

RETHINKING OTTAWA'S TRANSIT SYSTEM

A BOLD PROPOSAL FOR FREE TRANSIT IN A CITY DESIGNED FOR CARS

Julia Szwarc

During the week of February 4-10, Free Transit Ottawa challenged Ottawa's City Councillors and Mayor to take the Transit Week Challenge. The idea was simple: To get the people who make decisions about public transit to experience the system firsthand.

To the surprise of the organizers, the majority of Council chose to participate. Some, such as Shawn Menard, Laura Dudas, and Theresa Kavanagh, enthusiastically took the challenge.

Allan Hubley and Jean Cloutier, Chair and Vice Chair of the Transit Committee respectively, were initially unresponsive but eventually succumbed to the public pressure demanding that they take part. Others, such as Mayor Jim Watson and Barrhaven Councillor Jan Harder, turned the challenge down, citing their busy schedules as prohibiting them from taking transit during the week.

SERVICE ISSUES

Throughout the week many of the councillors took to Twitter to document their commutes and reported experiences all too familiar to regular transit riders. Buses were frequently late, cancelled, or didn't stop because they were too full. Stops were icy and some trips were exponentially slower by transit. Overall they encountered a transit system that is unreliable, inconvenient, and not expansive enough to reach many communities within the city.

Currently, the transit system is designed to get commuters back and forth between home and downtown — and even this is done poorly. For people living on low incomes, doing shift work, commuting between suburbs, or trying to access services and shopping during off-peak hours, the system is nearly unworkable.

The city may be able to rationalize its current approach to transit because, despite population growth, ridership has declined in recent years. However, it is difficult to blame citizens for avoiding a system that is becoming increasingly expensive while not serving their needs.

AFFORDABILITY

Despite being organized by Free Transit Ottawa, the issue of affordability rarely surfaced in the councillor's comments during the Transit Week Challenge. This is not entirely surprising — Ottawa city councillors make over \$90,000 annually and transit fares would be a nominal expense for them. While affordability was not one of the barriers faced by city councillors using transit, it is a problem for many people living on a low income.

Under the current model, 43% of OC Transpo's funding comes from passenger and 'other' revenue, with the remainder being covered by municipal contributions and gas tax funding. This heavy reliance on fare revenue presents a greater burden on people with low incomes, since the fare constitutes a higher percentage of their income.

OC Transpo fares have been increasing by 2.5% on average per year since 2011, which is significantly higher than the inflation rate of 1.6%. This also gives us some of the highest fares in the country.

Council plans to raise fares again in 2019 for all users, including for the Equipass program which offers approximately half price transit fares for citizens who have a net income below \$20,998 and who are not receiving Ontario Disability Support or transportation benefits from Social Services.

OC Transpo estimates that a mere 8,800 people in Ottawa

are eligible for the Equipass, yet few of them are taking advantage of it. In 2017 just 2,600 passes were sold each month. This probably because of the onerous application process. It requires applicants to provide information regarding the income of all individuals in their household, to submit forms in person or by mail, to wait up to 30-days to receive approval, followed by another in-person visit to receive a Presto card.

So while the Equipass might provide a welcome discount for a narrowly-defined group of people living on a low income in the city, the low uptake of the pass (and high costs of administering the program) suggests that it is inadequate for addressing the transit needs of low income communities in Ottawa.

These issues also raise a broader question — why should anyone living in Ottawa have to pay a fare to use transit?

TRANSIT AS A PUBLIC SERVICE

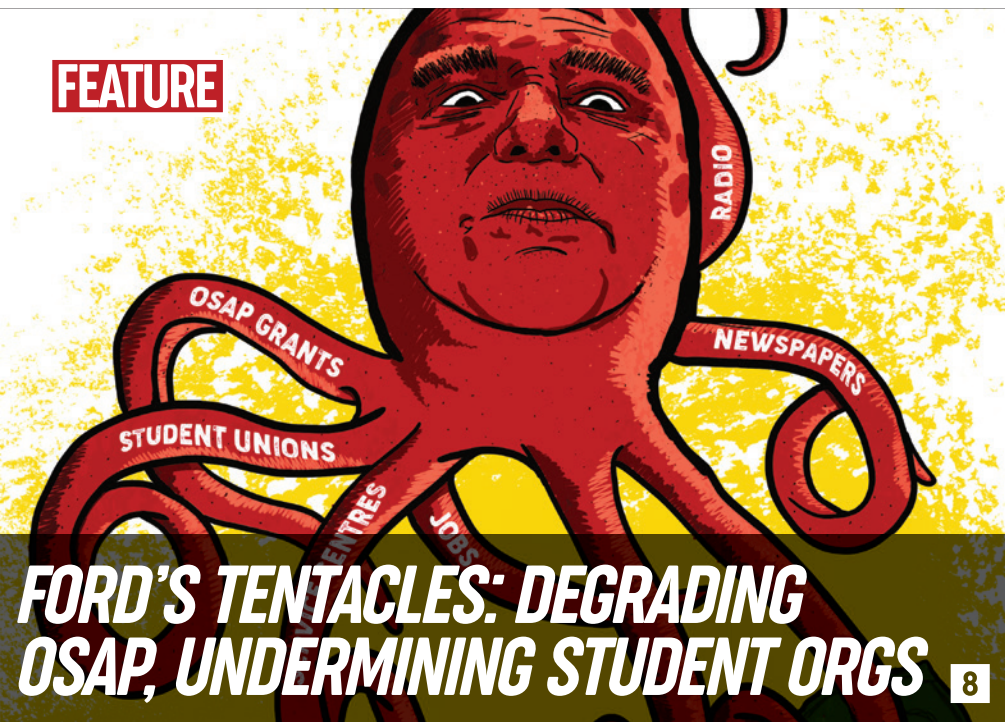
There are over 100 municipalities worldwide in which transit is free, with notable examples including Dunkirk, France and Tallinn, Estonia. In addition to being an egalitarian social policy, making transit free to users has the potential to dramatically increase ridership and thereby help to reduce carbon emissions, air pollution, and congestion in the city.

Free transit movements are gaining traction in both Ottawa and Toronto, largely because they have the potential to address both social inequality and environmental sustainability.

Recent reports that indicate we have a closing 12-year window to significantly reduce carbon emissions in order to prevent disastrous climate breakdown.

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FEATURE



WET'SUWET'EN NATION AND ALLIES PROTEST POLICING AND ATTACKS

Mike Hermida & Tim Kitz

On March 16, a cold but otherwise sunny Saturday, approximately 30 people marched through downtown Ottawa and dropped a banner in the Rideau Centre, in solidarity with the Wet'suwet'en Nation.

The march was a response to a call to action posted less than 24 hours before to the Earth First! Newswire and It's Going Down. This "Second International Call to Action for Gidim't'en, the Wet'suwet'en & Indigenous Peoples" called on allies to "step up for a second International Day of Action in solidarity with Gidim't'en Checkpoint, Wet'suwet'en Frontlines, and all Indigenous Peoples across Turtle Island."

The first day of action took place on Jan. 8, after the RCMP unilaterally moved into Wet'suwet'en territory the day before, dismantled the Gidim't'en checkpoint, and arrested 14 land protectors. The checkpoint was set up by the Gidim't'en clan of the Wet'suwet'en to support the Unist'ot'en camp, which has denied Wet'suwet'en land access to pipeline companies since 2010.

In Ottawa, the first day of action saw protestors storm into a government building in Ottawa and disrupt a speech to be delivered by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau

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The second call to action denounced "violent, militarized raids, destruction of personal property, continued harassment and threats" from the RCMP, as well as "defaming and untrue statements by the government and industry."

Indigenous Solidarity Ottawa responded by organizing this action. Armed only with a giant red banner, a mega-phone and some contagious energy, the crowd of Indigenous and settler supporters marched from Confederation Park up to and through the Rideau Centre mall. They enthusiastically chanted things like "Respect Indigenous Sovereignty! Water is Life! Water is Sacred! Stop the pipelines! Stop the hatred!"

After making a lap of the mall, the banner was dropped in a high traffic and high-visibility location, where an impromptu freestyle hip-hop show was delivered via mega-phone, drawing cheers from a crowd of Saturday shoppers and mall workers.

Rideau Centre security showed up, but were ignored as they could not be heard over the chanting, cheering and dancing.

Police were called and about five or six of officers showed up and began cutting down the banner, which — through some clever negotiations — was given back to the supporters.

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The Leveller



Art: Julia Szwarc

EDITORIAL

A WHITE APOLOGY
FOR THE NEW
ZEALAND MOSQUE
MASSACRE AND
OTHER SUPREMACIST
ATROCITIES



Neo-Nazi turned anti-racist activist Shannon Foley Martinez.

It seems to be a trend that, after a Muslim commits an attack, Imams and Muslim leaders have to apologize on behalf of all Muslims. However, whenever similar atrocities are carried out by white folk, no such apology is expected. On Jan. 15, two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand became the victims of white fascist terrorist Brenton Harrison Tarrant. The attack left at least 50 people dead and 40 others injured. There are really no adequate words to express the heartbreak

and tragedy of this event. This act was particularly gruesome because it was live streamed on social media for the world to see. Those involved in producing *The Leveller* tend to be a diverse bunch from a variety of backgrounds. But as we look around the room while putting the final touches on this particular issue, we're looking pretty pale. So, in response to the New Zealand attacks, *The Leveller* would like to apologize to the Muslim community, on behalf

of white people around the world, for the heinous attacks committed by white supremacist Nazis in New Zealand. We would like to extend our apology to say we're sorry for all the horrible shit we've done over the years. From the Atlantic Slave Trade — where many African Muslims were enslaved by Europeans and North Americans — to countless bombings and invasions of Middle East countries, white people have caused a lot of pain and suffering. Closer to home, overt and covert acts of Islamophobia are regular occurrences in Canada. Not that long ago, Québec passed Bill 62, banning anyone from receiving provincial or municipal services while wearing a niqab or burqa. Further, Muslims in Canada are regularly subject to racist and offensive treatment by their white peers. And that's to say nothing of our own little mass-murdering, mosque-attacking brat-fascist Alexandre Bissonnette. Here at *The Leveller*, we don't condone such actions. To the contrary, we actively try to stop them. In our 10 years of existence, our dedicated journalists have written numerous articles challenging phenomena like Islamophobia and Israeli apartheid. Away from our computer screens and style guides, we show up for solidarity rallies and anti-racist marches. We try to get in the way every time fascists and supremacists skitter out from under whatever slimy rock they call home. We speak up when friends and families indulge in stereotyping or 'edgy' jokes. Anyways, the purpose of this editorial is to provide an apology in the name of white people to Muslims of all shapes, colours, and sizes. Surely that's

overdue at this point? We know that we white people are a minority on a global scale and that many of us came to your countries as strangers — who you welcomed. Believe it or not, many of us just want to integrate peacefully into international society and live quietly as good global citizens. Despite what you may pick up from the media, not all white people are vile, violent, fascist haters. (Surprising, huh?) Look, some of us are even prepared to appear on the news program of your choice with carefully groomed hair and a nice suit and tie. Speaking in a measured, moderate, profoundly reasonable tone we will say: "We recognize that there are problems in our community. Many of our disenfranchised young people have been seduced by dark and radical forces. They have taken refuge in vile fantasies and dangerous ideologies that provide the false comfort, that scapegoat others for the failures of our own culture." (After all, you may have noticed that we've built a totally ecocidal, genocidal, suicidal, and utterly unsustainable system over here. Don't worry, we won't say that on TV — the advertisers wouldn't stand for it. We'll keep it euphemistic. But you'll know what we mean.) "Recognizing that there is a problem is the first step to recovering from it," we'll intone soothingly. And we mean it. Because these nationalists, these supremacists, these fascists — they don't understand the true meaning of being white. In the words of former Neo-Nazi turned anti-racist activist Shannon Foley Martinez, "as a white person, it is my responsibility to dismantle white supremacy."

- Lev·el·ler
noun
- 1 Historical: During the English Civil War (c. 1649), one who favoured the abolition of all rank and privilege. Originally an insult, but later embraced by radical anti-Royalists.
- 2 One who tells the truth, as in “I’m going to level with you.”
- 3 An instrument that knocks down things that are standing up or digs up things that are buried or hidden.

The Leveller is a publication covering news, current events, and culture at Carleton University, the University of Ottawa, the Ottawa/Gatineau region and, to a lesser extent, the wider world. It is intended to provide readers with a lively portrait of their campuses and communities and of the events that give them meaning. It is also intended to be a forum for provocative editorializing and lively debate on issues of concern to students, staff, and faculty as well as Ottawa residents.

The Leveller leans left, meaning it challenges power and privilege and sides with people over private property. It is also democratic, meaning that it favours open discussion over silencing and secrecy. Within these very general boundaries, the *Leveller* is primarily interested in being interesting, in saying something worth saying and worth reading about.

The Leveller needs you. It needs you to read it, talk about it, discuss it with your friends, agree with it, disagree with it, write a letter, write a story (or send in a story idea), join in the producing of it, or just denounce it. It needs you—or someone like you—to edit it, to guide it towards maturity, to give it financial security and someplace warm and safe to live. Ultimately it needs you to become a more truly democratic and representative paper.

