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THE MÉTROPOLITAIN

Ensemble et libres Together and free

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Ideas before identities

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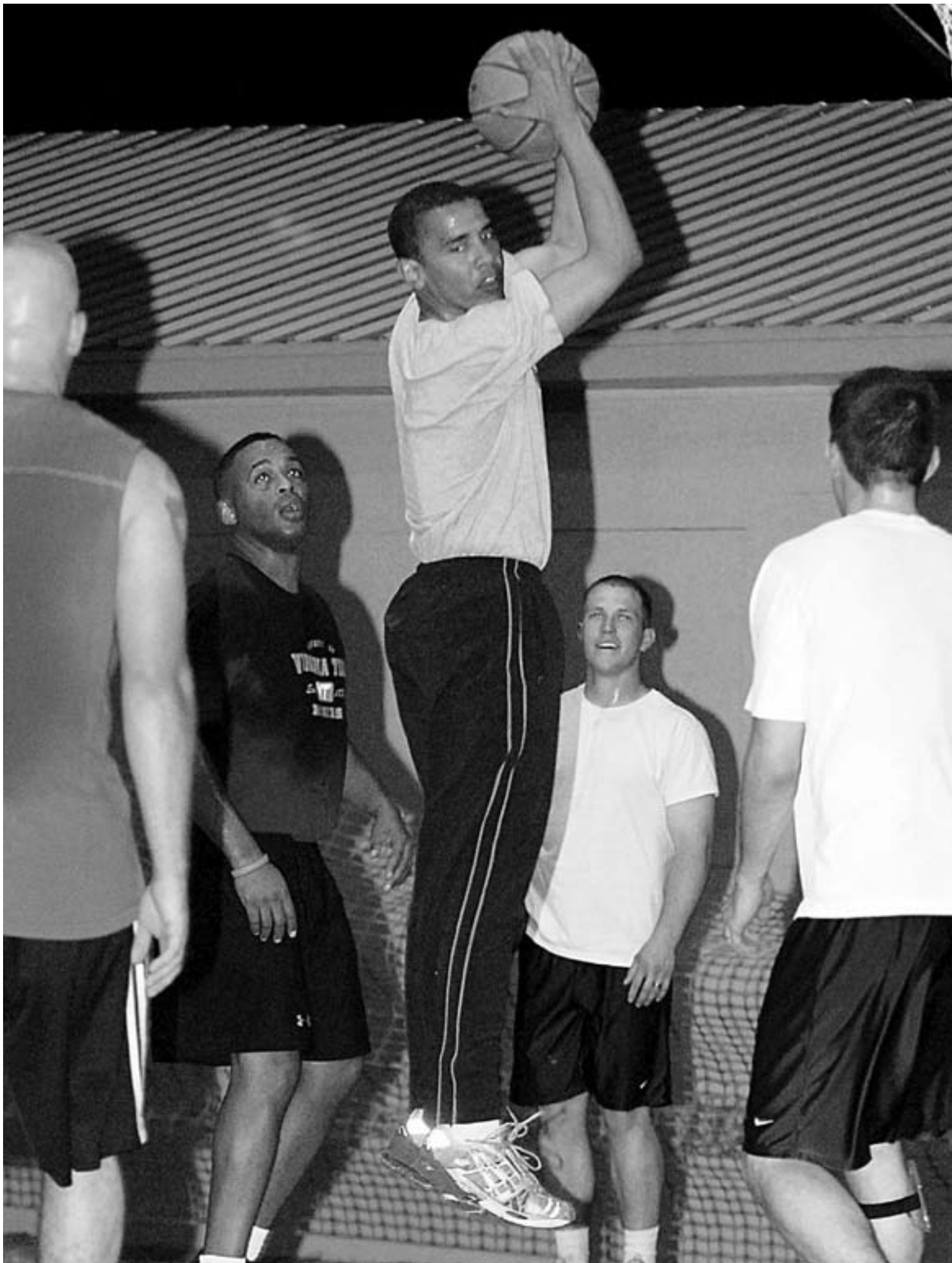
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Jessica Murphy

LA PATRIE

CITY AND BOROUGHS IMPOSE FINES ON TOP OF TAXES CONSCRIPTING MERCHANTS INTO PUBLIC BLUE COLLAR WORK

Don't clean weeds and butts? You pay!

Montreal merchants say they're being fined under the cleanliness bylaws while the City remains in disrepair.

Bill Vasilios Karidogiannis, a property owner on Avenue du Parc, is the recipient of one of those fines - \$260 for not maintaining the weeds around a city tree. The weeds in front of his property had grown higher than the 20 centimeters allowed under a Plateau bylaw.

"It means I need to come out everyday and measure them," he said.

In the meantime, he said, his borough had let his street go to pot.

"It looks very Third World here. And nobody's cut their weeds except me. Some (weeds) are literally chest high," he told *The Metropolitan* two weeks ago.

Then last Thursday, borough workers cleaned the street - but not before the inspectors ticketed a series of merchants a day earlier.

"They keep telling me it's not a tax grab, but, you know, it's an indirect tax," Karidogiannis said.

"There's no give and take, there's just take, take, take."

Since 2005, Montreal boroughs have adopted bylaws requiring property owners to maintain the public property in front of their buildings up to the sidewalk.

There are currently 50 different bylaws across City boroughs.

Some merchants say this has led to confusion, though all the boroughs sent out information packets to property owners or merchant associations. The City is currently creating a uniform series of laws for all its 19 boroughs.

In 2007, 7124 fines were given citywide for infractions of the cleanliness bylaws. In the Ville Marie borough, 2700 fines were distributed in six months, bringing in a potential revenue of \$1 million.



"If you add it all up my municipal tax bill comes to about \$1000 a month . . . Where does that go if we're also being obligated to do blue-collar work? Cut my taxes and I'll clean—I'll even fill the potholes."

Merchants on the Plateau received 1940 fines totaling \$223,420 in potential revenues.

The Montreal municipal court does not keep statistics on the number of

tickets currently being contested under the cleanliness bylaws.

Zissis Fotopoulos, on the executive committee of the Park Avenue Merchants Association,

agrees with Karidogiannis that the bylaws are a mistake.

"We think it's not right," he said. "They made a mistake when they passed it."

He's trying to organize the street's property owners to contest the tickets as a group.

While he lauds the borough workers for last week's cleanup, he said he wishes they would do it more often.

"I know one thing: it looks more beautiful when (the weeds) are cut," he said.

In Ville Marie, property owners are expressing their own frustration at the borough's bylaws, some of the strictest in Montreal.

They require landlords to install ashtrays at building entrances. The landlords have to purchase the ashtrays, which cost about \$100 and up.

Owners also have the option of placing a no-smoking sign on their building.

Maggie Garafano manages a series of buildings on Peel Street, Ste-Catherine Street and on Phillips Square. She's received over \$4000 in fines for non compliance with the ashtray legislation.

The fines were linked to two businesses renting in her building. The first, a restaurant, had ashtrays on all the tables of its terrace, but not a regulation one attached to the building's wall.

The second was a cafe that didn't allow smoking even outside and had prominent no smoking signs on its tables, but not a regulation no smoking sign on the building's wall.

"(The laws) don't cover restaurant patrons, it's for the people that are walking by," Garafano said. "It's not my responsibility."

She has since bought and installed the ashtrays though she's contesting the fines.

"These ashtrays are my worst nightmare," she said. "People stuff their garbage in there."

Street people also break into them to steal the remnants of cigarettes, leaving her to replace the broken ashtrays.

Garafano said she's left wondering why there are no garbage cans on the stretch of Peel near her properties and why the snow removal in the winter is dismal.

"Don't we pay enough taxes?"

A report released by the City notes a 48 per cent increase in fines in 2007.

Meanwhile, Karidogiannis is contesting his tickets and taking on the borough in his blog, *Why Montreal?*

"My question is this: I pay taxes - \$6000 a year just for the building," said Karidogiannis. "I pay taxes to the city (in many ways). If you add it all up it comes to about \$1000 a month. Where does that go if we're obligated to do blue-collar work? Cut my taxes and I'll clean. I'll even fill the potholes up." ♣

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GARCEAU FOUNDATION AND INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS BENEFIT CONCERT



The "Gentling the condition" Concert

The most satisfying thing for me about combining the social activism of the Institute for Public Affairs and the journalistic advocacy of media is the ability to help more people more effectively. It has also brought many more people together to do well and gentle the condition. Among the cases and causes we have been able to tackle, no issues are as poignant as those that deal with the 3-H's of society's ills: health, hunger and homelessness. As much as the Institute has done – particularly in expanding Moisson Montreal's

raison, que non seulement ces groupes excellent dans ce qu'ils accomplissent, mais aussi que, considérés en un tout, ils sont emblématiques des préoccupations les plus criantes en matière de justice sociale dans notre communauté.

Dr. Nicholas Steinmetz' and Dr. Gilles Julien's Fondation pour la promotion de la pédiatrie sociale tackles the health needs of poor children. Helping thousands in Montreal's poorest areas of Côte-des-Neiges and Hochelaga-Maisonneuve, the Fondation cares

d'espace et de ressources. Elle a désespérément besoin des fonds pour des locaux plus grands, mais plus économiques, afin de poursuivre son œuvre essentielle.



