about the attitudes of the person behind the camera. It was challenging to distinguish whether Moth was trying to convey indifference towards these empty spaces, or if the mood was more confrontational. Moth’s ambivalence urges the viewer to construct meaning for themselves. I consider how up until this point I have seen the author as the arbitrator between the viewer and work. Perhaps in opening up so many questions which can best be answered by looking at the decisions and indecisions of the camera, the work really functions more importantly as a dialogue between the viewer and author.

Activism through Afrobeat

Remembering the legacy of Fela Kuti

TAYLOR MITCHELL
The McGill Daily

Despite being arrested over 200 times, Fela Kuti demonstrates that not even a military-run government could silence his anti-colonial message. October 15, 1938 marks the birth of Nigeria’s beloved musician, activist, and political leader. 19 years after his death, his fans continue to spread his message of Pan-African revolution. DJ Asma, a Montreal local with West-African roots, commemorated his legacy at a tribute concert held on October 14 at Groove Nation.

Music was Fela’s tool of resistance against the corruption that persisted after Nigeria’s independence from Britain in 1960. Combining poetry with politics, Fela’s lyrics opposed the systems of oppression that Nigeria inherited from British colonialism. However, Fela didn’t simply identify these structures, but created a collective call to action through his pan-African worldview. Pan-Africanism, a movement that seeks to deconstruct the physical and internal borders created by colonialism and foster sol-

idarity throughout the African continent, unites African people in the shared struggle against colonialism.

Fela also pioneered the Afrobeat genre: the convergence of jazz and Yoruba music. Through juxtaposing modern music – largely influenced by his trip to the U.S. – with pre-colonial music, Fela demonstrated how modern innovation can coexist with the art forms that colonialism attempted to erase. Typically, his songs involve large ensembles with an elaborate horn section and complex rhythms to create individual pieces that can last up to 45 minutes in concert.

The song “no agreement” exemplifies the fusion of old and new. The song begins with a techno-style synth solo – improvisational and spacious, backed by a steady guitar riff. Then, the song introduces various percussion instruments and an explosive saxophone section with harmonies reminiscent of Cuban jazz. After 12 minutes, the horn section takes a break; a call and response section takes its place, layering the language of Pidgin English over the original techno beat.

Fela was inspired by the Black Panther movement in the U.S. and the writings of Malcolm X, exploring ideas of Black nationalism and negritude among the Black diaspora in his music. His song, “Who No Know Go Know” critiques the lack of “togetherness” in Africa, implying that fragmentation creates unnecessary conflict that thwarts the fight for freedom.

As an outspoken Pan-Africanist, Fela strove to reclaim African identity as Nigeria healed from the trauma of colonialism. The militaristic Nigerian governments of the 1970s and 1980s and the exploitative racial hierarchy were lasting effects of colonial rule. One of his goals was to dispel the racist idea that Africa was destined for internal conflict, by reconfiguring the idea of African unity. This is especially important considering how colonialism sought to exercise control by politicizing Indigeneity. African intellectual Mahmood Mamdani explains how colonists created small groups based on their racist and shallow interpretations of African cultures, and assigned

these groups to specific territories, governing them through “chiefs” under “customary law.” This also pitted groups against each other to distract from the root struggle against colonialism, fostering Eurocentric propaganda that portrayed Africa as an inherently corrupt continent.

As an outspoken Pan-Africanist, Fela strove to reclaim African identity as Nigeria healed from the trauma of colonialism.

The emphasis on unity present in Fela’s music shows that decolonization doesn’t simply mean to dismantle economic and political structures – but also to reclaim identity. However, it’s important to recognize the complexity of individual experi-

ence and the danger of creating one homogenized narrative. Fela Kuti’s activism was far from perfect – and many of his political stances generated, and continue to generate, great controversy.

“Zombie” was not only considered one of his most influential albums, but the spark for intense political controversy that led to Fela being banned from entering Nigeria. In the title track, Fela used the metaphor of a zombie to criticize the Nigerian military-run government, saying they still had to wake up from the colonial framework from which they were entrapped. Moreover, through the song’s repetition of military orders, Fela simultaneously condemns the way the armed forces don’t even question this structure – obeying orders like zombies. The voices echoing the word “zombie” throughout the track are hypnotic as well as taunting – criticizing, whilst pointing out the absurdity of it all.

August 2, 1997 may mark the loss of a revered leader, but the continuation of his revolution demonstrates the power of his activism.