The Leveller is an ambitious little rag. It wants to be simultaneously irreverent and important, to demand responsibility from others while it shakes it off itself, to be a fun-house mirror we can laugh at ourselves in and a map we can use to find ourselves and our city in. It wants to be your coolest, most in-the-know friend and your social conscience at the same time. It continues to have its work cut out for it.

The Leveller is published every month during the school year. It is free.

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SAVE THE LEVELLER!

As we part ways with you dear reader, having completed our 11th Volume, *The Leveller* is facing an existential crisis. When we prepare to launch Volume 12 in September our funding and thus our future will remain uncertain. If Doug Ford's Student Choice Initiative is successfully implemented, we expect a massive loss of funding. (See our feature on pages 8-9 for details.)

Carleton graduate students, when you register for courses next year please "opt in" to support *The Leveller* with a couple of your tuition dollars. For just \$1.75 - the price of a shitty coffee or ramen packet - you can help keep independent, community-based, power-challenging journalism alive. We promise to keep fighting for your interests on the pages of this paper!

Everybody else, consider getting involved or becoming a sustainer or subscriber. If you have any ideas for how we can raise some cash to keep us afloat, please get in touch.

As always, we can be reached at editors.the.leveller@gmail.com, or in all the usual social media places.

If you're angry and concerned about the Ford government's cuts to post-secondary education, join a coalition meetings every Thursday from 5-7pm in the grad students' lounge (6th floor Unicentre) to strategize a coordinated fight against OSAP cuts and the Student Choice Initiative. For more information contact ottawa-coalition@googlegroups.com.

You can also get involved with the Ottawa Coalition Against Ford!
www.facebook.com/OttawaCoalitionAgainstFord

The Leveller

The *Leveller* acknowledges that Ottawa is on unceded Algonquin territory.

The Leveller

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The story of Heron Gate, a massive low-income housing complex in Alta Vista has featured prominently in the pages of this paper since last September. In May of 2018, corporate landlord Timbercreek informed 105 families that they were being evicted by September 30, their homes to be demolished to make way for luxury apartments.

These families were living in a block of aging townhomes in the Herongate neighbourhood, bordered by Sandalwood Dr. Baycrest Dr. and Heron Rd. Most of the affected residents were immigrants, a large portion forming an important Somali community.

Since January there has been a growing challenge by residents to Timbercreek's above guideline rent increases (AGI) in two Heron Gate tower blocks located on Cedarwood Dr.

As this is the final scheduled edition of *The Leveller* until next September, it seems fitting to offer a summary of where things stand at the moment, including tenants ongoing struggle for decent living standards. I also wanted to follow-up on my first *Leveller* article highlighting the cosy links between Timbercreek consultant Jack Stirling and city planning chair Jan Harder.

A COLD RECEPTION

Demolition crews began tearing down townhouses at Herongate in late January, a process that is now nearly complete. I visited the site on the January 25. Work was proceeding quickly, yet there was an almost laid-back, casual quality to the movements of the solitary excavator. It effortlessly tore through the walls of houses, which until recently had been homes to a thriving, mainly immigrant community.

Down the street, residents of Heron Gate's two towers on Cedarwood Drive had their own difficulties. Heating systems in both towers had been malfunctioning during a period of extreme cold. The problem persisted for several weeks.

I spoke to Bryanna Parrish, a young single mother who described how the problem was affecting her daughter. "She's almost three years old and you know, it's freezing," she said. "I send her to bed in sweaters."

Parrish said that when she complained to the rental office they provided her with a tiny space heater, which she stated was inadequate to heat her apartment. This solution also passed on heating costs to her electric bill, which she said was just one more burden on top of the \$1,265 per month she already pays for the one bedroom apartment.

Parrish also explained that since moving in the previous July, her apartment had been overrun by cockroaches. Despite several half-hearted efforts by Timbercreek, the infestation continued. Things were so bad that cockroach waste products were aggravating her daughter's asthma.

I also spoke with a resident from the adjacent Cedarwood tower who gave his name as Jonas. Apart from the malfunctioning heating, he described



[Left] Heron Gate townhouses being demolished.
[Right] Bryanna Parrish holding the woefully small space heater Timbercreek gave her when the heat broke down in her Herongate tower. Photos: Neal Rockwell



BELOW GRADE

HERONGATE RESIDENTS CONTEND WITH BROKEN HEATING, BROKEN PIPES AND A RENT INCREASE, WHILE COUNCILOR JAN HARDER AND DEVELOPMENT CONSULTANT JACK STIRLING KEEP IT IN THE FAMILY

other maintenance problems. Like Parrish, he also experienced infestation issues — of bedbugs, in his case. Timbercreek had likewise implemented an extermination process that didn't work.

Jonas said that in the end, he ended up paying around \$1,000 out of pocket to hire his own exterminators and pay for hotel bills and storage fees in order to regulate the problem. He was never reimbursed.

Jonas also explained that one of the elevators consistently malfunctioned. This puts residents in an unpleasant bind, he said, because the stairway was filled with a terrible stench. Either people had to wait a hellishly long time for the elevator or take the stairs — and, as he put it, "you literally have to plug your nose in the staircase. It smells like poop."

While the reader might be forgiven for thinking that maintenance is far from Timbercreek's top priority, it has recently applied to the Ontario Landlord and Tenant Board for an above guideline rent increase — while citing maintenance expenditures as a primary rationale, ironically. As a previous *Leveller* article reports, Timbercreek is seeking a rent increase of 2.07 per cent above the province's 2019 guideline of 1.8 per cent — for a total increase of 3.87 per cent.

Tenants organizing with the Herongate Tenant Coalition rejected this increase at a Landlord and Tenant Board Hearing on January 18. The decision has now been delayed until it can be heard at a second "Merits Hearing," which will offer a final ruling on the above guideline increase. The date for this hearing is yet to be determined.

Given the state of the towers, Jonas offered "it's absolutely crazy to raise the rent like that!"

AREA SUBJECT TO FLOODING

There was also a recent incident on January 30 where a water-main broke, flooding a number of Cedarwood townhouses.

I spoke to Tammy Mast about the flooding. Mast, who lives across the street from the flooded homes, has been a Herongate resident for five

years and has been organizing with the Herongate Tenant Coalition since the end of 2018.

The break happened in the evening, on one of the coldest days of the year. Mast said that the fire-fighters who were called to deal with the incident were up to their ankles in water. Crews worked diligently for the next 24 hours to contain the accident.

In Mast's estimation this process was about as orderly as could be expected, given the circumstances. But she was critical of the way Timbercreek dealt with the repairs and remediation process — which didn't even begin until a month afterwards. "The problem has been communication with tenants afterwards" she said.

Mast explained that between February 25 and March 1, workers came to complete repairs to damaged houses without any prior notification. They arrived wearing full hazmat suits and respirators and simply announced that tenants needed to leave while they were working.

Repairs typically took between one and two days and residents were permitted to return to their homes in the evenings. Yet they were disturbed to find warning signs fixed to the exteriors of their homes outlining a litany of hazards, including asbestos warnings.

Tenants were in no way briefed about these repairs or any hazards that may have been associated with them. After the remediation efforts were completed, people simply moved back into their homes and the signs were removed.

This harkens back to another issue in October. When workers first began preparing for demolition, asbestos warning signs were affixed to doors. Similarly no residents were given notice — despite the Occupational Health and Safety Act requiring surrounding residents to be given "Designated Substances Reports" whenever asbestos is present and work is about to commence.

A STIRLING REPUTATION

Lastly, I wanted to touch on the issue of developer influence at city hall. This influence seems

to go a long ways to explaining how Timbercreek can so effortlessly demovict residents and systematically neglect properties, despite the way this flouts bylaw regulations.

In September, I wrote about how Peter Hume was in business with Jack Stirling as planning consultants who help developers streamline development proposals through the city government.

Hume is the ex-councillor for Alta-Vista (the ward of Herongate) and former chair of the city's Planning Committee. Stirling is a former developer cum Nepean planning commissioner cum Minto executive cum planning consultant.

All of this is relevant because Stirling is consulting for Timbercreek on their Herongate project. Hume, while not officially involved, has very close ties to Jean Cloutier, the current councillor for Alta Vista. In fact Hume managed both of Cloutier's election campaigns.

Hume and Stirling are also connected to Barrhaven councillor Jan Harder, who is the current chair of the Planning Committee, as well as being a member of the Finance and Economic Development Committee and the Planning Advisory Committee.

Harder used to organize a little-publicized event called the Jan Harder Charity Golf Tournament, where a handful of councillors got together to play golf with developers and ask for sponsorship money. Senior bureaucrats in the planning department also attended.

As reported in the *CBC*, the optics of this event became more unseemly once Harder was appointed chair of the Planning Committee. But rather than stopping the event, its name was simply changed to the Just Happy Golf Tournament and its organization was outsourced to Hume and Stirling.

Stirling's relationship with Harder goes back at least to the late 1990s, before amalgamation, when he was the Nepean Planning Commissioner and she was a Nepean councillor. Another *CBC* article from last September notes that Planning is City Hall's most powerful committee. It further notes that Stirling organized a campaign

fundraiser for Harder and that she considers him an "old friend."

Recently it has come to my attention that one Alison Stirling is currently working as an aid for Harder. At the same time Alison Stirling's LinkedIn page lists her current job as a project manager for the Stirling Group — that is to say Jack Stirling's consulting firm. The LinkedIn profile has no mention of her working for Harder.

Alison is presumably Jack's daughter — but ironclad verification proved elusive. The Stirling Group has no web presence and the elder Stirling seemingly prefers to keep an extremely limited public profile. So I posed these two questions to Councillor Harder's office:

- 1) "Do you think there's anything inappropriate about Jack Stirling's daughter, Alison Stirling working both as an aide for you and at the same time working for her father's consulting firm, The Stirling Group?"
- 2) "Do you think this gives the impression that developers have too much influence at City Hall?"

Since Harder didn't respond to my questions and I wasn't able to get in touch with either Stirling, I can't say with 100% certainty that Alison is in fact Jack's daughter.

At the very least, they are closely related. Alison shares his last name, is approximately one generation younger than him, and is presently listed as working for his consultancy. She also previously worked as a junior sales representative for Minto at the same time that Jack worked for the same company as the Vice President of Land Development and Acquisitions.

I continue to find myself bemused by the way things are done at Ottawa City Hall. There is an extreme casualness and fluidity with which developers (and their agents) mingle and even blend with elected officials. Developers become councillors, councillors become developers; professional relationships and friendships become indistinguishable.

There is inadequate regu-

lation surrounding how these types of relationships are permitted to be conducted. People have an unfortunate tendency to adopt a blasé attitude to an environment of quasi-institutionalized grifting because many of these activities are not strictly illegal.

Ironically, the fact that these relationships and transactions are *not* illegal testifies to the depth of regulatory capture by business interests. There is an alarming normalization of practices which are fundamentally inimical to the democratic process.

COUNTERING INTUITIONS

In a certain way I feel like the conclusions to my *Leveller* pieces are becoming repetitive in that they all follow the format:

This misery is particularly

CITY HALL AND DEVELOPER INSIDER GRAFT

HEARTLESS INCREASINGLY FINANCIALIZED REAL ESTATE MARKET

EXTREMELY LOW VACANCY RATE IN OTTAWA

MISERY FOR LOW INCOME TENANTS

notable among the Herongate residents whose situation I've been reporting on for the last ten months. Their rents keep going up and their living conditions are crappo to a level which does not even manage to meet low-level legal norms. Timbercreek has engaged in a pattern of systematic neglect, aided by hobbled and ineffectual municipal regulatory bodies.

This time I think I'll leave off not with my usual formula, but with something else Tammy Mast said to me. She and her husband were originally from Alberta but have lived in Ottawa for the past 17 years. For the first 12 they lived in Centretown, until the building they rented was destroyed in a fire. They've lived in Herongate for the past five.

Mast told me, "I've been super happy here. I really love this neighbourhood. It's part of what made Ottawa feel home. I didn't feel at home in Ottawa the first 12 years I lived here." She highlighted the openness of her neighbours and the strength of the community, something she had never experienced in a similar way elsewhere in the city.

This is another message that numerous people have stressed to me since I began reporting on this story — and I think it bears repeating. Stereotypes about Herongate persist across Ottawa and it's easy to focus on what is wrong about it. It is important, however, to recognize that the fight to save Herongate from gentrification is not simply about helping people in a precarious situation, or as a half-measure to prevent victimized people from being even further victimized. It is a fight to preserve something which is in fact strong, vital and unique across the city.

Because of common preconceptions, many people might find it hard to believe that someone like Mast could prefer Herongate to Centretown. It is a reality that flies in the face of Timbercreek's marketing about "revitalization." I think this is a good message to close on for this last *Leveller* edition of the season.



LEARNING FOR THE SAKE OF LEARNING

REMEMBERING THAT UNIVERSITY EDUCATION IS ABOUT MORE THAN JUST EMPLOYMENT

Emma Chamberlain

Looking at the way Canadian universities recruit new applicants, one thing becomes strikingly clear: they assume you're after a job. It's not an entirely wrong assumption. Most university students in Canada *are* studying in order to better themselves and further their careers.