Dr. Gilles Julien and children from the Fondation pour la promotion de la pédiatrie sociale.

Brigitte Garceau wanted to give structure to the help we were bringing to these groups. She realized that many were missing the kind of professional skills she was able to organize and channel. Elle a créé La Fondation Garceau afin de fournir un appui financier, professionnel et organisationnel à l'action communautaire et aux associations de services sociaux qui font face à d'importants défis comme la santé, la faim et l'itinérance. Chaque jour, ces groupes, qui œuvrent déjà des conditions précaires, doivent faire

years. Government programs do not always meet local needs and more and more non-governmental organizations are filling the gaps with more and more Canadians turning to them for help.

Brigitte croit qu'aucun parmi nous ne peut rester inactif devant ces réalités. C'est pourquoi, Mme Garceau met ses années d'expérience dans le réseautage politique et communautaire, de même que



Brigitte Garceau

I assure you that the music, the words and the images of this concert will pierce your heart. We want you to take away from it a greater ability to see the world through the eyes of its victims. And to understand, intuitively, that the less educated are not less intelligent and that the less affluent are not any less human. That is what Cassandra's Lilacs "Gentle the Condition" concert is all about, and what the Garceau Foundation seeks to achieve.

capacities, sending paramedics to the SCLC's Delta Relief Project during Hurricane Katrina, assisting Toronto's "Lawyers feed the homeless" program, helping defray expenses for poor kids who needed surgery – there is always more to do. And when a plight is brought to your attention, you cannot remain idle.

Au cours de la dernière année, l'avocate et activiste Brigitte Garceau a porté à mon attention trois organisations, de même que leurs besoins. J'ai d'abord pu focuser l'attention des médias sur les besoins urgents de ces organisations et, en oeuvrant de concert avec notre réseau d'activiste sociaux, nous avons été en mesure de fournir les moyens moraux et matériels requis. Brigitte croit, à mon avis et avec

for the physical, psychological and educational needs of children who are products of underprivileged homes. It not only provides immediate help, but follows the children through years of schooling to ensure that the work is having an effect.

It is a totally holistic approach to childhood development (see "It does take a village" at : www.themetropolitain.ca).

La Maison du Partage d'Youville est une cuisine communautaire et une banque alimentaire qui, depuis vingt-cinq ans, oeuvre dans les quartiers Pointe-Saint-Charles, Verdun et Petite-Bourgogne. Cet organisme dessert en besoins alimentaires des centaines de personnes à chaque semaine. Actuellement, La Maison doit faire face à un manque

De la Rue... à la Réussite, takes homeless men and women and provides them with the necessary tools and employment opportunities to reintegrate into the workforce.



De la Rue... à la Réussite's Brian Morel, founder and president Sue McDougall and Serge Fournier. This remarkable organization, founded by the indefatigable Sue McDougall and her late husband Jean-Pierre Chartrand, doesn't just get people on their feet, it gets them back into life. It understands that it's about more than just getting people a paycheque; it's about giving them back their purpose.



Board meeting at the *Maison de partage* with Beryl Wajzman, Brigitte Garceau, and labour leader Edward Branden in attendance.

face à des besoins de plus en plus pressants.

Ours is a nation of wealth, but with only a thin veneer of affluence. Recently released government studies demonstrate that one-third of our urban households live below the poverty line and that the median household income in Canada has increased just slightly more than \$100 a year over the past twenty-five

dans les campagnes de financement, au profit de la Fondation Garceau. The Foundation's first major project, produced in co-operation with the Institute, is the "Cassandra's Lilacs" concert.

Inspired by a real-life Cassandra - Garceau's ten year old daughter - who wanted to do something to help the underprivileged, the symbolism of the lilac is poignant and pithy. Like children, the most vulnerable and fragile among us, each lilac flower alone is beautiful but fragile. But together in a bough, lilacs are not only fragrant, but strong. Each child alone is fragile. But if we look at them together, we are compelled by their needs and find the strength to accomplish the unimaginable. Together, we can gentle the condition.

*“This story shall the good man teach his son;
We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;
This day shall gentle the condition;”*

~ Henry V

This concert seeks to raise money for, and awareness of, the three unique organizations in the Montreal community that I have outlined above.

Le spectacle aura lieu sous la présidence d'honneur de Madame Andrée Ruffo. Durant plusieurs années, Mme Ruffo a été une voix éclairante non seulement au Québec, mais aussi dans tout le pays, en faveur de la défense des plus vulnérables et des plus démunis notamment les enfants. En tant que juge au Tribunal de la jeunesse, elle a fait preuve non seulement de compassion à la Cour, mais aussi sur la scène publique. Son livre, intitulé *Parce que je crois aux enfants*, n'est pas seulement un réquisitoire contre l'apathie, mais aussi un éloquent appel à l'action.



Andrée Ruffo

This concert will be held Thursday, October 2nd, 2008 at 7.30 pm at Théâtre St-Denis. Among the entertainers will be Ranée Lee, Chantal Chamandy, Stephanie Biddle from New York, Lorraine Klaasen, Ashley King, Sandy Brandone, the Imani Family and Full Gospel Church's Children's Choir and international human rights activist and former Miss World Canada Nazanin Afshin-Jam will be coming in from Vancouver to be

with us. Other stars will be announced shortly. There will also be an after-party at the popular night club, Lamouche.

We are proud to help The Garceau Foundation make this special evening a great success. I am reaching out to all of you to buy as many tickets to this great event as you can. All contributions are deductible and tax receipts will be sent out. The \$250 VIP ticket entitles you to attend the after party at LaMouche, just one block south of the theater on St-Denis and St-Catherine. General admission tickets are \$150. Please email me at wajzman@themetropolitain.ca with your ticket requests. Tax receipts will be issued.

The concert will not only be about entertainment. You will meet the people behind these groups and you will meet the people they help. We hope you will be touched as you meet the most humble among us who cannot secure the preferences of the privileged for themselves. We hope you will be touched enough to give of your time and talent as well as your treasure.

C'est d'ailleurs ce que le designer bien connu Kevin Allwood a décidé de faire. Les créations de Kevin sont connues sous l'étiquette "Nevik" et, travaillant avec Charlize Theron et Katherine Heigl, il lance maintenant "Kevin Allwood Couture", dont la nouvelle ligne sera lancée à Los

Angeles. Malgré son horaire surchargé, Kevin se dévoue en tant que directeur artistique de notre concert. Pour ce faire, il met aussi à contribution certains membres de sa talentueuse équipe de Montréal et de Los Angeles, qui aideront à la

coordination de l'événement.

I assure you that the music, the words and the images of this concert will pierce your heart. We want you to take away from it a greater ability to see the world through the eyes of its victims. And to understand,

intuitively, that the less educated are not less intelligent and that the less affluent are not any less human. That is what Cassandra's Lilacs "Gentle the Condition" concert is all about, and what the Garceau Foundation seeks to achieve. ♣

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Ex-dramaturge, romancier persévérant, essayiste et poète à ses heures, Pierre K. Malouf fréquente des fédéralistes et des indépendantistes, des gens de gauche et des gens de droite, des jeunes et des vieux, des écrivains et des ingénieurs. Gentil comme tout, il ne dit pas toujours tout ce qu'il pense, mais pense toujours ce qu'il écrit.

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LE SYSTÈME DE SANTÉ AU QUÉBEC

Tout ne va pas si mal

En santé publique, le Québec vit en régime de pénurie, surtout en ce qui touche les ressources humaines. Le nombre de médecins peut paraître suffisant, il y en a chez nous 215 pour 100 000 habitants, la moyenne canadienne étant de 190. Pourtant, seulement 75 % des Québécois ont un médecin de famille (la moyenne canadienne est de 86 %). Notre

manquons d'infirmières : le rapport Castonguay dit qu'il nous en faudrait 3 000 de plus, chiffre qui représente à peu près 5 % des effectifs et qui pourrait grimper à 10 000 en 2014. Nous manquons de pharmaciens en milieu hospitalier. La pénurie atteint 18 %, il nous faudrait 220 pharmaciens supplémentaires. La situation ne sera pas corrigée de sitôt : un

de la Santé. Loin de moi l'idée de blâmer ici celui a récemment démissionné ou celui qui lui a succédé. Philippe Couillard laisse derrière lui une oeuvre imposante. Plusieurs expriment des réserves (en particulier quant au choix de Saint-Luc comme site du nouveau CHUM), mais rares sont ceux qui jugent qu'il n'a rien fait de bon.

demeurent trop longs, les infirmières s'épuisent à la tâche, les salles d'urgence débordent, les malades mentaux errent dans les rues. En 2003, les libéraux nous avaient promis mer et monde. Ce qu'on doit leur reprocher ce n'est pas d'avoir trahi leurs promesses, c'est d'avoir trop promis.

Forte de ces constats déprimants,

suivent, on commence à me prodiguer des soins : morphine, radiographie, scanner. Le lendemain matin, échographie. Quelques jours plus tard je suis débarrassé de ma jaunisse, de mes pierres et de ma vésicule.

Je n'ai qu'à me féliciter des soins reçus à l'hôpital Jean-Talon. Le personnel infirmier a beau être épuisé, il n'en laisse rien paraître. Tous ceux et celles qui se sont occupés de moi sont d'un professionnalisme à toute épreuve. Soit, j'ai passé 48 heures sur une civière avant d'être transféré dans une chambre. C'est peu cher payer pour être si bien soigné. Tout ne va si mal dans notre système de santé.