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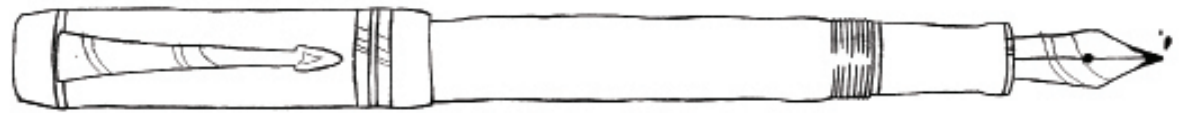
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NoDAPL is a Native struggle, not just an environmental one

Since April, the construction of the North Dakota Access pipeline (DAPL), which would transport crude oil from the Bakken and Three Forks oil fields in North Dakota to Illinois, has been protested by groups of Native land defenders and allies, a movement known as NoDAPL. The response to NoDAPL protesters has been unnecessarily militarized and violent, with the governor of North Dakota calling the National Guard—a reserve military force that has been used to clamp down on large-scale political actions like in Ferguson and Baltimore. While the media, as well as some protesters, have treated NoDAPL as solely an environmental issue, it is also a matter of Native rights. It is crucial that we acknowledge that due to ongoing colonialism and violence, Indigenous people would disproportionately suffer the consequences of climate change and environmental destruction caused by this pipeline.

In early September, the Standing Rock Sioux made an injunction request, which was later rejected, to stop the construction of the pipeline across treaty-protected, sacred burial grounds and through the Missouri River, their source of water. Peaceful protests against the DAPL were met with increased state and police violence against land defenders, which has included attack dogs, pepper spray, and mass arrest. This has been largely ignored and unreported by mainstream media sources. Similar struggles have occurred within Canada: in late 2015, Indigenous peoples opposing the construction of Enbridge's Northern Gateway, a pipeline that was to run through treaty-protected Unist'ot'en land, were met with increased Royal Canadian Mounted Police presence and surveillance on their land, and harassment and

intimidation tactics. While both the Unist'ot'en clan and the Standing Rock Sioux have faced systemic violence that is part of the continuous oppression and erasure of Indigenous peoples, the mainstream media has portrayed the Indigenous struggles against the fossil fuel industry only as environmental activism.

This shift in media portrayal is further reinforced by non-Indigenous celebrities, political figures, and environmentalists, whose support occupies space in the media that should be given to Indigenous peoples directly affected by this issue. Their participation takes the focus away from the decolonization struggle at the centre of the NoDAPL movement, and is given priority over Indigenous voices, making it more about their involvement in the events and less about the events themselves. This misguided allyship is exemplified by actress Shailene Woodley who declared that “we’re all indigenous to this Earth” while publicizing her support for the NoDAPL cause. If those allies are sincere about their support for the Standing Rock Sioux and other Indigenous groups fighting against colonialism, they should be mindful of their privilege and empower solutions that come from the Indigenous communities they want to support.

Despite the environmental focus of the portrayal of the Standing Rock Sioux's fight, we should not forget its anti-colonialist foundations. Moreover, those of us who are settlers directly benefit from colonialism. Instead of framing the problem in a more palatable way, non-Indigenous people need to acknowledge that this movement is fundamentally about decolonization.

—The McGill Daily editorial board

Regarding last issue's editorial, “We’re ‘not interested’ in the Harambe vigil”

Our most recent editorial, published on October 3, garnered a substantial number of community responses, including allegations of racism due to the fact that the editorial pointed out the anti-Black implications of the Harambe vigil and meme. We want to reaffirm our stance and make clear that drawing attention to and denouncing racism is not the same as perpetuating it.

However, the language in the editorial was unclear, and we should have emphasized that the idea that the Harambe meme is anti-Black is not ours. The Daily's editorial board is comprised of mainly non-Black editors, who cannot speak for the Black community, and we should have acknowledged that concerns over the meme's connotations have been raised in other media by numerous Black writers and activist groups.

The Daily has an anti-oppressive mandate to report on issues concerning people with marginalized identities, and critique unequal distributions of power. However, this does not mean we know everything about anti-oppression; we recognize that it is a process that requires constant self-awareness and growth. We appreciate and plan to use the constructive criticism that we've received to ensure that our editorials are more clearly written and contextualized in the future. We encourage readers to read the resources, written predominantly by Black people, that we consulted while writing the editorial. They are attached to the online version of this statement.

—The McGill Daily editorial board

ERRATA

“SSMU Council discusses budget” October 17th, News, page 6, stated, “The notice mentioned a Legislative Council meeting on October 20, but as there is no scheduled meeting that day, Council will have to meet earlier to approve the amendment motion.” In fact, Council added another meeting on October 20 to approve referendum questions, as the original electoral timeline called for approval on October 27, but there is no Council meeting that day. The Daily regrets the error.