However, treating education as training for a career is problematic. University educa-

tion needn't be dependent on a promise of employment. It would benefit us all if it wasn't.

Carleton University, to name just one, boasts about its graduate employability ranking online. When considering Carleton, prospective students find themselves being assured that the university's offerings will enhance their labour market potential. The notion of preparing students for work is deeply intertwined with the purpose of pursuing univer-

sity education in Canada. No wonder students are using this as a marker for what program to chose.

Since 1990, the number of Canadian university graduates has doubled (Department of Finance Canada, Job Report). Employment rates, however, have not followed suit.

Employment is dropping and job vacancies are increasing, suggesting that it's not a lack of openings causing this dilemma. If university is meant to answer all our employment woes then why are graduates less employable now than ever before?

Sceptics will argue that some career paths require the intense training that only a university course can offer. This rings true for some cases, such as medical careers. However it's entirely possible to study medical science just for the sake of knowledge and not follow it though to a job. Maybe it's time to consider that the degree itself isn't just for employment purposes.

Take for instance most European universities — which coincidentally happen to be free in most cases. Typically students in European universities tend not to pick their course on the basis of its employment opportunities.

There's hardly a mention of employment on the welcome pages of many European university websites. The University of Frankfurt advertises a mission for "Knowledge, with and for society," the Technical University of Munich

promotes "Sports, Music and Arts" and the Aarhus University in Denmark points to studying there as a way to "make friends for life."

University for the European student isn't always about training for a career; it's about growing as an individual, a member of society

The European model structures university education as a means to help individuals gain knowledge, not train students as employees. University education should be a catalyst for the development of citizens, not cogs in the system of corporate profits. Most European Universities promote learning for the sake of learning and give the student the freedom to enjoy studying without being chained to employment.

Of course this doesn't mean that one can't then go on to use their knowledge and experience to develop a career. Instead graduates are able to choose courses that may not be directly linked to a job — in liberal arts, for example — and not feel hampered with guilt as to how this will affect their growth.

Programs in universities such as Carleton are directed more and more towards training the next year of graduates into workers. Meanwhile, liberal arts courses are constantly scrutinised for not being 'relevant' enough.

In a desperate attempt to rebrand themselves as such, programs (such as philosophy at Carleton) advertise the skills

they teach as being meaningful to 'whatever profession you eventually choose.' There are countless ways the academic pursuit of knowledge benefits society without contributing to employability, though.

For example, better historical knowledge can help us better understand who we are, address injustices, and make better decisions. The pursuit of pure knowledge in fields like science and philosophy is also an expression of human curiosity — of our drive to investigate and understand the world and ourselves. Knowledge is a human need and a worthwhile goal in itself.

Yet Canadian universities are so wound up on ensuring students are employed the moment they accept their certificate that they neglect the importance of having knowledge beyond what is applicable to labour.

With the cost of university tuition burning a hole in our pockets, we need to consider who is benefiting from this investment. Employers want an individual to arrive 'day one ready,' not someone who will cause financial burden on the company as they pay for the training.

More often than not jobs are advertised to individuals who have degrees tailored for the position. Gone are the days when a company would hire individuals based on their personal attributes and then, using company money, train them to be ready for the job.

Employers have a responsi-

bility to train their employees. The burden should lie with them. But instead individuals — and the public, through government funding — are increasingly paying for this. Employment training is being disguised as university education.

Considering the promise of employment that universities give, it's alarming to know that graduates are frequently looking to post-degree programs in colleges. In a desperate attempt to seem more 'employable,' university graduates are enrolling in college courses after graduating to give themselves a better chance in the ring of candidates.

Graduates are facing a harsh reality that university education may not give them a career, leaving many to doubt whether the program they've dedicated years of their lives to was really of any interest to them. Studying at universities needs to return to its true meaning, to give knowledge and form people as individuals and members of society.

Changing the expectation of what university education can give is a progressive step towards seeing education become more than job training.

No good can come from measuring the success of a student's time at university using only capitalist markers.

The European university structure is one Canada could learn from. Remove the implicit focus on employment and give students back their autonomy to study, learn and enjoy university.

OPIRG
annual
general
meeting

Join the OPIRG Carleton community for our Annual General Meeting. Check out our financials, elect our new Board, hear report-backs from our working groups, and have some great food!

29 March @ 6 PM in the GSA Lounge

DOUG FORD IS TRYING TO **BREAK** CAMPUS LIFE
AND WE HAVE TO OUTLAST HIM.

We know that the coming months and years are going to be hard for higher education in Ontario. A lot of organizations are going to close and a lot of students are going to face pressures like they haven't before as the supports they have built are undermined.

No matter what happens to us: Campus must organize and students must resist. When the days to come get hard, don't despair. The Ontario Conservatives are trying to gut the structures and weaken the power of civil society in so many areas, but that cannot stop us.

"DON'T MOURN. ORGANIZE!"

ALL WORK IS WORK

STUDENTS SPEAK OUT ON THE IMPACTS OF UNPAID PLACEMENTS

The All Work Is Work Campaign Team

Carleton students in the Social Work Department, and other departments such as Global and International Studies, are expected to undertake unpaid placements in the field in order to graduate and/or gain accreditation. Unpaid placements place undue burdens on marginalized students and unevenly distribute stress on future social workers and other professional workers.

The All Work is Work campaign, developed and ran by Carleton students through OPIRG-Carleton, puts a spotlight on this devaluation of student labour. There is nothing inevitable or natural about student placements going unpaid. Several other departments at Carleton offer paid placements, such as psychology and computer science.

Nor do accreditation standards mandate unpaid placements as such. In the case of social work placements, this is a decision made by Carleton.

Marie-Christine Bois, the Accreditation Coordinator for CASWE (the Canadian Association of Social Work Education) confirmed that CASWE does not mandate that placements are either paid or unpaid — just that 700 field hours are required for graduation. Bois further explained that this decision is up to each individual school of social work, but as long as educational goals are achieved, the placement will meet accreditation standards.

The All Work is Work also focuses on inequitable placement and labour policies that exploit students rights and that directly risk infringing on the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Ontario Human Rights Code, and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).

The CASWE handbook for the Standards of Accreditation claims to support these legal rights by states that their standards “encourage and support diversity and social justice in all aspects/domains of social work programs. Diversity throughout this document refers to a range of characteristics including, but not limited to: age, colour, culture, disability/non-disability status, ethnic or linguistic origin, gender, health status, heritage, immigration status, geographic origin, race, religious and spiritual beliefs, political orientation, gender and sexual identities, and socioeconomic status.”

However, departmental policies infringe on students’ rights surrounding accommodations. The Leveller obtained an internal department document explaining that future social work students will be required to sign a document stating certain considerations and scenarios will not receive accommodation by the program. For example, there would be no additional supports during a pregnancy or to help navigate a placement while being a sexual assault survivor.

Instead, students are expected to simply deal with these matters privately and should not expect supports from the program. In the document, the School of Social Work states that the nature of social work itself, as it is case-work based, will inevitably lead us to deal with these challenges in the workplace and, as such, there will be no accommodation for students.

The claim that supports and accommodations are contradictory to social work practice itself entirely contradicts CASWE’s Standard (3.2.17) which states that field placements should accept students “without discrimination as defined by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and provincial human rights legislation; the field placement/setting is free of discriminatory practices both in personnel practices and in delivery of services.”

As such, the idea that placement spaces for student-workers are somehow void where the Charter, AODA, and other rights and accommodations-based legislation does not apply is nonsensical. Under the Human Rights Code, all organizations already have a duty to accommodate persons with disabilities, which is defined in legislation as “a physical or mental condition that limits a person’s movements, senses, or activities.”

Not providing an accommodation for a sexual assault survivor directly contradicts this legislation, due to the short and long-term mental health effects of sexual assault such as PTSD, depression, and anxiety, for example.

Furthermore, the Ontario Human Rights Code protects against discrimination on the basis of family status. It defines family status in such a way that parents are protected from being discriminated against because they have children, which includes protections for those who are pregnant.

CASWE does not define family status as a characteristic that remains free of discrimination or recognize that family obligations often create challenges for student parents. The aforementioned documents that students will be required to sign again directly contradicts legislation that protects pregnancy under family status.

A single mom social work student who is supporting her children has to partake in an unpaid placement under existing regulations. This means that she is expected to pay full tuition to the corresponding university while doing so. She is therefore more likely to face financial insecurities as she is required to exchange the potential for paid work to pay tuition and work for free.

An added barrier is created when student parents have to balance responsibilities of parenthood and placement — such as missing placement hours due to a sick child or family emergency, which can result in an unsatisfactory grade.

Social work students in particular are taught throughout their education through CASWE Standards “to identify negative or inequitable policies and their implications and outcomes, especially for disadvantaged and oppressed groups, and to participate in efforts to change these.” So let’s acknowledge the negative and inequitable policies that results in massive financial burdens and insurmountable barriers to graduation for many social work students.

An analysis of our All Work is Work survey that currently has 34 submissions, speaks to the problematic nature of unpaid placements.

The survey results showed that 30 students lost wages throughout their placement, compared to 4 students who did not. Twenty-two students had to take an unpaid leave of absence to compensate for hours spent completing their placement, compared to 12 students who stated they balanced both their paid position in conjunction with their unpaid placement hours. Furthermore, 29 of the student respondents had to at least reduce their hours of work in order to adequately dedicate enough time to finishing their unpaid placement hours.

As one anonymous student stated in the All Work is Work survey, “Being in a program that works with underprivileged populations, I find myself being in the same situation as my clients. I feel like I’m struggling financially. Tuition is already so expensive, and school books added on top of that. Having to do an unpaid placement means I cannot work at my regular job and then I risk not being able to pay my bills on time, have money to buy groceries or put gas in my car.”

Many students further expressed frustration that they were forced to quit their paid job, were unable to find work due to limited available hours, had to find new part-time jobs, or had to balance paid and unpaid positions.

Emphasizing this frustration, one anonymous student stated that an unpaid placement “makes it difficult because only people who can afford to not get paid can do a placement option. I have had friends find amazing employment opportunities, yet because it was paid they were not allowed to take the job for their placements.”

Another student said, “I find it incredibly unfair that placements are mandatory yet we are not allowed to be compensated for them.”

On the other hand, expecting paid placements from non-profit organizations is something many students understand is not always feasible and students also appreciate the educational value of these placements.

As another student expressed throughout the All Work is Work survey, “I think that forcing paid placement

on social services agencies is going to drastically limit opportunities to train in the field for placement students of the Bachelor of Social Work and Master of Social Work programs. These agencies are underfunded and students often don’t have the skills the agencies would normally require, so asking them to compensate students is not fair.”

This student goes on to suggest that, “instead of paid placement, I would have preferred reduced/no tuition for the placement semester... I think the university could stand to not profit from students paying full price for a semester in which students aren’t actually on campus and receiving minimal support from professors/practicum liaisons.”

A model that leaves students uncompensated is not necessary. There are avenues in which students could be compensated for their time. There are ways to make the process less of a financial burden — either through wages or other forms of financial compensation.

A reduction in tuition or charging similar fees to existing co-op programs are also possible options. It is understandable that some tuition may well be required to ensure that there are funds to compensate administrative staff related to the placement program; however, the amount students pay should directly reflect the supervision and guidance they receive.

All of this to say, there are options.

Many students echoed the fact that they are living in financial crisis and often unable to manage unpaid placement, paid work, and classes. “I had to quit my job to be able to manage school and placement,” one said. Another explained “I cannot get a job because of the amount of time placement takes up and is causing financial problems.”

The survey results clearly demonstrate that students are dissatisfied with the quality of education they are receiving. Students demand better.

OTTAWA TRANSIT CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Free transit is a policy that, unlike market-based solutions such as carbon pricing, can help to reduce carbon emissions without placing additional burdens on working people. In other words, introducing free transit is an effective way for cities to address climate change while also improving life for citizens, especially those living on low incomes.

FREE TRANSIT CHALLENGES

The movement for free transit in Ottawa faces a number of challenges and limitations. Eliminating fares within the current system would benefit low-income transit users but it is unlikely to be transformative if the entire system is not improved upon as well. To begin, transit will have to be expanded to accommodate an increase in ridership and to reach neighborhoods with inadequate transit access.

There is a strong cohort of citizens already active in making this happen. In January over 100 people attended a workshop on creating a transit riders organization to give riders a collective voice when it comes to transit issues. At the end of the workshop a committee of more than 25 people from across the city was created with a mandate to organize a founding meeting of a city-wide transit riders organization, tentatively called the ‘Ottawa Transit Riders’.

If this movement gains traction, it could put transit riders in a better position to advocate for reforms to the system. However, it will have to build a large base of support if it

hopes to challenge city council’s decisions around transit.

Eliminating fares would mean transforming how transportation is funded. Two creative ways to subsidize the system would be to increase the price of parking and introduce substantial taxes on transportation network companies (or TNCs), such as Uber and Lyft. In any case, making transit completely free while expanding capacity and service would necessitate radical policy change at the federal and provincial levels as well, to significantly increase the funds devoted to public transit.