À Jean-Talon, notons-le, la pluriethnicité du personnel est un fait vécu. Je fus traité par des médecins « de souche », opéré par un médecin d'origine vietnamienne, soigné par des infirmiers et infirmières d'origines canadienne-française, haïtienne, maghrébine, est-européenne. À l'occasion d'un code bleu (arrêt cardio-respiratoire), je vis passer au pas de course devant ma porte un médecin coiffé d'une kippa. Je n'aperçus pendant pendant ces dix jours, du moins parmi les employés de l'institution, aucun autre signe religieux ostentatoire que celui-là, qui ne pourra échapper aux interdits qui frapperont un jour le turban, le hidjab et le crucifix. Dura lex, sed lex. ♣



En fait, la plupart des réformes que le Dr Couillard a pilotées produiront à moyen et long termes de bons résultats.

territoire serait-il trop vaste ? Nos médecins travailleraient-ils moins que ceux du ROC ? Le modèle québécois (que le monde nous envie) aurait-il quelque chose de bordélique ?

En théorie, nous avons donc assez de médecins ; en pratique, il nous en manque. En dermatologie, par exemple, il nous faudrait cinquante médecins de plus. Les facultés en forment trois ou quatre par an... Nous

pharmacien en milieu hospitalier gagne 20 000 \$ de moins que dans le privé, mais doit étudier deux ans de plus. Pénurie de médecins, d'infirmières, de pharmaciens, et pénurie aussi, sans doute, de techniciens de laboratoire.

Il est cependant un domaine d'activité où notre système de santé ne connaît aucun passage à vide. Nous ne manquerons jamais... de ministres

Certes, Amir Khadir prétend que le Dr Couillard « a laissé se détériorer le système de santé au détriment de la population et au seul bénéfice du privé ». Voilà qui est trop exagéré pour ne pas être insignifiant. En fait, la plupart des réformes que le Dr Couillard a pilotées produiront à moyen et long termes de bons résultats. En attendant, bien sûr, les listes d'attente et les délais

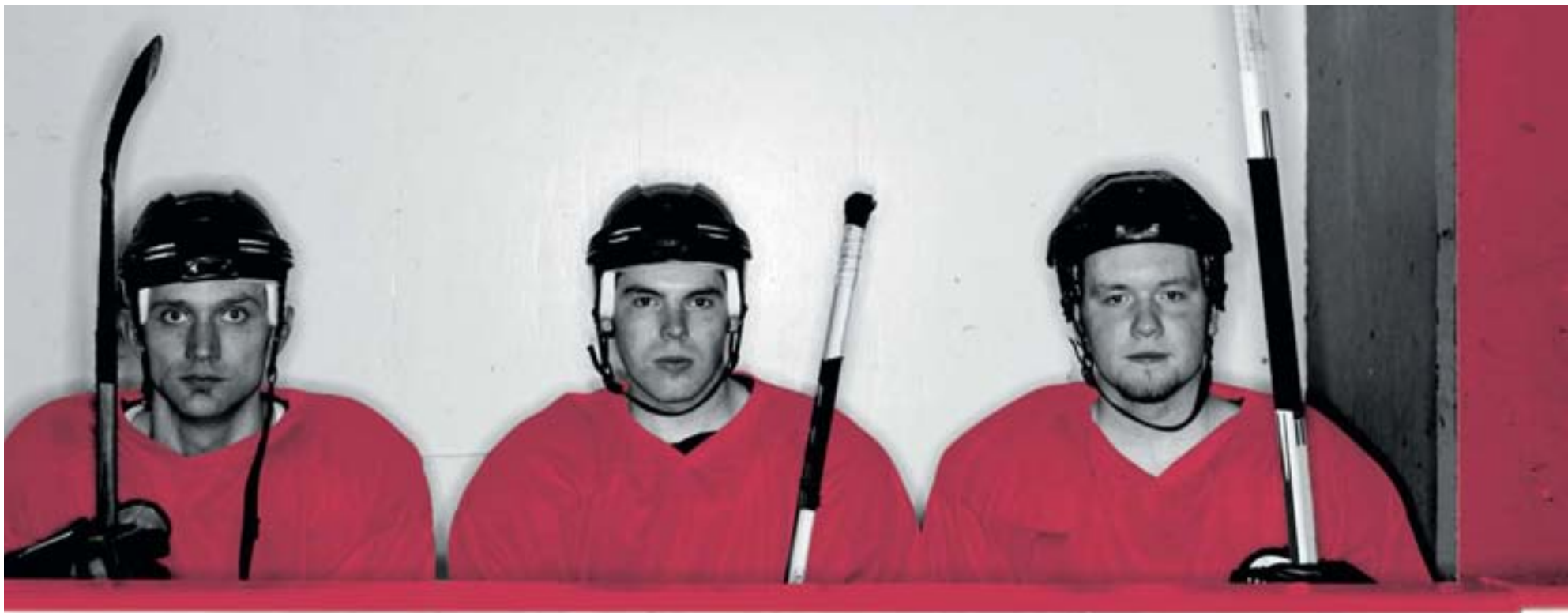
ma vésicule biliaire a décidé à la mi-juin de mettre le système à l'épreuve. La vieille salope m'imposa donc, par un beau samedi après-midi, une violente crise de colique hépatique. Je me rends à pied à l'urgence de l'hôpital Jean-Talon. L'infirmière préposée au triage voit d'emblée que mon cas est sérieux. Je me retrouve sur une civière en deux temps trois mouvements. Dans les minutes qui

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- George F. Lengvari, Sr.



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Proud to be Canadian?

Canada provides hundreds of million of dollars in aid to dictators, tyrants, and corrupt governments around the world.

Of the 25 countries named in the new International Policy Statement as key recipients of Canadian aid, only 6 are deemed by Freedom House to be free, while 19 are unfree or dictatorships. All 25 are identified as having corruption as a major problem, combined with weak parliaments, a lack of transparency and little respect for the rule of law.

Instead of working to bring about positive change, Canadian aid allows these dysfunctional and sometimes tyrannical regimes to remain intact while we apply band-aids to the symptoms.

Canada consistently fails to support democracies around the world such as India, Taiwan, America and Israel. In many cases, we actively work against them. And with the exception of Ukraine, Canada refuses to take measurable action to support the billions of people aspiring for democracy, freedom and accountable governments around the world.

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Canada's foreign policy is centred around three Ds (Defense, Development and Diplomacy). CCD believes that our policies should be guided by a 4th D, Democracy. Canada must make ending corruption, respect for the rule of law, and open, accountable and transparent governments key foreign policy priorities. If you agree, become a member of the CCD.

Founded in 2003, the Canadian Coalition for Democracies (CCD) is an organization of concerned Canadians dedicated to the protection and promotion of democracy at home and abroad. CCD will influence the Canadian political process and public opinion to achieve a more pro-democracy foreign policy.

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VILLANUEVA AFTERMATH



Police walking “thin line” in Montreal North

Only days after the shooting of Freddy Villanueva and the ensuing riot that ripped through the streets of Montreal North, SPVM Police Chief Yvan Delorme said the city's police were doing everything possible to re-establish law, order and “a sense of security” in the district.

“It's difficult,” said Delorme. “The police always know how there's only a thin line between prevention and repression.”

Over the past week, Delorme said his officers met with all of the district's political representatives, all of its community leaders and several of its community activists in order to re-establish some kind of communication between the area's residents

and the police. In addition to the SPVM's public relations offensive, Delorme also sent reinforcements to police the area, including a number of experienced officers with several years of service in the city's ‘zones chaudes’-its hot zones.

After weeks of bad press and a number of accusations as to how the police were unable to control the events in Montreal North, Delorme said 35 arrests have already been made “...and there were more to come.” Many of the arrests were based upon assorted pictures the police took during the riot and later posted on the SPVM's web site. While police say much of the damage done during the riot was the

“We can't do it alone,” noted SPVM Police Chief Yvan Delorme. “The community's representatives, its schools, its organizations and even the parents all have their place if we want to solve the community's problems.”



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result of ‘criminal opportunities’, police authorities also believe more than a few of the city's ‘usual suspects’ used the riot to inflict their own particular brand of mayhem.

“A lot of factors contributed to this situation,” said Delorme. “As bad as it seems, things could have been a lot worse.”

After he mentioned how much he admired the courage and fortitude displayed by the police during the riot, he also congratulated them for their discipline even as they were being confronted with a tense and potentially explosive situation.

“Even after one of theirs [a police-woman] had been shot,” he said, “they avoided any kind of provocation which would have only made matters worse.”

Even after Delorme said he would have to wait for the results of the SQ (Sureté du Québec) investigation into the Villanueva shooting before he could make any comment, he also told the city's media there were no quick and easy solutions to the kind of problems the SPVM had to face in Montreal North. Even so, he ordered his police force to make a special effort to reach out to the community and try to work with the community to solve its problems.

“We can't do it alone,” he said. “The community's representatives, its schools, its organizations and even the parents all have their place if we want to solve the community's problems.” ♦

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TO MEDICATE OR INCARCERATE

Safe injection facilities: Compassionate or enabling?