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Lies, half-truths, and “we’re okay with the women and the gays, now.”

Republicans deny the existence of women

Leaders baffled by idea of women as people

DR. ANDREJA VIJUMIC
The McGill Weekly

In a shocking turnaround after last Sunday’s American presidential debate, the Republican Party has announced that it intends to continue denying that women are people, too.

“It’s not that we don’t believe women exist,” said Kellyanne Conway, Trump campaign manager and human woman, in an interview with the McGill Weekly. “Nobody is suggesting that women don’t exist. What we’re saying, simply, is that women don’t exist, per se, as people — which is obviously very different.”

The announcement followed a policy statement made last Friday by Donald Trump, a clump of moldy Cheetos and Republican nominee. The statement, released in the unconventional format of ‘leaked audiotape’ — presumably to appeal to millennial voters — included Trump confirming that being famous allows him to assault women without consequences. The statement solidified what has long been understood as the GOP’s policy on women — namely, that they exist to serve and entertain men.

“So as you can see, we clearly do acknowledge the existence of women,” said Conway. “Just not as autonomous individuals.”

In a show of support for his party’s policy on women, Rudy Giuliani, a withered husk of a New York mayor and current Trump advisor, said: “Of course, these comments are disgusting and vile and I don’t agree with them. But you know, it’s just locker room talk — we all do it. I’ve done it. The difference is that I’ve never said it on record, or in a locker room — why limit it to just there, right? — but really we all say this kind of thing all the time.”

Trump’s policy was featured heavily in the debate. In the opening minutes, moderator Anderson Cooper asked Trump if he

was aware that kissing and groping women without their consent qualifies as sexual assault. “I respect women,” Trump said, winking at his daughter Ivanka, “I’m a huge supporter of women. I love women. Nobody loves women as much as me.” He did not, however, respond to questions or demands made by moderator Martha Raddatz, opting instead to spew racist, alarmist vitriol until addressed by Cooper. When criticized later for his dismissive behaviour toward Raddatz, Trump replied: “Who?”

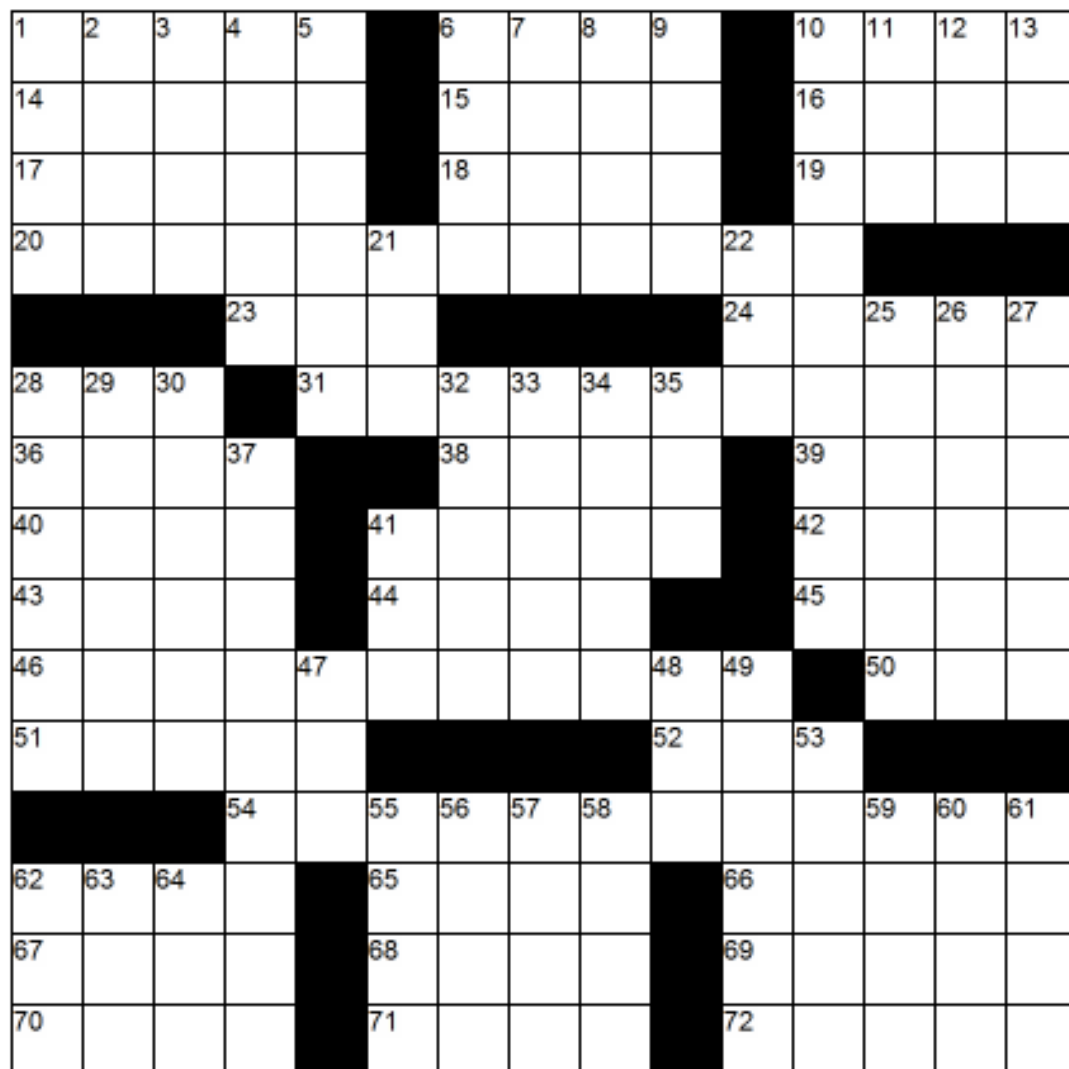
“As you can see, he is sticking to his policy,” said Conway, addressing the criticism. “Don-