Instead of addressing the declining ridership, and difficulties transit-dependent people face in Ottawa, city council appears to be continuing its trajectory of prioritizing car drivers. This is evidenced by the fact that while transit fares are raised continually, parking rates have remained frozen over the past decade, and the city continues to actively expand roads and highways.

Groups like Ottawa Transit Riders and Free Transit Ottawa are a promising development, since they’re advocating for immediate reforms and starting conversations about the prospect of free transit. To truly succeed, this movement will require mass uptake to overcome the stasis of our current system and pressure policymakers to transform transit.

We need to work to establish a broad coalition between environmental and social justice advocates and build public support. Daring ideas like free transit are the future; they have mass appeal and need to be actualized.

Julia Szwarc is a member of Free Transit Ottawa.

WET’SUWET’EN PROTEST CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Moving as a collective unit, the supporters were followed out into the street and watched by police as they made their way back out into the early afternoon sunlight.

As the Wet’suwet’en struggle against B.C. pipeline project Coastal GasLink’s private security (aka the RCMP) intensifies, similar injunctions are being resisted in Nova Scotia by the Mi’kmaq. They have been fighting Alton Gas,

a gas storage company trying to store natural gas on unceded Indigenous land on the shores of the Shubenacadie River for years.

One marcher, identifying simply as Kit, told The Leveller “today was a show of solidarity. Not theoretical solidarity, but the practice of actually physically showing up again and again for the urgent resistance of an industry and system (whose) biggest threat is civil disobedience.

“Hope to see you out at the next one!”

Joel Harden

MPP, Ottawa Centre



Joel Harden
MPP / Député provincial,
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Connect with us and let's get organized!



IS THERE A LEGAL PATH FOR FIGHTING THE STUDENT CHOICE INITIATIVE?

Mike Hermida

In a press conference on Jan. 17, Minister of Training, Colleges, and Universities Merrilee Fullerton announced cuts to the Ontario Student Assistance Program, a slight domestic tuition cut, and the implementation of the Student Choice Initiative (SCI). While the SCI appears to save students money and increase their power to choose, it also received pushback from many students and organizations across Ontario.

As was reported in *The Leveller* last month, the SCI is a policy that will allow college and university students to opt-out of non-essential fees. It is to be implemented at the start of the

upcoming academic year. At Carleton University, for example, these fees account for about \$100 of the \$1,000 in ancillary fees most students pay.

Students across Ontario, myself included, are deeply worried about the effects the policy will have on campus groups. It threatens the funding of organizations like the Ontario Public Interest Research Group, student unions, the Canadian Federation of Students, and student newspapers (including us at *The Leveller*).

While there are numerous protests against the initiative, including a student walk out planned by the CFS, as a law and legal studies student, I am interested in the following question: can student organi-

zations fight the SCI through the legal system?

In answering this question, the first place I would look to is the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Specifically, since the SCI poses a threat to institutions like student unions, university and college newspapers, and on-campus LGBTI safe spaces, we could make the case that the policy violates the constitutional freedom of association, freedom of the press, and equality rights.

However, as Mohammad Akbar, office and communications co-ordinator at the Graduate Students' Association at Carleton pointed out in an interview with *The Leveller*, a Charter challenge may be ineffective. This is because the Pro-

gressive Conservative's majority government has proven that it is not afraid to use the notwithstanding clause to override our rights and freedoms — as when Premier Doug Ford threatened to invoke it to slash the size of Toronto's municipal government. "Your human rights being violated is not going to stop this government," said Akbar.

If Ford were to invoke the clause this time, it would mean that we can throw equality rights and fundamental freedoms out the window.

According to Brad Evoy, volunteer, outreach and programming coordinator at OPIRG Carleton, another problem with pursuing a legal path is that "even if it is successful, it would be kinda post-fact." A court case of this calibre may take months or even years and would take even longer if it got appealed. So, even if the legal challenge would be successful, "it would have good effect for the future, but the damage would still be done by the initiative."

Another possibility is to ask a court to file an injunction on the grounds that it violates the rights and freedoms of students. This injunction would differ from a Charter challenge: A Charter challenge would consist of asking a court to strike down Ford's policy because it violates the Charter. On the other hand, an injunction would be a court order

to halt the implementation of Ford's policy *before* the court definitively ruled on its constitutionality.

However, whether a court would offer an injunction to students remains to be seen. "Would a judge grant (an injunction)?" said Akbar, "it is hard to say. It'd be cool if they did."

Of course, when it comes to an injunction, as with a Charter challenge, the government can always invoke the notwithstanding clause.

Nevertheless, it may be possible to force universities to declare all ancillary fees essential thanks to the existing legally binding contracts.

This is because universities often have contractual agreements to pay the ancillary fees they collect to their student unions. (In turn, unions usually have agreements with campus organizations to fund them through these fees.) In order not to break the university-union contracts, universities may be legally forced to declare all ancillary fees essential.

The elephant in the room with all of these legal remedies is that they all cost a lot of money. Our underfunded unions and broke college and university students may not be able to afford to seek legal action.

It also seems unlikely that small campus legal clinics could defeat the provincial government in court.

Ultimately, obstacles along the legal path to fighting the SCI demonstrate that the law is limited in what it can do to help us students. Although I always support diversity of tactics and legal action may lead to some good, it is by no means a replacement for other forms of activism.

For those looking to resist the SCI, may I suggest heeding the advice that Ottawa lawyer Daniel Tucker-Simmons gave to the Herongate Tenant Coalition? (Herongate is an Ottawa neighbourhood where hundreds of predominantly racialized, low-income residents have been evicted.)

Tucker-Simmons said, in a video posted to the coalition's Twitter account, that "the only thing the law can do is support you in your organizing efforts." He continued saying that "the law is not there to help you, the law is there to make people money."

The same is true about the SCI. The policy was made by the provincial government to attack checks and balances on the government like unions, newspapers, and advocacy groups. Fighting it through the legal system is like fighting fire with fire. The law cannot be the students' resource.

In the words of Tucker-Simmons, "You all have much more power than I do (as a lawyer)... The only thing you can do to stop it is to organize and stick together."

CUPE 4600 Annual General Meeting

**Wednesday April 10th
5-8pm Dunton 2017**
www.cupe4600.ca



LE TROLLAGE, UNE TACTIQUE ANTIFÉMINISTE

Alice Paquet

Cet article est paru sur ricochet.media le 8 mars 2019

Les luttes féministes des dernières années ont mis en lumière les violences que les femmes subissent encore de nos jours, et notamment de celles qui se réclament ouvertement du féminisme.

Sarah Ahmed écrivait dans *Les Rabat-Joie féministes* : «si vous êtes une féministes de couleur, vous n’avez même pas besoin d’ouvrir la bouche pour provoquer la tension». En laissant la porte ouverte aux masculinistes, les médias de masse limitent et contrôlent l’accès et la protection aux femmes dans l’espace public. Et davantage à celles qui sont marginalisées. Nous sommes bloquées par l’impossibilité de nous défendre.

ai reçu, cette semaine encore, des images à caractères pornographiques de la part d’un inconnu. Les féministes «aliénées» qui osent se défendre se font remettre à leur place. C’est ce qui m’a motivé à rédiger ce billet : on se radicalise, la colère monte parce que la violence à notre égard est sub-

limée. Internet nourrit l’exclusion et nuit inéluctablement à la lutte des féministes.

L’antiféminisme à gorge déployée dont les luttes féministes sont la cible, comme on peut le voir dans les sections commentaires de presque tous les médias à grand tirage, illustre avec éclat le mépris et la brutalité qu’on réserve aux femmes qui parlent trop longtemps ou trop fort. Les femmes qui affichent publiquement leur militantisme sont soumises à des insultes, des menaces, du harcèlement en ligne et parfois même en personne – mention spéciale aux «dickpics» non sollicitées, phénomène en vogue à l’ère des réseaux sociaux.

LES IMPACTS DANS MA VIE

J’ai longtemps souffert des attaques à mon endroit, tant dans la rue que dans ma boîte de messages privés. Un jour, je me suis levée et ce n’était plus rare, mais plutôt la routine. Le train-train quotidien. il est évident que mon passé dans le milieu du travail du sexe a joué un rôle important dans les attaques virtuelles dont j’ai été la cible depuis 2016.

En plus des discours haineux à mon endroit, les intrusions dans ma vie personnelle font dorénavant partie de mon quotidien. Presque trois

ans après ma dénonciation, des hommes m’abordent encore dans des endroits publics.

La plupart d’entre eux débutent en soulignant mon courage, en me remerciant d’avoir dénoncé publiquement mon agresseur. S’ensuivent des invitations et de la drague, des allusions sexuelles et des avances. Comme ma sexualité a été étalée publiquement dans les médias, il est donc «logique» qu’on puisse me harceler et me solliciter sans scrupule, que ce soit en ligne ou en personne.

Ces hommes, pourtant, peuvent dire les pires obscénités à répétition, nous faire craindre pour notre sécurité, mais se lèveront demain matin, boiront leur café, iront travailler, rentreront à la maison pour s’installer ensuite devant leur ordinateur. En plus d’avoir peur en marchant dans la rue, dans les bars, quel que soit l’endroit public, la peur s’installe aussi dans notre vie intime, derrière nos écrans.

Ces formes de violence psychologique n’aspirent pas à stimuler le débat ou à faire avancer la réflexion collective. Elles visent explicitement à nous blesser, à nous rappeler notre place, à nous faire taire ou à nous réduire à des objets sexuels. Ce ressac virtuel, mené entre autres par des masculinistes et des gens qui se sentent attaqués par le mouvement féministe, a un impact réel sur la vie émotionnelle et la santé mentale des femmes visées.

Le sujet est sur la table depuis un moment déjà. Le terme Troll est couramment

employé pour désigner les individus qui s’en prennent ainsi à des femmes qui ont une visibilité publique.

COMMENT AFFRONTER CE PROBLÈME?

S’il est si difficile pour ces mêmes femmes d’éviter ces interactions néfastes, c’est parce qu’il est presque impossible, pour la majorité des personnalités publiques, de désertier les réseaux sociaux, devenus indispensables à l’exercice de leur métier.

En effet, ces mêmes réseaux sociaux, qui exposent davantage les femmes au risque de harcèlement en ligne, sont parallèlement devenus un outil de travail dont il est difficile de se passer. Sur 357 journalistes françaises interrogées pour une enquête menée par l’entreprise Cision au second tour des présidentielles de 2017, 94% d’entre elles ont indiqué qu’elles utilisaient les réseaux sociaux – Facebook et Twitter en tête – dans le cadre de leur travail. Parmi celles-ci, 77 % s’en serviraient pour publier ou promouvoir leur contenu, 73 % pour suivre les autres médias ou leur domaine de prédilection et 70 % pour interagir avec le public.

Une partie importante du pouvoir des Trolls réside dans leur impunité. Et si on exposait publiquement ces hommes? Le militant et blogueur Francis Lagacé a publié en juin 2013 un billet sur le phénomène des Trolls, dans lequel il affirme : « Le troll s’alimente à la rage qu’il

fait naître en vous. L’en privé, c’est l’affamer et le laisser dépérir ». Six ans plus tard, où en sommes-nous? Ignorer les Trolls est une stratégie nécessaire pour préserver sa santé mentale, mais est-elle suffisante pour adresser plus largement le phénomène?

Au Québec, nous devons faire état de la spécificité de ces attaques: Il semblerait qu’elles soient d’autant plus fréquentes dans les publications concernant l’Enquête Nationale sur les femmes et les filles autochtones disparues, le port du voile et la question des genres. En considérant ce bassin, on tient quelque chose. On a une direction où aller. D’ores et déjà, nous savons que ce sont les femmes qui en sont les principales boucs émissaires.

Au cours des siècles derniers, il ne nous aura pas été donné de lutter sans avoir à craindre pour notre sécurité. Considérant que les échanges sous certains articles publiés sur les réseaux sociaux ne sont aucunement constructifs, les médias Québécois devraient prendre la décision de fermer les sections

commentaires en considérant la violence des interlocuteurs et l’impact considérable qu’ils ont dans nos vies.

Les Trolls et leurs effets dans l’espace public sont bel et bien pointés du doigt, comme dans le documentaire de Pénélope McQuade, *Troller les trolls*, ou encore en politique, avec plusieurs élus Québécois et Canadiens qui répondaient dernièrement à la proposition apportée à l’Assemblée Nationale Française de rendre obligatoire l’identification sur les plateformes telles que Twitter et Facebook.

Il me semble important de souligner, une nouvelle fois, que les principaux responsables n’ont pas à vivre avec les conséquences de leurs actes. Cette violence ne peut mener qu’à davantage de violence. Une chose me semble très claire : pour mener à bien cette lutte féministe contre la peur de s’exprimer publiquement sur les enjeux qui nous tiennent à coeur, comme pour toutes les autres luttes féministes, nous devons insister et nager encore plus fort à contre-courant.

Les Sans-Culottes

Les Sans-culottes étaient les révolutionnaires radicaux pendant la Révolution française (vers 1789). Leur nom émanait des pantalons qu’ils portaient au lieu de la culotte courte et des bas, portés par les nobles et les bourgeois.

Le Leveller étend ses branches!