The ongoing debate over whether or not to provide Montreal drug addicts with clean syringes and a safe place to shoot up pits the tough love crowd against a more sympathetic, mothering approach; long-term solutions versus short-term relief.

Quebec's new health minister, Dr. Yves Bolduc, scrapped a pilot project last month that would have seen a

exemption granted to the organization by Health Canada. The project was in response to an out-of-control addiction problem in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, where an estimated 4,700 injection drug addicts live. Montreal is home to roughly 12,000 addicts island-wide, 25 per cent of which are HIV-positive.

"La prohibition et l'approche

There is no denying that clean needles will prevent the spread of HIV and Hepatitis C among drug users. Opponents of SIFs are arguing two main points: The first being a lack of research into the long-term effectiveness of the sites and the second is a more ideological standpoint against the tolerance of unhealthy, criminal behaviour.

ble with SIFs; a source higher up at the organization told The Métropolitain that it's simply a stop-gap measure that enables a dangerous lifestyle and does not reduce the number of addicts on the street. Their treatment, on the other hand, is said to reduce criminality and drug use by 95 per cent.

Harding did concede that the sites

that cannot otherwise be legally prescribed?" Clement said. "The supervised injection site undercuts the ethic of medical practice and sets a debilitating example for all physicians and nurses, both present and future in Canada."

Clement's critics have said that failing to intervene as addicts contract life-threatening infections could also



"La prohibition et l'approche d'abstinence comme traitement pour les toxicomanes est un échec. On a essayé d'autres solutions. Il y a des choses qui ne fonctionnent pas pour tout le monde... Il faut empêcher que ces gens là souffrent de problèmes de santé."

safe injection facility (SIF) created in the city, similar to Vancouver's InSite centre. Injection drug users can walk into the centres, no questions asked, and get high in sterile cubicles as trained staff keep a watchful eye on them. Workers make sure there are no overdoses and that the addicts can leave on their own two feet.

InSite has been able to operate legally since 2003 because of an

d'abstinence comme traitement pour les toxicomanes est un échec," said Jean-Sébastien Fallu, the head of GRIP Montreal (Groupe de recherche et d'intervention psychosociale), at a recent press conference held to denounce Bolduc's decision. "On a essayé d'autres solutions. Il y a des choses qui ne fonctionnent pas pour tout le monde... Il faut empêcher que ces gens là souffrent de problèmes de santé."

"There's something very wrong about it," said Seychelle Harding, director of communications for Portage, a nonprofit group of treatment facilities that specializes in substance abuse problems. "I'm very happy the decision (by Bolduc) to have safe injection sites was dropped. These sites are a way to meet people and network to get drugs."

Portage's philosophy is incompati-

"may be helpful for a highly marginalized population; a very small group that can't be treated."

Federal health minister Tony Clement used more polarizing language while addressing doctors at last month's Canadian Medical Association conference in Montreal.

"Is it ethical for health-care professionals to support the administration of drugs that are of unknown substance, purity or potency; drugs

be against a doctor's code of ethics.

A combination of SIFs and treatment could be one possible solution that would bridge the gap between opposing forces in this debate. Research completed last year by the University of British Columbia, Vancouver's St. Paul's Hospital and the B.C. Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS suggests that InSite has been "associated independently with a 30 per cent increase in detoxification service use, and this behaviour was associated with increased rates of long-term addiction treatment initiation and reduced injecting at the SIF."

Bolduc's reasoning for abandoning the project, initiated by his predecessor, was the lack of research available on the effectiveness of SIFs. No plans for the health ministry to conduct their own studies have been announced. Parti Québécois critics blasted Bolduc, calling it a Conservative-style lesson in civic morality and a failure to respond to the AIDS crisis. The PQ's press conference last month was held at a Gay Village park that is notorious for neighbourhood children stumbling upon used syringes on the playground.

"On aimerait une société sans drogues," said Fallu, "mais peut-être ce n'est pas très réaliste." ♦

Shedding light on the truth

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What constitutes appropriate force?

Canadian police and other law enforcement officials will have to wait until 2009 to answer questions posed about the safe and efficient use of their ubiquitous 'Taser' stun guns.

Last year, after a tourist's videotape showed several R.C.M.P. constables using their CEDs (Conducted Energy Device) to subdue and eventually kill visibly distressed and barely coherent Polish immigrant Robert Dziekanski, the Canadian Association of Police Chiefs (C.A.P.C.) asked the Canadian Police Research Centre (CPRC) to prepare a complete and comprehensive report on the effective police use of CED weapons. The five-part,

there is no way the report can be ready for public scrutiny until 2009. Steve Palmer, the CPRC's executive director, said the center's report was far too important to leave any doubt as to its discipline and its veracity.

"It's important that this [report] is done well and done in a way that brings value to everybody concerned- the public, the police, and policy makers," said Palmer.

While both police and government authorities understand the public's concern about CEDs, police officers still believe it's an acceptable 'intermediate force option'.

As the publisher of Blue Line,

Lymburner knows something about a cop's life on the streets.

"Police know they must always open their strategic options," said Lymburner, "...and that's after they're being forced to reduce their tactical options."

To exercise their authority, Lymburner believes police on the street have only a few options between their voice and their gun.

"You've got your voice," he said, "...and then you've got your hands. You've got your stick and then you've got your gun. Street cops like the Taser because it's an acceptable option that lies somewhere between questionable options like your stick

the Dziekanski scandal and could affect the public's concern as to how and when the police use their CEDs. But as a policeman, he believes the weapon has also proved itself to be an "acceptable intermediate force option".

Denis DeFalco, a well-known NDG routier agrees with Lymburner. Late one night, as he happened to be walking home after a long night with friends in a St. Denis Street tavern, DeFalco saw a naked young woman screaming as she was running towards the Berri St. overpass near the Sherbrooke Street Metro.

"I caught her before she could toss herself off the overpass," he said. "I

girl, everybody was screaming and someone called 911. That's when he started to get worried because he began to think the police might get the wrong idea.

"Once the police got there, they told me to stand away and when I rolled away, she got up, started screaming at them and that's when they hit her with the Taser. She just collapsed in a heap and it was all over."

When the police drove DeFalco home, the police told him the girl probably owed him her life. All DeFalco could remember was how the naked and hysterical girl dropped once she was hit by the Taser.

Critical observers and police

"You've got your voice and then you've got your hands. You've got your stick and then you've got your gun. Street cops like the Taser because it's an acceptable option that lies somewhere between questionable options like your nightstick and terminal options like your gun."

federally funded report will compare CEDs with other police weapons, including handguns. Police and assorted judicial experts are especially curious as to what the report has to say about a medical condition now described as 'excited delirium': a state of extreme mental and physiological excitement defined by extreme agitation, overt hostility and occasionally exaggerated physical strength. It is a common symptom of extreme mental illness (Schizophrenia) as well as the result of continuous and intensive drug abuse. However, since the report's medical research must be subject to an independent scientific peer group's survey and analysis, CPRC executives admit



The Canadian Association of Police Chiefs (C.A.P.C.) asked the Canadian Police Research Centre (CPRC) to prepare a complete and comprehensive report on the effective police use of CED (Conducted Energy Device) weapons. The five-part, federally funded report will compare CEDs with other police weapons, including handguns.

Canada's well-respected national law enforcement magazine, retired Toronto policeman Morley

and terminal options like your gun."

As a publisher, Lymburner understands how recent events like

fell backwards and held her from the back as she kept trying to jump."

As DeFalco held the struggling

experts across the country believe the CPRC's conclusions will depend upon what medical experts now define as "excited delirium".

DeFalco hopes the girl he saved is alive and as well. However, Robert Dziekanski, Montreal's Quillem Registre and at least 20 other Canadians are dead after being momentarily electrocuted with a CED. Even so, while police officials are anxious to read the CPRC's report, most working police officers believe the CEDs are an acceptable "intermediate force option" that will soon become just another "tactical option" for police across the nation.

"After all," said Lymburner. "It's a lot better option than being shot." ♦

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LE HEZBOLLAH ABAT UN HÉLICOPTÈRE DE L'ARMÉE LIBANAISE ET TUE SON PILOTE

Incident, ou Meurtre prémédité avec message à l'appui?

Lorsque l'information est tombée, ma première réaction était de la vérifier pour voir si les agences de presse ne s'étaient pas trompées – bien que rares sont les erreurs de ces dernières, voire impossible – en annonçant qu'un hélicoptère de l'Armée libanaise avait été abattu au dessus d'une zone contrôlée par le Hezbollah au Sud Liban. Hélas! l'information était correcte et un hélico de l'armée libanaise avait bel et bien été « forcé » d'atterrir selon les premiers rapports. Or, ce qui est étrange dans cette affaire, ce sont les explications fournies aussi bien par le Hezbollah que par l'armée libanaise.

En effet, le communiqué de l'armée s'est contenté de présenter l'information dans ses faits... mais pas tous, en attendant l'enquête sur le terrain. Quant au Hezbollah, il a promis une coopération « sans faille » pour faire la lumière sur « ce regrettable incident » où un « hélicoptère de l'armée a été pris par erreur pour un hélicoptère israélien » !!! Le Hezbollah a ajouté qu'il « livrera la personne responsable de cet incident à la justice libanaise ».