ald Trump is an honest, reliable man. He honestly thinks of women as objects, and unlike other wishy-washy Republican leaders, he isn’t afraid to stick to that. Perseverance, honesty, reliability — these are important presidential traits.”

Trump’s objectification of women was felt throughout the debate, when, referencing a row of women sitting in the front, he complimented Anderson Cooper on the décor. Responding to a question made by a woman in the audience, Trump said: “That’s a beautiful question. Terrific question. Very sexy. I just want to grab it by the pussy.”

Crossword

JAY VANPUT
The McGill Weekly



ACROSS

1. What one does at a red light
6. Away from wind
10. Used for cattle
14. “Vote for ___,” a popular shirt from Napoleon Dynamite
15. Moves a boat
16. Skill
17. Sci-fi movie featuring Sigourney Weaver
18. Half of binary
19. Popular twenty-one pilots
20. Good way to find new people
23. 7th letter of the Greek alphabet
24. ___-gritty
28. See someone in court
31. Commonly referred to as Ringwood
36. Math involving triangles, abbr.
38. “Neither a borrower ___ lender be” Shakespeare quote
39. Things missing electrons
40. “Back in the ___” Beatles song
41. Steel used in construction
42. Musical composition
43. Deep Purple’s “Any ___ Kno That”
44. Three in Tijuana
45. “Good night.” in text speak
46. Where a certain demon barber lives
50. Fish common in the North Atlantic
51. What you are supposed to do to drugs
52. Before, to a poet
54. Famous traditional English folk song
62. .5(base) x height, for a triangle
65. Things that connect neurons to each other
66. Woke up
67. Type of beetle
68. Records have two of these
69. “___ Whirl”
70. Theme for the long clues?
71. To be, pour vous
72. “___ alarm”

DOWN

1. Type of email you would ignore
2. Prefix, far off
3. Garfield’s friend
4. Ready, to Pierre
5. Composition for a soloist
6. Nickname for an infamous Yankee
7. Type of shot
8. Jug commonly used for carrying water
9. To be, to Octavian
10. To divide into parts
11. Hitting a double with someone on third (most likely)
12. Geriatric
13. Grade worse than a cee
21. Grandmother
22. December 31st, for the current year
25. Line 23.5’ north or south of the equator
26. To hold for a full time value, musically
27. Agreed with
28. Fills something to the brim
29. *Sea witch from The Little Mermaid*
30. Mos ___ Cantina, from *Star Wars*
32. Type of gas
33. Scoring a .0 on a breathalyzer
34. Remove
35. Body part most important for balance
37. European plum
41. What you drive on, abbr.
47. Something that allows you to browse the web anonymously
48. Snakes cousin
49. What a lot of kids will get on October 31st
53. Feeling you might get in a haunted house
55. Inch along
56. Sortie
57. Intersection of many branches
58. Super Nintendo abbr.
59. Unit in Ohm’s law
60. This, in Madrid
61. Actor Bean notorious for always dying
62. Sweet drink suffix
63. Regret
64. Compass direction

Write for Compendium!

McGill’s premier satire section.

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