Nous acceptons actuellement des articles en français pour la prochaine édition du *Leveller*.

Envoyez vos articles à editors.the.leveller@gmail.com

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INTRODUCING THE CONSERVATIVE ATTACK-OCTOPUS

Doug Ford's Ontario government has begun to implement a series of far-reaching measures to rapidly reconfigure the province's public services and social welfare system. Informed by a combination of free-market economics and far-right populism, the Ontario Conservatives have unlocked the ideological tool chest and started brandishing the austerity sledgehammer at any public good thought to be associated with progressive politics and the left in general.

While labour unions will inevitably be subjected to the wild swinging of the wild-eyed, Trump-lite populist protégé, the current assault is being levied at the health care and education systems. In particular, the Conservative government's targeted reconfiguration of the tuition and loans framework has broad implications for educational affordability, public access, democratic participation, and student organizing.

Under the previous Wynne framework for tuition and OSAP, there was a chance for students to receive up to a full 100 percent grant instead of loans through the OSAP system. While this was not, by any means, true free tuition, it was a heavily utilized program that aided low and middle income students.

Obviously, such redistributive funding was not to our millionaire premier's liking and so, we are now faced with changes that include:

- reducing the family income threshold for student eligibility for Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) funding;
- eliminating the six-month interest-free grace period for student loans repayment upon graduation;
- increasing the number of years one must be out of high school to qualify to be a mature student; and
- targeting the ancillary fee structure – otherwise known as the levy system – that supports a wide range of student services and groups on campus.

Of course, the sugary bribe to make all this bitter medicine go down is the 10 percent tuition cut for domestic undergraduate students. This is simply a distraction from the long-term costs degrading OSAP and student groups will have.

Beginning in June, all postsecondary institutions in the province are mandated to include as part of the registration process an opt-in feature for all 'non-essential' ancillary fees. These are fees that students had previously voted on funding. Of course, that doesn't matter to Ford. To him, consumeristic choice is more important than democratic mandates.

This will deeply affect student associations (and their service centres and clubs), campus media (radio stations and newspapers), and other non-profit organizations on campus that provide a wide variety of student-run services to students. These organizations will hemorrhage funding and many will likely be forced to shut down.

Of course this is no accident. It's the very goal of the Ford Conservatives. For decades Conservatives in Ontario (and beyond) have decried the work that student unions, campus media, and progressive groups like the Ontario Public Interest Research Group (OPIRG) and the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS) carry out on campus.

These groups organize students, facilitate social justice activism, and broaden students' perspectives – helping them develop non-academic skills and enriching the academic experience as a whole. These activities are what Doug Ford referred to as "crazy Marxist nonsense" in a February fundraising email to party members, which attacked the idea of union membership in general: "Students were forced into unions and forced to pay for those unions... I think we all know what kind of crazy Marxist nonsense student unions get up to. So, we fixed that. Student union fees are now opt-in."

Having failed time and time again at the campus ballot box to defund groups like OPIRG and the CFS, Ontario Conservatives believe that they have finally figured out a way once and for all to kill student unionism and student activism on Ontario campuses – the bureaucratic sledgehammer. They plan to directly change of ministry policy through the Ontario's Tuition Fee Framework, without the oversight of the legislature – and are about to do more damage to student organizing than years of failed attacks.

In this article, we want to further unpack the Student Choice Initiative (SCI) by analyzing it when measured beside the restructuring to the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP), then examine a similar model that was rolled out in Australia and New Zealand, hone in on implications for campus media and student democracy in Ontario, and focus on the potential impacts for Carleton University in a post-SCI landscape.

CARLETON'S "NON-ESSENTIAL" FEE STRUCTURE

In late January, 82 students associations representing over 1.3 million students across Canada signed and issued a letter to Ontario Premier Doug Ford and Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities Merrilee Fullerton. The letter condemned the Student Choice Initiative as an attack on student democracy, since students have already chosen through referendums to fund student associations and various campus groups.

The associations likened the model to allowing voters to opt-out of paying taxes to police services or libraries. They demanded the initiative be reversed until proper consultation is undertaken.

The letter also highlighted the potential loss of thousands of jobs across Ontario. At Carleton, for example, the Graduate Students' Association (GSA) and the undergraduate Carleton University Students' Association (CUSA) employ over 350 people.

The Ford government's plan to restructure the ancillary fee framework is not only a false choice, but a staunchly political one. Under the proposal, only around 10 percent of all undergraduate student fees will be made optional.

During the 2018-2019 academic year, Carleton undergraduate students paid \$1105.01 in fees. Under the new model, \$126.54 will be optional. Similarly, graduate students paid \$1,325.08 in fees in 2018-2019. Under the new model, only \$237.02 will be optional, representing around 20 percent.

THE MANY PITFALLS OF THE NEW OSAP

With the January announcement of changes to the Ontario Student Assistance Plan, further details have slowly been released by government officials, organizations like OPIRG, and direct reports from students.

THE DIRECT CUTS TO OSAP

The OSAP of Fall 2019 will be a minefield of new restrictions on access, as touched on earlier. Other OSAP changes include:

- Second degree students – including graduate students in general and second-degree college students – will be required to take on a loan that is worth fifty percent of their total OSAP funds.
- There will also be no scenario where students receive a full OSAP grant to cover all university or college costs.

All these additional caveats and cuts to OSAP double the pressure on students, creating a situation where students are disincentivized from taking up any additional fees and desperate to save anywhere they can.

Austerity makes the rhetoric of the Student Choice Initiative seem even more appealing, since there is less support for students in general under this new framework.

THE QUIET TRANSFORMATION OF OSAP GRANTS

Students have more to worry about than simple *reductions* to OSAP grants – they are also faced with the outright *transformation* of grants to loans.

There is an under-reported hum about this on social media platforms across Ontario. Students are finding their OSAP grants from previous years have been converted without warning into loans in the current year – all before changes to the grant system are supposed to come into effect.

As noted in the terms and conditions of the Master Student Financial Assistance Agreement (MFSAA-Ontario), as of 2017, there are only three conditions under which students could be faced with grants being transformed into loans "on a date determined under the MTCUA [Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities Act]":

- A. you cease to be enrolled in an Approved Program of Study at an Approved Institution or cease taking the Minimum Required Course Load within thirty days following the first day of your Study Period
- B. your circumstances or the circumstances of your Expected Contributors change resulting in a determination that you are no longer eligible to receive an Ontario Student Grant or you are not entitled to the amount of the grant issued previously to you, or
- C. the Minister cannot, to his or her satisfaction, verify with the Canada Revenue Agency or through other means the financial information reported by you or your Expected Contributors

There have been numerous reports of student receiving notices that portions of their OSAP grants were being clawed back without specific reference to these three clauses – and, again, ahead of any forthcoming changes to OSAP.

Are the Conservatives somehow engaging in tougher enforcement of this existing agreement? Are they otherwise leaning into some of the more ambiguous language? Government officials have also remained silent on the matter and refuse to acknowledge that the conversions are occurring at all.

With the changes made to OSAP by recent government announcements, we can expect the release of a new MFSAA-Ontario, which will govern individuals terms and conditions for both grants and loans. We can probably expect draconian measures – look what they're accomplishing with the current agreement!

And again, this change adds to the economic pressures on students reviewing their expenses, adding to the growing pile of disincentives for students to opt-in for student organizations and services. That is, if they really even have a choice.

STUDENT CHOICE AND OSAP

As revealed through phone conversations between OPIRG and both frontline and executive figures within OSAP's departmental structure, it appears those fees impacted by the Student Choice Initiative will not be covered by OSAP.

We managed to speak about this with Maria Mellas – who boasts the astonishingly baroque job title of Director (Acting), Student Financial Assistance Branch, Advanced Education Learner Supports Division at the Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities.

Mellas stated that existing policy regarding OSAP coverage of optional fees would apply to these newly-optional fees. In other words, all optional fees are not covered by OSAP – and this now includes SCI-impacted fees, ranging from student unions to newspapers to independent student-run offices of all kinds.

While this is a clear and direct response to the issues at play, OSAP attempted to obfuscate the issues at hand when the matter was raised repeatedly on their general line. The frontline bureaucrats who answer the phone shifted from a clear answer of 'no' to a more vague request for members of the public to wait for the release of the budget, only to be later contradicted by Mellas.

THE STUDENT CHOICE INITIATIVE WAS SUPPOSED TO INCREASE STUDENT CHOICE AND HALT THE PRACTICE OF STUDENTS BEING 'FORCED' TO SUPPORT VARIOUS ORGANIZATIONS. INSTEAD, THE INVERSE IS TRUE. IT WILL LIMIT STUDENTS' CHOICE. LESS UPWARDLY MOBILE STUDENTS WILL BE LOCKED OUT OF SHAPING WHICH CAMPUS ORGANIZATIONS EXIST IN FALL 2019 AND BEYOND.





Moreover, when speaking to Mellas, we were astounded by her seeming lack of understanding of what the Student Choice Initiative even is. It seems that this government's proverbial left and right hand simply do not know what the other is doing.

In spite of repeated requests for clarification on the government's position on this issue, Minister Fullerton has not responded nor given any suggestion that there will be a change to existing ministerial, branch, or departmental policies governing OSAP.

In itself, applying this existing OSAP policy of non-coverage of optional fees to campus radio and student unions fees, for example, might not seem to be a big deal. However, the impact is wide ranging for low-income students.

It has been estimated that approximately 60% of students rely on OSAP grants and loans for payment of all post-secondary institution fees, including tuition and ancillary fees. As such, when less financially liquid students are faced with the prospect of paying for various additional fees out of pocket, one can imagine the choice they will be forced to make.

In essence, the reality of all three of these areas of changes to OSAP – the various cuts to the program, the quiet grant conversions, and the lack of coverage of SCI fees – contradicts two key talking points of the Conservative government on this issue.

First, the SCI was trumpeted as a measure that put money back in the pockets of students. Yet in reality students will actually be getting a further decrease in OSAP funds, since the government is skipping out on ancillary fees.

Second, the SCI was supposed to increase student choice and halt the practice of students being 'forced' to support various organizations. Instead, the inverse is true. The SCI will limit students' choice. Less upwardly mobile students will be locked out of shaping which campus organizations exist in Fall 2019 and beyond.

Combined with the other OSAP changes, students are being heavily disincentivized to take on any other costs financially. This can only lead to reductions in financial capacity for student organizations themselves.

Interestingly, we have seen this scenario play out in other jurisdictions – namely Australia and New Zealand.

HOW DID 'VOLUNTARY STUDENT UNIONISM' TURN OUT IN AUSTRALIA?

In December 2005, the Australian parliament passed the Higher Education (Abolition of Compulsory Up-front Student Union Fees) Bill. The complete end of compulsory student fees entirely came into effect less than a month later, in January.

This implementation of so-called Voluntary Student Unionism (VSU) was done by making the collection of student organization fees by universities essentially illegal. As in our new Ontario system, student organizations could still convince students to sign up for memberships, but they could no longer rely on any fees being collected by their institutions. In fact agreements to do so were now illegal. (That's the Orwellian language of conservatives for you – making a choice illegal and calling it 'voluntary'.)

While this level of direct attack on student fees is not at play in Ontario, the impacts will most certainly be instructive. While collecting fees for student organizations remains legal here, students are being severely disincentivized from paying.

From January 2006 until the replacement of the Higher Education Bill in 2011, full VSU was in effect in Australia. These were six years of immense austerity on university campuses, heretofore unseen in the world of student organizing.

The Howard Government of Australia shared the Ford Government's notable animus against student organizing. According to the Australian Centre for Policy Development in 2005:

"The debate surrounding voluntary student unionism (VSU) is emotionally charged – due as much to the personal vendettas of senior Liberals against the leftist student organizations they invariably lost elections to in the 1970s and 1980s as the passionate protests of student organizations. VSU is not only about furthering the free market and individualistic philosophy of the Howard Government but also severely limiting student organizations as political entities."

Much like the Ford Government's "crazy Marxist" framing of student institutions, Howard's Australian reforms aimed to undermine the power of student organizations to engage with civil society organizing and challenges to state power.

The impact of this legislation in Australia also brought about critical changes to campus life that may well be echoed in Ontario.

As noted in 2011 by the President of the Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations John Nowakowski, VSU was "a major factor in the complete collapse of student organisations in rural and regional universities, particularly postgraduate organisations."

The resultant organizational mergers resulted in graduate students losing "their autonomy and funding, and without these factors, students disengage," Nowakowski explained.

In 2007, the National Union of Students (Australia) released a report assessing of the impact of just the first full year of VSU and recounting the dire consequences of the new legislation.

First, they noted that "workers jobs have been the biggest victims of the Coalition and Family First's VSU legislation. 25 out of 30 student organisations reported substantial or total job losses."

Second, while some student organizations noted support for their academic advocacy services from their universities, by 2007 "at least six universities no longer operated student rights advocacy through a student controlled body."

This extended to many student run services. The wide collapse of student-run spaces was immediate and harsh. Student services were generally taken over by university or private contractors and 13 out of 18 organisations reported "substantial or near total cuts to... campaigns, activities, support programs."