Des questions qui en soulèvent d'autres, plus graves

À analyser de près cet incident, un observateur averti poserait plusieurs questions en tentant d'obtenir des éclaircissements plausibles à une telle affaire. Parmi ces questions, l'on peut répertorier les suivantes :

Qu'est-ce qu'un hélicoptère de l'armée faisait au dessus d'une région très sensible entièrement contrôlée par le Hezbollah et une zone où l'armée israélienne avait eu du mal à accéder durant la guerre de juillet 2006?

Comment une milice comme celle du Hezbollah, qui se prétend capable de détruire une armée sophistiquée comme celle de Tsahal, qui a annoncé être capable de mettre « l'ennemi à genoux » et « d'éradiquer ses espions libanais sur le sol libanais » a pris un hélicoptère GAZELLE (SA-341) libanais et visible en tant que tel pour un hélicoptère israélien ?

Comment une milice voire une armée comme celle du Hezbollah, qui clame haut et fort qu'elle est capable de repousser toute « invasion » israélienne et/ou

américaine, présente la personne qu'elle a remise à la justice libanaise comme étant le responsable de cet incident en le décrivant comme ayant été victime de « panique ». Ce qui l'a conduit à tirer avec son fusil d'assaut sur l'hélico ! Quatre balles seulement, forçant l'hélico à atterrir, tuant le pilote et blessant le copilote ?

Que dire des autres occupants de l'hélico, qui, semble-t-il, avaient été tabassés après, malgré qu'ils s'étaient identifiés aux miliciens du Hezbollah comme étant de l'armée libanaise ? Que dire alors des informations, qui restent toujours à vérifier, que le capitaine Samer Haddad, pilote de l'hélico, aurait été exécuté sommairement après que l'un des miliciens lui avait demandé de s'identifier?

Plusieurs autres questions hantent actuellement aussi bien les Libanais que la classe politique plus divisée que jamais, malgré un semblant d'union autour d'un nouveau gouvernement censé trouver une solution aux problèmes du pays. Or, examinées sous tous les angles, ces questions portent en elles plus de mystères que la zone survolée par cet hélico.

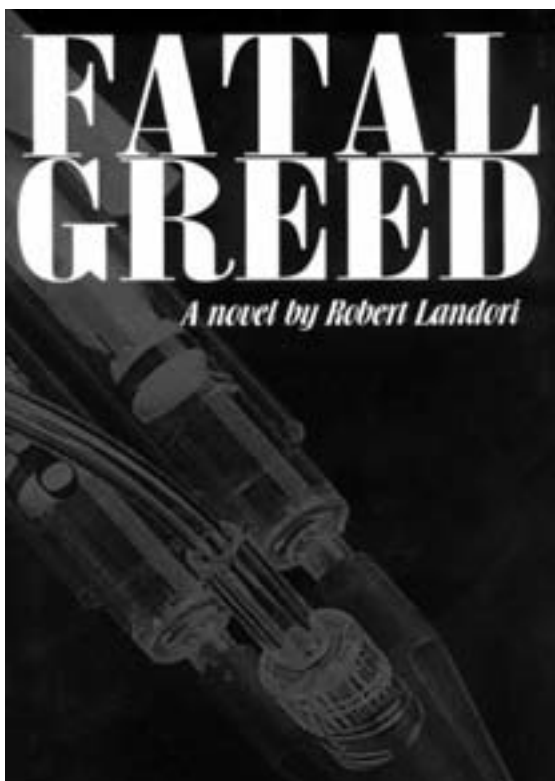
De spéculations en explications, la vérité est masquée

Ainsi, il serait plausible d'apporter une explication logique à ce qui s'est réellement passé, conscient du fait que cela peut également être considéré comme une spéculation. Mais les choses sur place étant ce qu'elles sont, la chance que ce scénario ce soit réellement produit nous semble plus proche de la réalité que ce que le Hezbollah essaie actuellement de faire miroiter au public libanais et arabe.

Tout d'abord, la région connue sous le nom de « Tallet (Colline de) Soujod » est l'une des régions les plus militairement sensibles pour le Hezbollah où il tient une présence active et très discrète. C'est une zone hautement militarisée mais invisible à l'œil de l'observateur de la FINUL, car elle est en dehors de la région qu'il supervise. Ensuite, le Hezbollah savait que, depuis quelques jours, l'armée libanaise effectuait des entraînements, d'autant plus que les instances militaires du Hezbollah avaient été informées de ces derniers. Or, il semblerait que cette zone ait été interdite d'accès

même à l'armée car elle est considérée comme une zone très sensible et, probablement, comme une forteresse militaire de laquelle les « surprises » contre Israël partiront. En effet, nul n'ignore la capacité militaire actuelle du Hezbollah et son armement plus que sophistiqué que l'Iran, la Syrie et la Russie mettent à sa disposition. Ainsi, le fait que l'hélico se serait dangereusement approché d'un des sites d'enfouissement éventuels ou d'installations de tels équipements militaires pourrait bel et bien être à l'origine de cet incident.

À cela s'ajoute la seconde question principale, celle de savoir pourquoi (ou comment) le pilote a été tué. Selon les premières explications contradictoires fournies, le pilote aurait été tué en vol. Or les médias libanais, notamment *L'Orient-Le-Jour*, rapportent que le pilote aurait été exécuté de sang froid après l'atterrissage du véhicule. Selon cette version, l'un des assaillants aurait demandé au pilote son nom comme pour s'assurer de son identité avant de l'exécuter froidement, laissant le corps gisant dans son sang pendant des heures et pendant que



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Et la question demeure : est-ce réellement un incident regrettable ou une nouvelle campagne pour la prise de contrôle de l'ensemble des institutions du pays par le Hezbollah, l'Iran et la Syrie ? Les jours à venir pourraient éventuellement fournir une réponse à cette question, à condition toutefois que les politiciens libanais et le nouveau commandant en chef de l'armée aient le courage d'avouer la vérité... et de l'afficher au grand jour.

les autres occupants étaient tabassés, comme pour envoyer un message clair à l'armée libanaise.

Un message « clair » à l'armée

Ainsi, le Hezbollah semble vouloir marquer son territoire aérien également comme zone interdite même à l'État libanais, confirmant ainsi sa position d'hégémonie sur non seulement la politique libanaise, mais également sur son armée.

La remise d'un jeune militant du Hezbollah à la justice libanaise, en le présentant comme l'auteur de cet « incident regrettable », pour avoir « pris par erreur » des soldats libanais pour des « Israéliens », ne peut être considérée par les observateurs que comme une mascarade visant à étouffer rapidement cette affaire qui a soulevé le colère populaire, notamment chez les Chrétiens après l'exécution de

l'un des leurs, le pilote Samer Hanna.

Ce précédent est un message à prendre très au sérieux par l'État-Major de l'armée avec son nouveau chef, le Général Jean Kahwaji, qui s'était illustré en 1990 par son opposition à l'invasion syrienne alors qu'il était un des officiers supérieurs de la 10^{ème} Brigade hélicoptère de l'armée, une troupe d'élite qui avait payé le plus lourd

des tribus après que l'ordre lui ait été donné par le général Aoun, premier ministre par intérim à l'époque, pour baisser les armes et répondre aux ordres du Général Émile Lahoud, commandant en chef de l'armée à l'époque. Ceci avait résulté en l'exécution de plusieurs centaines de ses officiers et soldats aux mains de l'armée d'occupation syrienne.

Et la question demeure : est-ce

réellement un incident regrettable ou une nouvelle campagne pour la prise de contrôle de l'ensemble des institutions du pays par le Hezbollah, l'Iran et la Syrie ? Les jours à venir pourraient éventuellement fournir une réponse à cette question, à condition toutefois que les politiciens libanais et le nouveau commandant en chef de l'armée aient le courage d'avouer la vérité... et de l'afficher au grand jour. ♦

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MANNING THE BARACKADES

Ideas before identities

Why the nomination of Barack Obama gives us all new reason to hope

Historic moments have a way of sneaking up on us.

Who among us, I wonder, didn't feel something akin to goose bumps as the reality of Barack Obama's acceptance of the Democratic nomination for President settled in upon them last week. One moment we were in the midst of just another U.S. presidential campaign, admiring yet another over-packaged, albeit 'well-cadenced' politician, and the next we were witnessing nothing short of the embodiment of Martin Luther King's triumphant vision of justice and equality in America. As a candidate of colour accepted his party's nomination to vie for the role of President of the United States, it was as if suddenly, amidst all the recycled infotainment and vapid ramblings of the bottomless news hole that we're subjected to day-in and day-out, here was something real, and true, and even, perhaps, something good.

Here was a country asking of its citizens that they place a man's ideas before his identity—the very act of which initiates a cycle of reflection that doesn't end until one is struck by the meaninglessness of so many of the artificial barriers (white/black, Tory/Liberal, Christian/Muslim) we erect in the path of true cooperation and true compassion in both our public policies and our private lives. Just when we thought the U.S. was down for the count, being eaten from within by furtive and ignoble men adept at steering trillions in public tax dollars into private coffers and

public wars, here was a culture that could yet find the courage to dare its population to refuse itself potentially one of the great leaders of our generation—simply on the basis of the colour of his skin.