VOLUNTARY STUDENT MEMBERSHIPS IN NEW ZEALAND

In New Zealand, Voluntary Student Memberships (VSMs) were implemented in 2011 through the Education (Freedom of Association) Amendment Bill. In this case, universities could still charge fees – much like in the Ontario model – but could not fund student organizations directly.

As a workaround, universities often implemented Service Level Agreements and hired contractors – often, the former student organizations themselves – to provide similar services. However, as the New Zealand student newspaper Critic pointed out, this meant that "universities control the funding for their student associations and can cut it at their discretion. In most cases, this meant major cuts to essential services such as counselling and advocacy."

Moreover, other spaces such as student media began to crumble in the years after the implementation of VSM. The 80-year old campus newspaper MASSIVE at Massey University folded. In the case of the Albany Students' Association (ASA), Critic also noted that "Effectively, VSM stripped the ASA of any budget beyond what it might be able to negotiate with Massey directly, but this is very limited in size and scope and has had serious long-term effects on staffing levels and even the ability for us to remain in our offices."

New Zealand had also been faced with changes to their student loan system as early as 1999, which similarly disallowed loans to pay for student fees.

The impacts in New Zealand then echo the Australian experience, with

the added confusion of organizations attempting to scrape by on the benevolence of university administration contracting out duties to those organizations.

This also led to many student organizations relationships being broken with the New Zealand Union of Students' Associations (NZUSA), the equivalent of the Canadian Federation of Students.

So in both Australia and New Zealand, some student organizations survived – though many often didn't – only by grasping at scraps from their institutions or by transforming their work into a more neoliberal model.

In turn, this is probably what we can expect going forward in Ontario. As surpluses and reserves of existing organizations run dry, what else will be there for organizations to turn to but these limited modes of capitalist reformation or oblivion?

WHAT ELSE IS THERE?

We cannot pretend that Ontario student and campus organizations will be immune from the same realities that our colleagues in New Zealand and Australia faced. There will be closures in the future and the loss of jobs on a similar scale.

We may be facing these changes through a differing mechanism, but without significant resistance this is the road which lies inexorably before student and campus organizing in Ontario.

PATH 1: TOWARDS NEOLIBERAL ORGANIZATION

Some student organizations will take the neoliberal path and attempt to become corporate-styled service providers, either through contracts with their institution or to keep existing for-profit spaces alive. This may be an easy transition for already service-heavy organizations across Ontario.

But will transforming into university service contractors keep student organizing alive? No. Instead such a transformation would only keep an appearance of organizing alive, under the pretenses of the students-as-consumers model that has already conquered university-run spaces.

PATH 2: OBLIVION

In turn, there will be some organizations who opt to ride out the times as they are, without looking to financial stability or changing practices. Some student unions, like the Graduate Student Union at the University of Toronto, are even predicting – without much basis – that they will simply continue to survive with over 60% of their current fees.

These organizations will hurtle towards their end, without properly preparing for any contingency for their members or campus.

But while these two paths have been trod in other jurisdictions, does there yet remain another?

PATH 3: THE RE-POLITICIZATION OF STUDENT ORGANIZING

Look at the establishment of the grassroots collective the Ontario Student Action Network and the proposed interventions from existing leftist organizations, ranging from the Revolutionary Student Movement to the International Workers of the World. There is perhaps a growing sense that student political organizing can be separated from wider service structures, with an eye to revitalizing student activism and culture along other lines than that of typical experiences of student life. This would be a form of student life focused around building open, democratic, and fighting student spaces – as a necessity under the Ford regime – and not just to build on existing organizations projects, or services.

While this cannot replace the decimated existing structures of student organizations and the losses of services, supports, and spaces which we are going to face, perhaps the longer-term fightback against this new policy and the Ford Government has only just begun?

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OTTAWA PUBLIC HEALTH FAILING GAY AND BISEXUAL MEN

EXPANDED HEALTH SERVICES FOR GUYS INTO GUYS URGENTLY NEEDED

Ryan Conrad

Last October GayZone, Ottawa's weekly sexual health walk-in clinic and wellness centre that serves guys into guys, hosted its 10th anniversary celebration at City Hall. The mayor Jim Watson, Centre-town city councillor Catherine McKenney, and representatives from the partner organization that make GayZone possible were all on hand to celebrate alongside the community.

It is imperative to celebrate our community's successes, especially at a time of increasing fiscal austerity, health care privatization, and homophobic/transphobic retrenchment in Ontario. Yet this is no time to sit back and relax.

The pressing need for GayZone to expand and evolve in order to remain the point of pride that it has been in the queer community for over a decade now is painfully obvious. If queer and AIDS activist histories have taught us anything, it's that we need to demand and agitate for this change. Nothing is won by simply asking for it nicely.

According to well-known gay Ottawa activist Barry Dee-prose, GayZone's origin stems from a dissatisfaction with the meager sexual health services that the city of Ottawa was providing in the early 2000s, when rates of HIV infection rose again after years of decline. Tension was also boiling over between gay health activists and the well-funded AIDS Committee of Ottawa, which was accused of not doing enough to serve gay and bisexual men, who continue to bear the brunt of the HIV epidemic in the region.

These frustrations were amplified by a serious syphilis outbreak among gay and bisexual guys in Ottawa at the time and Public Health's ineptitude at delivering culturally competent sexual health services to stem the rate of infection. Cultural competence is defined as the ability of providers and organizations to effectively deliver health care services that meet the social, cultural, and linguistic needs of patients.

Through the organizing efforts of people like Dee-prose, Orhan Hassan, and others, a vision for a satellite clinic dedicated specifically to the health and wellbeing of guys into guys was formulated. Funding for the effort was secured through conversations with the Medical Officer of Health for Ottawa and a reallocation of funds from Ottawa's sexual health clinic at 179 Clarence Street.

No new public funding has ever been made available for GayZone, but the clinic launched in 2008 nonetheless and has been packed every Thursday night from 5-8pm since. So packed, in fact, that it's been years since GayZone has even been advertised. After all, it continues to turn people away due to overcapacity on a weekly basis, despite the addi-

tion of a few staff last year.

Between Ottawa's three types of sexual health clinics staffed by Ottawa Public Health (OPH), GayZone is allocated the least resources. This is despite OPH's own reporting that gay and bisexual men are considered at higher or highest risk for nearly all reportable STIs.

The sexual health clinic at 179 Clarence Street is open nearly 30 hours a week for walk-ins and scheduled appointments. Three suburban youth-oriented clinics in Barhaven, Kanata, and Orleans are open for a total of nine hours a week combined.

This means that between the 40+ hours that OPH-supported sexual health clinics operate, a mere three hours is dedicated to providing culturally appropriate, low-barrier services to a marginalized group of people — who, according to the recent Mobilise! study, most often cite stigma, shame, and discrimination as primary reasons for not getting tested. Furthermore, the national SexNow! survey of gay and bisexual men indicated that in 2015 less than half of the guys surveyed had been tested in the last year. These studies speak volumes to the need for the expansion of culturally competent sexual health services immediately.

GayZone used to test and treat anyone who came by the drop-in clinic, regardless of municipal residency or citizenship status. Unfortunately, OPH has made GayZone more and more restrictive. It has erected barriers through residency requirements that exclude anyone without an OHIP card from accessing services — gay and bisexual men from Gatineau, international and out-of-province students studying in Ottawa, immigrants who don't qualify for OHIP, and migrant workers here without official status.

Adam Hodgins, a resident of Hull who works in Ottawa recalls, "I went to GayZone for years because it was hassle free and easy to access, until I showed up one Thursday and was told that they were no longer seeing Québec residents. Unfortunately there are no equivalent services in Gatineau. There is no queer-friendly option and drop-in hours at the CLSC [Centre local de services communautaires, the province-run clinics in all of Quebec] are only for people that have symptoms, not for regular testing. Rapid HIV testing is also not available."

While some may argue that municipal tax dollars shouldn't be stretched to test and treat those from 'outside' Ottawa, it makes poor public health sense — or cents. Gay and bisexual men from all these constituencies are having sex with one another. Indeed, when was the last time anyone chose a sexual partner based on whether or not they had an OHIP card?

Not treating everyone puts all gay and bisexual men at

greater risk and increases the cost by having to repeatedly test and treat those who can access services.

Furthermore, residents of Gatineau with a Québec health card, and many others living in Ottawa without OHIP, cannot access GayZone's clinical services, while anyone with an OHIP card is accepted, whether they're from Thunder Bay, Windsor, or Old Ottawa South..

If Appletree clinics and public hospitals like Élisabeth Bruyère can figure out how to accept Québec provincial health cards while operating on the Ontario side of the river, clearly the problem is a lack of political will to negotiate the funding of health services between the two municipalities/provinces. Gay, bisexual, Two-spirit, and queer guys, both cis and trans, do not have time for this bureaucratic idiosyncrasy when so many of us live, work, and play on both sides of the river.

Many of us who utilize GayZone's services would like to see new funding made available to expand its services from a once-a-week to a twice-a-week drop-in clinic, with lower barriers to accessing the testing and treatment services it provides. We understand that finding new funding for this is a difficult task in a time of ongoing austerity. That is why short term solutions should be considered immediately, like reallocating resources that are used less efficiently at other OPH-funded sexual health clinics.

According to Matthew Harding, the Community Engagement Coordinator at the GayZone partner agency MAX, "The expansion of GayZone has been explored and pro-

posed many times at the clinic's steering committee meetings. We hear over and over again that there are no funds available to expand the clinic even though guys into guys are considered the highest risk demographic for most sexually transmissible or blood borne infections (STBBI)."

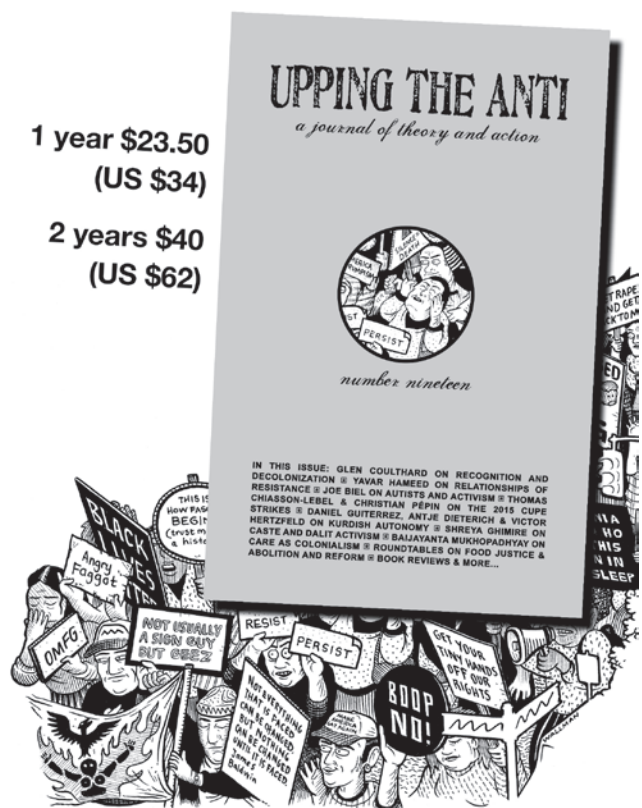
"The clinic turns guys away on a weekly basis," Harding continued, "redirecting them to other OPH-operated clinics instead of serving them directly and efficiently in a culturally sensitive setting. All of this makes it clear that culturally competent service delivery and public health management of STBBIs within our community is not a priority."

As under-resourced as it is, GayZone does a disproportionate amount of the sexual health work in Ottawa. The clinic is responsible for a disproportionate amount of STI positives not just because the higher risk levels within the community it services, but because folks don't like going to clinics where they experience homophobia and hostility from staff. That should warrant a reallocation of resources from less efficient testing sites.

In the long term, OPH should be coordinating with partner organizations and provincial health authorities to adopt the proven model of fully-operational, standalone queer and trans sexual health clinic like l'Actuel in Montreal. Gay, bisexual, Two-spirit, queer, and other guys who are into guys, both cis and trans, in the capital region deserve better. As a user of GayZone's services myself, I demand better of my municipal health authority. The time to act was yesterday, but better late than never!



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HOMOSEXUALITY WAS NOT DECRIMINALIZED IN 1969

ANTI-69 FORUM CHALLENGES “JUST SOCIETY” MYTH

Tom Hooper
& Gary Kinsman

The celebrations have already begun. They say 2019 is the 50th anniversary of the 1969 decriminalization of homosexuality. The Royal Canadian Mint is set to reveal a commemorative \$1 coin in April and Egale Canada Human Rights Trust, a national LGBTQ2 organization, was granted \$770,000 from the federal government to produce a film celebrating this anniversary.

The problem is that this is based on a myth. No such decriminalization took place, partial or otherwise. No offenses were repealed in 1969. Arrests did not go down.

Just the opposite: the policing of “indecent” sex dra-

matically escalated in the decades following this so-called decriminalization, including several mass arrests at gay bathhouses. The 1969 reform also did nothing to lessen the purge campaign in the military and public service, which had a major impact on people in the Ottawa area.

So why is this myth of decriminalization so widely accepted?

In 1967, Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau stated, “there’s no place for the state in the bedrooms of the nation,” adding “what’s done in private between adults doesn’t concern the Criminal Code. When it becomes public this is a different matter.”