For many of you as for me, Obama himself remains very much an unknown quantity. Yes he rouses emotions with his preacherly intonations and impresses with his easy grace. Yes he comes from humble beginnings and therefore demonstrates the potential to be a truly compassionate leader. Yet his effectiveness at delivering on legislation and truly enacting the dream he has presented, his ability to rise above the media circuses and scandals that will beset him and those he holds near, these and other challenges lie in wait for him as they lie for everyone who would deign to be president, and so the jury will have to stay out on him until time and fate have had their way.

At times, while listening to Obama wax inspirational and beckon for that 'Yes we can' brand of change that has become his hallmark, I'm reminded of certain separatists in Quebec who have learned over time to keep their dream of independence far away on the horizon—always frustratingly free of specific detail and just oh-so out of reach—even as it is managed by its operators to manipulate public emotion and secure political control. Obama's dream of change is often just as hazy and just as free of specific detail, but for the time being we need to give him the benefit of the doubt until his political mettle has been tested and his legacy defined in the victories or defeats, or perhaps simply benign inefficacy that may await him.

What interests me more about Obama, and is of greater value than the man himself to our world and its quest for a higher, more global form of civilization, is the historic fact of



The choice of a national population to elevate a member of a minority race to vie for a nation's leadership position is no small matter... Across the U.S. and around the world, the potential represented by Barack Obama is now resonating with the powerless and disenfranchised, giving hope where there was none and enabling uncomfortable, troubling questions, not only about racial barriers to advancement but also the economic and religious and political barriers that currently bar the way between those who have power and privilege and those who do not.

his nomination and its political meaning both within and beyond the United States.

The choice of a national population to elevate a member of a minority race to vie for a nation's leadership position is no small matter. The fact of it occurring in the most powerful country in the world is that much more relevant still. Across the U.S. and around the world, the potential represented by Barack Obama is now resonating with the powerless and disenfranchised, giving hope where there was none and enabling uncomfortable, troubling questions,

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not only about racial barriers to advancement but about all the economic and religious and political barriers that currently bar the way between those who have power and privilege and those who do not.

If, in a few short generations, a people can rise from enslavement to see one of its own become a champion of champions, the most powerful man in the world, then what people in what country will not now feel doubly inspired and empowered to claim a similar destiny as their own? For those of us in the western world, consuming 80% of the planet's resources on an

As Montreal's first truly bilingual newspaper, *The Met* challenges our readership with every issue to live up to the standards inherent in the history of our city and in the mutual respect Montrealers so often demonstrate to each other and yet too often take for granted. Just as *The Met* demands of its readership to journey to a new moral high ground where a person's ideas matter more than the language those ideas are voiced in, so the newest Democratic candidate for the Presidency of the United States is challenging his country and the rest of the world to start holding ideas above race as well.

annual basis while representing only 20% of its population, this kind of empowerment needs to be noticed.

Obama's nomination is first and foremost about elevating an individual's ideas above their identity. It's about all of us now having the potential to see what's right and the power to do what's right for our world no matter who we are and where we come from. By embodying this shift in how Americans have chosen to look at themselves and their world, Obama and his nomination represent for everyone, everywhere, a new hope that we can learn to see beyond the petty identities and hierarchies that we so often put in the path of our compassion and our generosity.

As one of this paper's editors I'd be remiss not to point out that the elevating of ideas before identities is one of the guiding principles behind the founding of *The Métropolitain*. As Montreal's first truly bilingual newspaper, *The Met* challenges our readership with every issue to live up to the standards inherent in the history of our city and in the mutual respect Montrealers so often demonstrate to each other and yet too often take for granted. Just as *The Met* demands of its readership to journey to a new moral high ground where a person's ideas matter more than the language those ideas are voiced in, so the newest Democratic candidate for the Presidency of the United States is challenging his country and the rest of the world to start holding ideas above race as well.

It is a small leap from race to creed, and from creed to nation, and if we're lucky we'll all live to see those false differentiations fall to the wayside like the hollow and ultimately meaningless artefacts of a childish worldview that they are. Barack Obama the man will not bring about all of this himself, but in his nomination we have perhaps seen the first in a long series of steps that will need to be taken on our path to the more just and inclusive level of human civilization that we too often lose sight of.

Lump in the throat indeed. ♠

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Getting ready for \$200/barrel oil

Perhaps it seems foolish to suggest that oil will head to \$200 US in the wake of a \$4 per barrel decline in the price of oil (to \$110) on Monday, since Hurricane Gustav caused less damage than expected to offshore oil rigs in the Gulf of Mexico. However, if we look at demand for oil from a long term perspective, \$200 per barrel is more

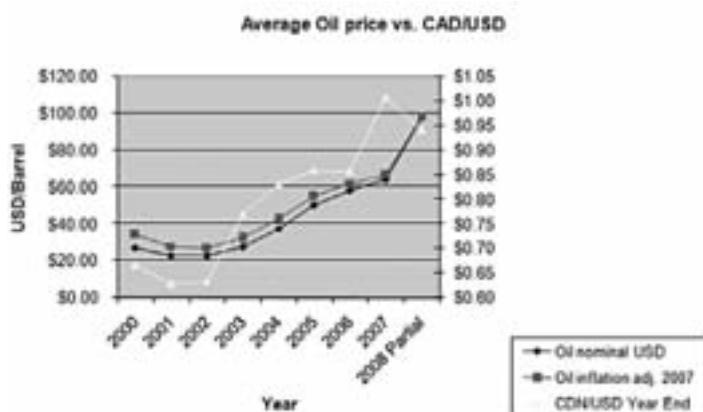
of a certainty than conjecture for the following reason; in the long run, demand will certainly outstrip supply as China and India ramp up their industrial development.

In his 2006 book, "The Coming Economic Collapse" Dr. Stephen Leeb argues that as the world depletes deposits of light sweet or intermediate crude, replacement

fields will either be of lesser quality, requiring greater expense for extraction, will not have the proven reserves of current fields, or both. A supply gap will emerge that will not subside through reduced consumption by the developed world which will push the barrel past the \$200 mark. Considering that we saw oil approach \$150 a barrel in mid-July,

it would not be hard to imagine that an international crisis in the Middle East, or a serious interruption of supply due to a natural disaster could cause oil to surpass its recent highs. What Dr. Leeb is concerned about is the virtual certainty that oil will sustain prices at the \$200 level without the effects of natural or political disasters due to the classic

migration to the east and west as dispossessed factory workers headed to where opportunity lies. The financial community could decamp from Toronto and head to Calgary, Edmonton or even Regina (!) since that's where the money would be. Equalization payments to Ontario could hit \$10 billion or more a year. It would be



What happens to Canada if the world actually sees \$200 oil?

Could you imagine the Canadian Dollar at \$1.50 US? This is not as far fetched a prediction as you may think. Since the fall of 2002, the Canadian dollar (as expressed in USD) has done a remarkable job of tracking the rise in price of a barrel of light sweet crude.

effects of not enough supply and too much demand.

What happens to Canada if the world actually sees \$200 oil? Could you imagine the Canadian Dollar at \$1.50 US? This is not as far fetched a prediction as you may think. Since the fall of 2002, the Canadian dollar (as expressed in USD) has done a remarkable job of tracking the rise in price of a barrel of light sweet crude.

This relationship weakened somewhat in 2008 as the Bank of Canada tried to "talk down" the Canadian Dollar and stopped increasing interest rates, in the face of a manufacturing recession in Ontario and sluggish manufacturing performance in Quebec.

Should international oil demand outstrip supply on a sustained basis, the US, along with many others in the developed and developing world, will beat their way to Canada's Tar Sands as a source of supply and will have to trade their currencies for \$CAD as a result. Central Canadian manufacturing will face job implosion; given the rapidity of the rise in the dollar there will be little time to adjust.

We already witnessed the outcry from Canadian manufacturers when the dollar briefly touched \$1.10 in the fall of 2007. There would be little that the Bank of Canada could do to mitigate the situation—cutting interest rates to zero is not an option, given that inflation would be rampant in the Canadian West and even in the Maritimes as workers scrambled for accommodation and the oil firms for equipment.

Central Canada could face a mass

the greatest reorganization of people and wealth even seen in an industrialized nation.

Is there any way to avoid this economic calamity? I fear not – since China and India are not attempting to reduce their oil consumption. Actually, China is securing long term sources of supply by investing in promising fields in Africa and seeking better relationships with oil-producing nations like Venezuela.

Even if a new US President wholeheartedly embraces alternative energy and invests hundreds of billions in solar, wind, nuclear, clean coal and natural gas, it will take 10 years at least to see the results. In the meantime, any reductions in US (or Canadian, or European) consumption would be gobbled up by the developing world.

Unless we can convince China and India to invest in partnership with developed-world governments in the quest for alternative energy, we will see \$200 per barrel oil at some point in the next decade. As consumers, investors and workers we must all consider how we may be impacted by this upcoming economic catharsis and develop personal financial and career plans to live through it.

It will create tremendous riches for some Canadians and completely destroy the lives of others. Dr. Leeb sincerely hopes that world leaders will avert this crisis and make a fool of him and his prediction; but he fears that our inability to change our ways fast enough will make \$200 oil a virtual certainty. ♦

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PIPERBERG'S WORLD



SOCIETY



David T. Jones

David Jones is a former senior counselor at the American Embassy in Ottawa. He is a well-known columnist contributing frequently to many publications including *The Hill Times*. He writes from his home in Arlington, Virginia and is co-author with the Hon. David Gilgour of *Uneasy Neighbours*.

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THE AMERICAN ELECTION

The running mate is fear

Earlier in the campaign season, once Democrats and Republicans identified their presidential candidates, respectively Senators Obama and McCain, the next question for the chatterers was "Who will be the Veep (Vice President)." This exercise qualified as fun for everyone with prognosticators pondering over the pros and cons of inter alia Senator Clinton (amusingly Republicans argued that Obama shouldn't pick her), Senators Dodd, Biden, and even Senators Hagel and Lugar (both Republicans), but not former Senator Edwards, after he "blotted his copy book." For Republicans the fibrillation included former Massachusetts governor Romney, Florida governor Crist, former Secstate Powell, and former Pennsylvania governor Ridge (but nobody mentioned obscure Alaskan politicians).

During the process, it was those who didn't know who were talking; those who knew said nothing. But selecting Senator Biden and Governor Palin as, respectively, the Obama and McCain running mates is a personnel decision; the reality is a socio-psychological issue.

For the United States in this seminal year, the real running mate on both tickets is fear. Setting aside as persiflage the various campaign slogans such as "we are the change we have been waiting for," "real change," or "spare change," this is not a good time for the United States. The country faces many serious problems, each generating a quotient of fear.

Whether you are a Republican or a Democrat, when 80 percent of the population believes that the country is headed in the wrong direction, you cannot be happy. A Democrat may be pleased at the political opportunities this affords his party (and a Republican desperately discouraged), but there are no "happy campers" when contemplating the forest of extended costly combat in Iraq/Afghanistan; the anticipation of another "9/11" later if not sooner; a struggling economy (including rising energy prices, the housing bust, health care increases, massive federal deficits/trade imbalances, rising unemployment, and a falling dollar); and a plethora of racial and gender issues that the political campaign will exacerbate rather than heal.

Each of these substantive challenges generates its own level of fear; it has been rare that so many challenges have arrived simultaneously and so few obvious solutions and so many bitterly debated and divisive/mutually exclusive decisions pending a change of administrations in Washington.

We are, for example, afraid that the

long hiatus in terror attacks on the United States will end just at a point designed to influence the election. For those with a scintilla of imagination, every air flight is a test of courage. It is approaching seven years since 9/11, but Osama bin Laden remains at large, and no one can be confident that it has been counterintelligence vigilance that has kept new assaults at bay. We fear both loosening the security strictures and the abrading social consequences of this security over the long term. For those who believe some U.S. citizens are paranoid about security when we should merely be neurotic, one observes, "he laughs at scars who never felt a wound."

We are afraid that the tentative progress toward stabilizing Iraq and Afghanistan is subject to the "two steps forward and one step back"—and that the "step back" will arrive in the autumn. Such will generate still another round of bitterness between those who believe both military actions were a nefarious Bush plot for oil as directed by VP "Haliburton" Cheney and those who see them as bitter but necessary politico military decisions that U.S. strength is driving toward an acceptable conclusion. We fear the prospect of new military confrontation (Iran) and "paralysis by analysis" from invidious experience in Iraq/Afghanistan. And now there are resurgent/revanchist Russian challenges starting with Moscow's pressure for regime change in Georgia.

We are afraid that the extended U.S. economic boom has deflated. We fear that the many "chickens" let loose in the form of massive trade deficits, huge budget deficits, and exuberant energy consumption are circling round the roost. Nor do we see any quick fixes; many "answers" look akin to deprivation in the form of higher taxes, higher unemployment, reduced energy consumption, and retrenching at home and abroad.

We are afraid that the challenges coincident with the unprecedented number of illegal immigrants (guesstimated at 12 million but who's counting?) will overload societal acceptance. Immigrant absorption is eased by a booming economy, but the semi-recession will generate even more tension for those at the bottom of the economic ladder regardless of their race, ethnicity, or gender.

It looks like years if not decades of bitter pills with the blame game being the only game in town.

We fear that these challenges require transcendental political skill but, unfortunately, many Americans are not satisfied with their principal candidates; both are significantly, perhaps fatally, flawed.

Senator John McCain

In some respects, Senator McCain's flaws are less obvious. He has been in public life in many dimensions for 50 years—which is his weakness as well as his strength; what you see is what

you get and will get in a McCain presidency. He is well tutored in national security and practical politics. He is 72, not the oldest man ever to run for the presidency (Robert Dole was older), but if elected, he would be

the oldest ever to become president for a first term. McCain deflects age questions by suggesting that his 96 year old mother would scold them; but perhaps genetically more relevant is that his father died abruptly at 70.



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And nobody can say that Senator McCain has not lived an extraordinarily stressful life, notably 5.5 years as a POW in Vietnam. The consequence of this experience, including both injury and torture, has left him physically handicapped, unable to raise his arms above shoulder level. Ask your father or grandfather whether he feels as capable now as he felt in his 50s?

Moreover, Senator McCain has been defined by anger—perhaps the emotion that kept him alive and sane as a POW, but one that has generated animosities among those who might have been allies. He claims to have conquered his bad temper, but this new McCain has not been tested, and he largely ignored the motto of "to get along; go along" in his political career. Never an intellectual, it is unclear whether he would be creatively flexible in addressing national domestic and foreign challenges outside his exiting paradigms. Can he build alliances both at home and

abroad when facing skeptical and/or hostile interlocutors?

Senator Barack Obama

The (in)experience question is overwhelming. Senator Obama's substantive credentials for the presidency are the thinnest of any Republican or Democratic candidate since World War II. He has never run anything larger than a senate office, engaged in business, or served in the military. If elected Obama would be younger than all but Clinton, JFK, and Teddy Roosevelt (who became president in 1901 after McKinley was assassinated having been elected vice president). Obama's 6 years as an Illinois state legislator are irrelevant so far as national effectiveness is concerned

(ref Stockwell Day's experience in Alberta provincial politics as illustrative). His books are most inspiring to those who consider Oprah Winfrey to be a literary critic.

When one has no experience

comparable to an opponent, you claim (a) judgment is more important than experience; and/or (b) yesterday's experience is irrelevant for tomorrow's challenges. Convincing Americans that is today's reality is Senator Obama's challenge.

Much of the presidential campaign to date has been devoted to seeking insight on Senator Obama. His soaring and inspirational speeches are juxtaposed against comments that bitter working class whites cling to guns and god. Should he be defined by the company he kept for 20 years (the odious Rev Wright with his "God damn America" rhetoric)? Has he become a prisoner of his own rhetoric with critics now caveating rhetoric with "empty"? What would his credentials as the most liberal U.S. senator mean for domestic policy positions? Was his decision to start wearing a U.S. flag lapel pin after ostentatiously refusing to do so an appreciation of political reality or an act of hypocrisy—or both?

Race will be another significant element in the election along with the fear associated with what a minority member president would mean for the United States. This is not because Senator Obama is African American as trivial observers of the U.S. scene would instantly surmise. To be sure, there are those voters who would never support a candidate not of their race (or gender) as well as those who would support the proverbial "yellar dog" if it had the correct political label on its ownership tag. Pollsters suggest that the United States is ready for an African-American (or a woman) as president, but definitely not this woman (Senator Clinton) and perhaps not this African-American, who has yet to provide a comfort level for other Americans. The task would have been easier for a figure such as former Secretary of State Colin Powell, with his decades of exemplary public service. Senator Obama may end by demonstrating a U.S. success story by being elected

president. Or he may also epitomize the ultimate level of success—being rejected on his merits with race having little to do with his defeat.

Does Senator Barack Obama have a middle name? The media never hesitated to identify "Hillary Rodham Clinton" or "Martin Luther King" or even with a bit of a sneer for upper-caste pretensions, "George Herbert Walker Bush." But Senator Obama's middle name ("Hussein") largely goes unmentioned, primarily because the political reality of "a name is a name is a name" may prompt those who see "Barack Hussein Obama" as a Muslim name—and thus unsuited to be U.S. president.

Senator Obama's name also leads into one of the dare-not-speak-its-name fears: assassination. It has been 40 years since there was a political assassination in the United States (1968 with Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King) and not since 1981 has there been an identified attempt (against Ronald Reagan), but the trauma associated with these attacks and presence of Senator Obama has raised the stakes. Thus the scare at the Democratic convention involved arrest of several drug-addled males with rifles in their car—ultimately being charged with illegal drug/gun possession but not worse crimes.

There is, for example, the quiet appreciation that while Senator Obama doubtless is a Christian, he may well be viewed in Muslim countries as having once been a Muslim. For some strict interpretations of Islam, a Muslim who converts to another faith is an apostate—and subject to death for this action. Thus in 1965 Malcom X was murdered by three black males ultimately identified as Black Muslims. And while Secret Service security and personal protection have become ever more sophisticated, the fear of the lone "James Earl Ray" type assassin cannot be set aside.

Nor is Senator McCain immune to threat. At one point earlier in the primary campaign, he was reported to have refused Secret Service protection. While one assumes that is no longer the case, the open nature of democratic politics places him at risk as well.