The legal change in 1969 followed this principle. The government added an ‘excep-

tion clause’ for the offences of gross indecency and buggery. These would no longer be crimes if they were committed in a narrow private realm, between two adults aged 21 and over.

Prior to 1969 all acts of gross indecency and buggery had been technically illegal. No distinctions were made on the basis of whether they were committed in public or private, or on the basis of age. The 1969 reform specifically directed the police against acts in public and involving those 21 and under.

This change had nothing to do with the ways that homosexuality was criminalized in practice, both before and after 1969. Two adults over 21 who had sex in private were not usually targeted for enforce-

ment. The state did not have the resources to police the bedrooms of the nation.

The 1969 reform was facilitated by the Supreme Court decision in the Everett George Klippert case in 1967. Klippert had been convicted of a number of counts of consensual gross indecency with males, most of whom were younger than 21.

Since Klippert was deemed likely to continue to engage in homosexual activities, he was sentenced as a dangerous sexual offender to indefinite detention. The Supreme Court majority decided that Klippert had been correctly sentenced, provoking Trudeau to make his comment on the state and bedrooms.

The very first gay and lesbian rights demonstration on Parliament Hill in August 1971 was explicitly opposed to the limitations of the 1969 reform. At this time, most heterosexual sex acts could be engaged in legally at 14, setting up very discriminatory age of consent laws.

Also, since many LGBTQ2 people did not have access to private bedrooms in order to have sex, living a discreet life often meant sex had to occur outside of the home. Although definitions of public and private shift historically and can be vague and arbitrary, the broad definition of public adopted in 1969 included bars, bathhouses, washrooms and parks.

This mandated police to mobilize against spaces of ‘indecent’ sex that were outside the home, including bathhouses. Homosexual sex ap-

parently threatened public decency somehow, even if it was taking place behind the closed doors of a privately-owned business establishment. From 1968-2004, more than 1,300 men were charged in raids on these establishments.

The ‘acts of indecency’ section of the bawdy house law was used in a raid on the Club Baths in Ottawa as part of the ‘clean-up’ campaign before the 1976 Montreal Olympics. This led to the arrest of 27 men under the bawdy house laws, with two charged for gross indecency for consensual sexual activity behind cubicle doors — which the police claimed was ‘in public.’ As in Montreal and Toronto, police refused the master key and entered rooms by smashing in doors.

Also in Ottawa in 1975, 18 men were charged with various offences for consensual sexual encounters with other males ranging in age from 16 to 21. Central to these charges was the higher age of consent set in the ‘69 reform.

‘Gays of Ottawa held rallies protesting Zufelt’s death, police persecution of gays, biased media reporting, the printing of the names of those charged, and called for a uniform age of consent for all sexual acts.

So from these example just from Ottawa, then, we can see that the limitations of the ‘69 reform had a devastating impact. At the time LGBTQ2 people did not celebrate the changes — and neither should we.

The decriminalization of homosexuality myth is also tied to other reforms in 1969. An exception from criminalization was established

for abortions, provided they occurred at a hospital with the approval of a therapeutic abortion committee of at least three doctors. They could only approve cases on the narrow grounds of the pregnancy “endangering a woman’s life or health” and many hospitals did not even have these committees.

Like homosexuality, the promise of reform did not match the actual legislative changes. The following year, feminist activists created the Abortion Caravan to protest these limitations, which included a demonstration that shut down the House of Commons.

These legal changes were part of Pierre Elliott Trudeau’s “Just Society,” a broad series of proposals that sought to redefine the relationship between government and people in Canada. This included the 1969 *White Paper*, which called for the destruction of Indigenous sovereignty and treaty rights in the name of granting Indigenous people “the full rights of citizenship” and “meaningful equality of opportunity.” Not only did the 1969 reforms enable mass arrests at gay bathhouses and restrictions on access to abortion services, it was related to a broader project of colonialism. What is there to celebrate?

We are part of a group of activists and scholars who are challenging the myths of 1969. We are organizing a forum called Anti-69 at Carleton University on March 23-24, which includes plenaries, presentations, video showings, book displays and more.

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GCTC PLAY UNPACKS “NORMAL FEMALE BEHAVIOUR”

WHAT HAPPENS THE DAY AFTER SILENCE IS BROKEN IN A RAPE CULTURE?

Tim Kitz

Behaviour, a new play by Darrah Teitel currently running at the Great Canadian Theatre Company (GCTC), examines the interplay of abuse and power among Parliamentary staffers with a fierce and funny eye.

The Leveller interrupted the playwright’s feverish rewrites over pints in a local bar in order to ask a few questions about our current post-#MeToo zeitgeist and about what inspired her.

Can you explain the genesis of this play?

While I was working on [Parliament] Hill, there was a really messy event where two Liberal MPs were fired after they sexually “harassed” two female MPs.

One of the compounding effects of that event was that a lot of Hill staffers were extremely triggered. They were thinking of all the abuse and sexual misconduct and labour rights violations that they had experienced throughout their lives and while at work. This was before #MeToo and right before [the] Gomeishi [scandal].

It was terrible how deeply unsupported Hill staff are and how vulnerable a workplace it is, given that we don’t enjoy the protections of the labour code of Canada and its extraordinarily hierarchical and every day is win or lose and it’s super-bullying and macho, blah blah blah.

That’s where the genesis, the germ of wanting to write this

came from.

I was really interested and curious in how endemic assault, rape, and abuse is in women’s lives — almost how statistically insignificant it is, the number of women who don’t have [experiential] knowledge of rape, abuse, sexual assault and harassment.

So I started to write a play called *Behaviour*, thinking about this — if we all have that experience, then it is clearly informing what appears to be normal female behaviour. I wanted to write something that unpacked that claim — that normal female behaviour is fed and coloured and influenced by the experience of assault.

I also wanted to see what happens when that compartmentalization begins to erode inside a person. The kind of cognitive dissonance required to lead your life when you have had experiences of rape, assault, and abuse that you’re not dealing with — and have never even voiced to yourself, never mind others.

How did the play relate to #MeToo, as that unfolded?

Obviously, it had a necessary impact on this play. I had a full draft before #MeToo erupted. And if my thesis statement had something to do with proving that everybody’s raped, then #MeToo showed up and proved that for me.

So art being what it is — needing to ask the important

questions, not the foregone conclusion questions — I needed to start with where we were now. What questions remained, what needed to be asked, what needed to be challenged?

It required me to write a third act, because I needed to explore what happens the day after silence is broken. What happens in the years and months following, when women do what we’re urging them to do, which is to speak out and tell their truth? What are the actual real-life consequences of speaking that truth?

If speaking out has been popularized, to a degree, is that a weapon that allows women to level the playing field? To protect themselves from men who could otherwise take advantage of them?

I would say no. I don’t think the playing field has been equalled in any way, because we didn’t create a system in which women can tell the truth. If a woman tells the truth, she will lose a lot more than she gains.

If you tell the truth, all you gain is a painstaking litigious battle, which is probably followed by total and utter disappointment and failure. Financial ruin. Nothing but an incredibly tarnished reputation. At the very least, a bunch of fear following you, because you’re ‘the girl that did that.’

I actually think we made people more vulnerable because we encouraged them to tell truth and we actually didn’t tell them “oh by the way, as soon as you tell this truth, nothing good is coming at you. Only bad things will happen to you.” Unless you sign a non-disclosure agreement which robs you of your ability to tell the truth. And then maybe you’ll get some money.

It’s really rough because not telling the truth is incredibly

painful. And telling the truth is incredibly painful.

Telling the truth in a culture that supported that truth telling — that would be the answer.

Right. At least it seems like powerful men can no longer take for granted that they will never be exposed. Do you think the culture of impunity has been dented in the wake of #MeToo?

Maybe. I guess we will see. It hasn’t been that long. Also, I think that most people think that what they’re doing is perfectly okay.

I think people have a generally very shallow understanding of things, unless they’ve taken a lot of time and a lot of energy to figure out what this grey zone looks like — what these power imbalances do, what human rights are, what hierarchy means, what consent is. Understanding that actually takes a tremendous amount of effort, not just a terrified thought when you read a headline — “oh shit, I better not do shit anymore.”

So in the absence of that sort of deeper work, most powerful men won’t know what they’re doing. They will think they’re good.

“Everyone always thinks they’re good.” That’s actually a line in my play.

To be clear, I don’t think this is about men. I think this is about the behaviour of people in power. In fact, one of the people in this play who commits some of the most atrocious abuses of power is a woman.

So obviously if people want to start doing that deeper work, they should just come to your play.

Ha! Maybe.

I think my play does ask for change. It asks for bystander change. I think it asks for people to examine the ways in which their strict categories of

‘victim,’ ‘perpetrator,’ ‘good guy,’ ‘bad guy’ are actually far more muddled than they realize. And that we have to operate based on the knowledge that almost everybody could be a victim. Almost everybody is a perpetrator. And we all have a part to play in [finding] justice.

Does that explain why you’re interested in exploring these issues through story-telling?

Well, I do work in politics. Politics requires simple, repeatable, and airtight soundbites that you have to say are true and that you have to campaign on.

Art will inevitably seek the cracks inside any dogma, in any ideology.

I exploit the tools of politics to campaign for the greater good. Whatever I decide is the greater good — ha ha.

You need a room full of people chanting the same thing. But there is something deeply anti-intellectual, anti-emotional in that. Because it refuses or is somehow weakened by the existence of contradiction and of hypocrisy inside any dogma, or any ideology, or any chant.

The beautiful thing about art for me is that it flows into those spaces. So whenever I come against something where I go “Ooh, this doesn’t quite work” — that’s where I seek out art.

Maybe some writers find their conclusion before they begin a writing process. I don’t. I start writing things, usually, when I come up against a problem I don’t know how to fix. As soon as I come across something where I think “I can’t fix this on my own” — that’s when I start writing. You know, instead of going to therapy.

What do we gain by exploring some of this complexity?

Well, it’s more the grey zone stuff that we’re reconciled to. We haven’t had very sophisticated tools to detect some of

the abuse — or know when we’re perpetrating it against others. That’s why we call it a rape culture.

There’s a line in the play where somebody asks somebody else “Why didn’t you come to the police after you were raped?” And the character says “Because I don’t know when that is. Because there’s the time you were raped, the time you realized you were raped, and there’s the time you decided to tell somebody you were raped. These are different times.”

I think people are more aware of these dynamics because of #MeToo. There’s more of a conversation.

I think that men who want to be feminists will probably think about their behaviour more. Hopefully women will too. Although [#MeToo] didn’t do the best job of pointing out the ways women are complicit and also guilty.

Was there just not enough talk about hierarchy and power?

Yeah. And this is one of the problems with how it’s being interpreted, right? Because then it breeds men’s rights activists who feel like men are being attacked, or there’s a war against men.

Because the simple narrative is that men are villains who are doing horrible shit to women. As opposed to the actual narrative, which is that capitalism and power have created immeasurable vulnerability within society.

That’s a much more difficult transformation, of course. It’s more than “hey men, learn to ask for consent.” Because it implicates everyone.

Behaviour is running at the GCTC March 12-31. There will be a free live stream for World Theatre Day — March 27 at 8pm on behaviourplay.ca.

WHODUNIT

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MATCH THESE WORDS OF WISDOM TO THE PUBLIC FIGURE!

A. “I believe that is the first time a flag has volunteered to be burned.”

B. “A dehumanized discourse on Islam and Muslims can lead to these kinds of terrorist attacks... It’s just one step from the word to the deed. If you continuously dehumanize people, treat them in a different way, implement legislation that discriminates against them, what do you think will happen?”

C. “How ironic that this country, founded upon the destruction of Indigenous peoples for corporate interests, demoted and then disrespected an Indigenous woman apparently because of corporate interests.”

D. “More people have been killed by white supremacists since 9/11 than by people who believe these kinds of extremist, twisted forms of Islam.”

E. “[Kim Jong-un] speaks and his people sit up at attention. I want my people to do the same.”

F. “If I was still in the [neo-Nazi] movement, I would be doing what everything else is doing — I’d be voting for Trump, because he’s saying all the right stuff. He’s the president of the United States, so you get these Neo-Nazis going ‘We got this president and he’s pretty much given us the OK to do whatever we want.’ ”

G. “We think we’re searching google; google’s actually searching us. We think that these companies have privacy policies; those policies are actually surveillance policies.”

H. “To be Black is not only to be targeted for questioning or arrest, it is also to be proximate to death... In the case of Abdirahman Abdi, to be Black to not only be violently assaulted by a law enforcement officer but also to be left, bleeding, for an extended period before emergency services were even contacted.”

I. “[President Trump is] a symbol of renewed white identity and common purpose.”

J. “I think enough people have realised just how absurd the situation is. We are in the middle of the biggest crisis in human history and basically nothing is being done to prevent it.”

1. Greta Thunberg, 16 year old climate change activist

2. Omer Aziz, former policy adviser to the Minister of Foreign Affairs

3. Shoshana Zuboff, author of *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*

4. President Trump

5. Stephen Colbert, comedian

6. Jason Downard, former Neo-Nazi

7. Heidi Beirich, Intelligence Project Director, Southern Poverty Law Center

8. Robyn Maynard, author of *Policing Black Lives: State Violence in Canada From Slavery to the Present*

9. Farid Hafez, professor and editor of *Islamophobia Studies Yearbook*

10. Brenton Harrison Tarrant, Christchurch mosque shooter, mass murdering livestreamer

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(a) Greta Thunberg; (b) Brenton Harrison Tarrant; (c) Omer Aziz; (d) President Trump; (e) Heidi Beirich; (f) Jason Downard; (g) Shoshana Zuboff; (h) Robyn Maynard; (i) Farid Hafez; (j) Stephen Colbert.

leveller.ca vol 11, no 6, Spring 2019 The Leveller 13

VENUS ENVY

SEXUAL HEALTH & PLEASURE ALERT



HEY VENUS ENVY,

Why do some women enjoy anal sex, while others don't? I know it has a lot to do with personal preference — but I also wonder why some women are so repulsed by the idea that they think women who like buttsex must be lying.

What is it about specific bodies that take pleasure in playing with an otherwise strictly exit hole? Is there physical or structural differences that may explain this preference?

Thanks,
Anal Suspicion Suspect

HEY ASS,

Our sex-negative culture tells us that sex is only acceptable if it's potentially procreative. Having married sex to make a baby is okay, but the further your sex is from that, the more stigmatized it is.

Women, especially, are intensely shamed for having sex just to feel good. We have all kinds of names for women like this, but mainly we call them sluts. We say that "good girls" don't do things like anal play, and then we shame the girls who do.

This deeply impacts many of us. And I think the main reason some women are repulsed by anal sex is because it carries so much of this stigma. Because wanting anal sex is purely about wanting pleasure. Unadulterated, hedonistic, fuck-me-in-the-ass pleasure.

Ironically, that kind of cultural stigma is one of the reasons some people are so into taboo things. Because good girls aren't supposed to have anal sex, doing it makes some women feel bad and dirty in the best, sexiest ways.

The other big thing that turns some women off from butt stuff is that they've only had irritating, painful, awful anal sex. I talk to a lot of

women like this who genuinely can't imagine that anyone really likes it, since their experience was so bad.

This is often because the anal sex they experienced was approached like anal sex in porn, where there's generally no warm up, no lube and no communication. (Of course in porn, this stuff is usually done off camera.) In real life, anal sex can feel really good, but you need to listen to your body, go slowly and use a lot of lube.

One potential reason for booty pleasure is the high concentration of nerve endings around the opening of the butt. This is a huge erogenous zone for a lot of people, and rimming it with a tongue or lubed-up finger can feel especially good.

Beyond that, there are some other anatomical differences that might make anal sex feel better or worse, from person-to-person. Some women might have large or sensitive g-spots that are easily stimulated through the anal canal, leading to added sensation during sex. Similarly, some trans and intersex women who have prostates might find them to be an extra rich source of anal pleasure. For women with vaginas, some will love how filled up they feel by having something in the back and in the front.

While these differences will have some impact, like you said, personal preference plays the biggest role in determining what people are into. Ultimately, the brain is the biggest source of sexual pleasure, and being turned on by the idea of something can substantially change how it actually feels.

So the best way to make anal sex feel good is to have only it if you really want to.

Sincerely,
SAM WHITTLE
Sex Educator and Owner of Venus Envy

SEND QUESTIONS YOU WANT ANSWERED TO EDITORS.THE.LEVELLER@GMAIL.COM
OR DIRECT TO SAM AT EDUCATION@VENUSENVY.CA

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EXPLAINING DISABLED PEOPLE ARE HOT

THE TRUTH BEHIND THE HASHTAG

Kristen Williams

It's 2019 and the internet is aflame with hot disabled people pushing you to acknowledge their sexual prowess and your ableism all at once, through the #DisabledPeopleAreHot social media trend. Disabled people from all four corners of our flat earth are popping up in their sexy outfits and everyday lives being, well, hot.

The "disabled people are hot movement," as it's now being dubbed, has been alive and thriving for about a month now, and was originally started by Andrew Gurza, who works as a sex and disability consultant. The point of the whole thing is to give space and representation to disabled people for the sexual beings that we are — and to also show able-bodied people that we exist in sexual capacities.

As a population with a history of desexualization and disenfranchisement, #DisabledPeopleAreHot works to bring the sexuality and humanity of disabled people to the fore. And so far, it's done just that for a wide range of disabled people, spanning from here in Canada to places like France, Kenya, and many spaces in between.

Unfortunately, not everyone is on board with the hashtag or its goals, with some believing that it hypersexualizes or objectifies people with disabilities. But objectification is a passive



When we as disabled people pick our own photos and audiences (through privacy settings and such), we are navigating how we are seen and by whom.

process, with the goal of dehumanizing someone, often for the sexual pleasure of the viewer. With #Disabled-

PeopleAreHot, however, the narrative around disabled bodies is actively controlled by disabled people.

Choosing which particular photos of us are seen on social media also flies in the face of "inspiration porn," a term coined to describe the act of abled people using scenes from disabled lives to feel better about their own lives.

When we as disabled people pick our own photos and audiences (through privacy settings and such), we are navigating how we are seen and by whom.

In the process of posting, we are also owning our own stories, instead of hinging on the stories of people that are able bodied.

Even if you're not a fan of racy photos, I encourage you to see #DisabledPeopleAreHot for what it is: a wide-spread movement to make disabled people seen. Viewing disabled people as sexual is long overdue, and the internet at large is finally recognizing that.

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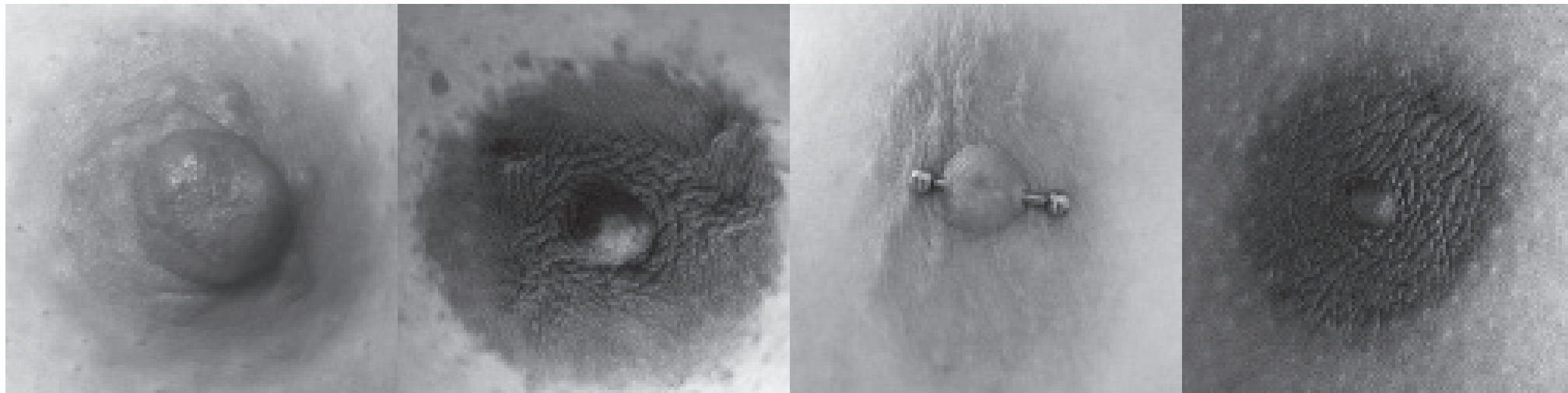
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Male or female? Can you tell the difference?

Photos: Genderless Nipples (Instagram: @genderless_nipple)

PATRIARCHY'S BIGGEST FEAR: ***THE FEMALE NIPPLE*** HOW SEXIST STANDARDS OF NUDITY PREVENT THE FEMALE NIPPLE FROM BEING SEEN

Jacqueline Atkinson

Nipples. We've all seen them. Most of us have them. Some of them are pointy and some of them are round. Some of them are long and some of them are inverted.

Some can be proudly displayed during the Super Bowl and others will be banned from ever returning. The difference? Some belong to the white, male-gendered Adam Levine and others belong to black, female-gendered Janet Jackson.

THE DIFFERENCE OF NIPPLES

The nipple itself is not inherently sexed, as the Instagram account @genderless_nipples makes pointedly clear. The account works to challenge Instagram's sexist standards of nudity which allows photos showing male nipples to remain but demands photos of female nipples to be removed.

The account posts close up images of nipples and challenges Instagram to tell the difference. Male or female. Remain or remove. Their argument? It is literally impossible to tell such a difference because nipples cannot be physically characterized by gender.

Yet nipples have often been incredibly gendered — according to whose body they exist upon. For men —

assuming the nipples are mounted on perfectly toned pectoral muscles and accompany an equally toned upper torso — they indicate sex appeal and fierce, masculine confidence. Publicly displaying male nipples shows that you are doing masculinity right, and as such, proclaims that you are welcome to be physically present in the patriarchal public.

This is precisely why Adam Levine, front man of the popular band Maroon 5, exposed his male nipples — proudly ripping off his shirt during the band's Super Bowl performance. Levine presented the correct form of masculinity, as evidenced by the positive public celebration of his nudity. His male nipples simply had a self-proclaimed right to be there — and the patriarchal National Football League controlling this particular public space was in agreement.

As a black woman, Janet Jackson's nipples did not. When her nipple was briefly exposed by Justin Timberlake during their 2004 Super Bowl performance, she was immediately crucified by the public and has never been invited back to perform since. Additionally, a \$550,000 fine from the Federal Communications Commission citing 'indecentcy' was slapped on the producing CBS network,

though this was later thrown out through appeal. What Levine's recent performance reveals about this controversy — blown out of proportion as 'Nipplegate' 15 years ago — is that it was never really about a nipple but rather about female nudity in public.

So why is the nude female body indecent but the male female body is not? Put simply, this is because the nude female body is intended to be consumed for the purpose of reproduction, whereas the nude male body is to be presented as an expression of masculine might.

NIPPLES AS TOOLS OF REPRODUCTION

As a prime focus of pornographic content, female nipples are expected to play a prominent role in stimulating men to orgasm. As our culture sexually objectifies them, female nipples are positioned to be touched, ogled and consumed by men — not only for male pleasure but so sexual reproduction, which is often narrowly defined by the ejaculation of sperm, can take place. The female nipple must work so the male penis can perform.

But the laborious job of the female nipple to reproduce does not end there. A child is born and immediately placed next to the mother's nipple, with an expectation

that the same nipple expected to help create the child in the first place must now sustain the child as they grow. The nipple is now seen in a nurturing light, but is still expected to be consumed for the sake of reproduction.

Both these reproductive expectations of the female nipple take place in the private sphere. This makes the public presence of the female nipple inherently explicit because it is actively defying the patriarchal social expectation that reproductive work should only exist in the private sphere.

Public display of the female nipple is then quite literally a challenge to the patriarchal limitations of where women can exist. So weaponized 'public indecency' accusations are used to suppress this challenge.

RECLAIMING THE NIPPLE

Adam Levine's display of his nipples remind us of the power that men have over their bodies — power women continue to struggle to assert. Levine can decide whether to mobilize his male nipples as a part of his masculine sex appeal during his performance, or render them as non-sexualized when partaking in a family swim day with his children.

A woman breastfeeding

her child in public, however, is forced to cover up because her breastfeeding nipple has already been sexualized by public opinion. The use of the woman's nipples is decided for her not by her. This reminds us that women are not permitted the same bodily autonomy that men have.

It is worth noting that women in Ontario do have the legal right to go topless in public (like men) since 1996. This was the year Gwen Jacob, a University of Guelph student was acquitted of charges of indecency for having removed her shirt on a hot day during the summer of 1991.

Yet legal rights do not necessarily translate automatically or easily to everyday actions. How often do you see a topless woman versus man in public? Also, women continue to struggle to be topless in various spaces that are largely considered public, such as the Internet and private businesses.

As women struggle to define the nature of their topless appearance in public as being sexual, maternal or otherwise, we can see how this legal right to be topless in public fails to equalize bodily autonomy among men and women.

A popular 2012 campaign, known as 'Free the Nipple,' connected the ability of women to bear their nipples

in public with increased female bodily autonomy. Several celebrities, including Miley Cyrus, Chrissy Teigen and Rihanna supported the campaign by posting Instagram photos bearing their nipples.

These photos were of course removed and Rihanna even lost posting privileges for a brief period of time as a result. Nonetheless, the point of the campaign rang true with many throughout the world: women, like men, should be able to present their bodies however they choose to.

Though the campaign was wildly successful in calling attention to this issue, not much has changed to allow and facilitate the public display of female nipples.

Breastfeeding mothers continue to be shamed for showing their nipples in public. Nipple baring Instagram photos continue to be removed citing 'indecentcy.' Adam Levine can proudly display his nipples during the Super Bowl in 2019, but it is disturbingly clear that Janet Jackson would still never be permitted to do so.

The female nipple may look no different from the male nipple. Yet its feminized ability to create and sustain life has rendered it to be too large a threat to our patriarchal order for it to be proudly displayed in public life.



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