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt once proclaimed that "the only thing we have to fear is fear itself." That observation was and remains true—but it is likewise true that failure to recognize and appreciate the power of fear may lead to exactly the consequences that inspired the dread. And fear will surely stand at the shoulder of this presidential election. ♦



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Dan Delmar

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COMMENTARY

The weekend to end modesty

Everything about the recent Weekend to End Breast Cancer is over the top. Judging solely based on the millions of dollars raised, one could come to the conclusion that the adage 'bigger is better' should be applied to charity. But when a supposedly selfless deed is flaunted in front of an entire city and turned into an exercise of corporate and self-promotion, what's left is a sad commentary on just how selfish we've become.

The absurdity in the event's name alone seems to be lost on most people. After its fourth annual weekend, breast cancer continues to kill people on the following Monday morning. Despite being given false hope, participants continue to fork over millions every year in the belief that they are taking part in something "life-changing," and "world-changing," according to the promotional literature. Granted, those who were walking crookedly last week, nursing blisters after the 60km island-wide trek, are to be commended for raising money for a worthwhile cause (the Jewish General Hospital's Segal Cancer Centre). Along with a pat on the back, allow me to enlighten the walkers on whom else they're helping.

The JGH hires a company called

CauseForce, based in Hollywood no less, to organize and promote the event. Although little is known about the company, we do know it puts on similar events across Canada, the U.S. and the U.K. The Weekend to End Breast Cancer's marketing formula, for example, is a virtual carbon-copy in every Canadian city, from Vancouver to Halifax: Same logos, same photographs, same television ads and same advertising

coffers? I'm sorry to say I don't know. The JGH—despite being a hospital funded with public money—has withheld those exact figures since the Weekends began in 2005. It would be nice if it did, at least for the sake of transparency.

In order to maintain the status of charitable organization in the eyes of Revenue Canada, 80 per cent of funds collected must go toward the cause. The JGH has said in the past

remain for the cause."

The first three weekends raised a total of \$25-million for the JGH—great. It's not like I'm pro-cancer. But do the ends justify the means? The sheer magnitude of the event takes attention away from other smaller, grassroots charities that may eventually have to compete on a grander scale just to remind Montrealers that they're still there. Then we get into a battle of attention-grabbers (CauseForce's Underwear Affair has participants shamelessly running around in their skimpies), which is annoying on many levels.

There's the office charity collection agent who squeezes every last penny out of colleagues in an attempt to reach a fundraising goal (with the Weekend, you're banned from strutting around town in your pink tights unless you come up with \$2,000). It's simply the needless excess of these walks that I find curious. Raising money can directly help a charity—there's no question about it. But how does flaunting your sacrifice in front of the city help said charity?

The automatic response from the pink ribbon crowd is the incredible amount of "awareness" that is "raised." Thank-you for finally making me aware of a disease that touches no less than one in nine Canadian women; a disease that has become the darling cause of the corporate world because its victims are in a desired target demographic; a disease that I'm reminded of daily because people plaster pink ribbons on their carcinogen-spewing SUVs in an utterly backward gesture of solidarity; a disease that killed my grandmother and nearly killed my aunt. Thank-you for parading yourselves across the island and back, alerting me to this silent killer!

Sarcasm aside, I don't doubt that

most of the participants had good intentions. But in my view, they are misguided. It's time to bring modesty back into the act of giving. What's wrong with writing a cheque or putting a bill into a tin, satisfied in knowing that you did a good deed and kept it to yourself? Why do you need to get something in return (a plastic bracelet, a bumper sticker), much in the same manner you would with any transaction at a store? Why do you need to show everyone what a benevolent person you are?

With respect to breast cancer and the pink ribbon, we need to shift our focus from a consumer-driven attitude to a more pro-active 'buyer-beware' attitude. There's a reason many corporations are so quick to adopt the ribbon, which in itself was born from focus groups: Many cosmetics contain a group of chemical preservatives known as parabens, which have been linked (albeit loosely, for now) to cancer; pharmacies sell drugs that treat the disease; car companies and big oil contribute directly to rising cancer rates because of vehicle emissions; General Electric builds mammogram machines and Kodak supplies the film for them. The thing about corporate charity is that it's not really charity, it's marketing. "Cause marketing," is the industry term, to be more precise.

Walkers: Consider yourselves heroic and inspired if you must, but know that you're being used as living, breathing promotional tools to sell stuff. Donors: Cut out the middleman and write a cheque to the Segal Cancer Centre (and don't tell me about it). Charity is not a transaction, nor is it a means of self-promotion. It's giving without getting something in return. An anonymous donation may not be as gratifying in the short-term, but I promise you, it's better for the soul. ♦

This brings me to the most obvious question of all: How much is CauseForce's cut? How much of your donation is going toward the "battle against breast cancer" and how much is going into CauseForce coffers?

copy (word for word). It's essentially a franchise that uses many of the same marketing tactics as a McDonald's or a Burger King, but instead applied to charity. It makes perfect sense from a business standpoint: Re-use the same marketing material in every city and save a small fortune.

This brings me to the most obvious question of all: How much is CauseForce's cut? How much of your donation is going toward the "battle against breast cancer" and how much is going into CauseForce

that CauseForce is paid only a flat fee, not a percentage on the final take. A line taken from a Vancouver event waiver form makes one wonder just what the hard numbers are, exactly:

"CauseForce Inc. cannot make any guarantees about what percentage of a donation will remain for the cause and what percentage will help cover the expenses of the event. This depends entirely on how many people participate and on how much money they raise. The more we raise, the greater the percentage that will

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ADAM DAIFALLAH TASHA KHEIRIDDIN

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A provocative and timely call to action for civic-minded Canadians yearning for a more competitive political system and better government.

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Cambridge Middle East Studies



David Romano focuses on the Kurdish case to generally try and make sense of ethnic nationalist resurgence. In a world rent by a growing number of such conflicts, the questions posed about why, how and when such challenges to the state arise are becoming increasingly urgent.

Throughout the author analyzes these questions through the lens of social movement theory, considering in particular politico-social structures, resource mobilization strategies and cultural identity. His conclusions offer some thought-provoking insights into Kurdish nationalism, as well as into the strengths and weaknesses of various social movement theories.

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MÉTROPOLITAIN WILL HELP STAGE SHOW TO REVIVE STEFANOFF LEGACY

A Roman Catholic who was incarcerated in a series of Nazi concentration camps during the Second World War, Christo Stefanoff's signature works have enduring political value because not only do they depict the Jewish Holocaust, but Christian suffering as well.

Few painters have captured first hand the heartbreak and the horror of Gross-Rosen, Nordhausen-Dora and Bergen-Belsen as vividly. His iconic paintings, including "The Uprising", of the first Warsaw Ghetto Uprising are said to be the only eyewitness

Mayor Camillien Houde and was commissioned, but never paid, for his portrait of Cardinal Paul-Emile Léger that is included in the recently discovered trove.

After Stefanoff's death in 1966, just as the Canadian art market began to flourish, his widow, Irena Pludowska, kept his work under lock and key, out of public view. Only recently has his nephew, Robert Pludowski, attempted to spark renewed interest in what remains of Stefanoff's output. "He was considered by European critics as one of the great masters," said Pludowski, "We have to do everything to see that he is



Death of a Master

Stefanoff then apprenticed with the Hungarian-born, British painter Philip Alexius de László, who made his reputation doing portraits of European aristocracy and royalty.

Stefanoff became an itinerant painter who travelled Europe in search of commissions and exhibited in the United States. In 1934 he settled in Warsaw, where he executed portraits of Benito Mussolini, Greta Garbo, and Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands.

When the Second World War began, he joined the Polish underground. In 1943 he and his wife were arrested, separated, and shunted around various



Portrait of Cardinal Léger.

accounts of the Jewish and Polish undergrounds tragic struggles against the Nazis in 1943. Even though helping Jews in occupied Poland was punishable by death, Stefanoff was a member of the Zegota, (the Relief Council for Jews in Poland).

Stefanoff came to Canada in 1951. While he was alive much of his work, especially his portraits and his landscapes, was highly regarded. Samuel Bronfman bought one of his canvases of the Warsaw Uprising, which now appears to have been lost. Stefanoff did a portrait of Montreal

remembered, to make him great again. It will be a challenge, but it will be well worth it."

Pludowski's lawyer Aaron Markovka, who has worked ceaselessly on the Stefanoff collection over the years, approached The Métropolitain's publisher, Beryl Wajzman, who also heads the Institute for Public Affairs. After a tour of the artist's studio, Wajzman agreed to support the effort to refurbish the artist's reputation. "Stefanoff's work is iconic to so many as the pre-eminent artistic representation not just

of the horrors of the Holocaust but of man's faith and redemption as well. I'm not an art expert, but the ideas and emotions of his work need to be disseminated to a new generation as much as any history or poetry of that era," Wajzman said.

Montreal fine art dealer Alan Klinkhoff agreed that the paintings are good, but there is no commercial market for them.

"Stefanoff is so entirely off the radar," said Klinkhoff. "To create a market takes a lot of work. An artist has got to be out there, he



Under Fire.

has to have exhibitions to create an identity so people think the paintings are in demand."

Now, a compact show is being put together in Montreal, with the help of Wajzman and the Garceau Foundation working in concert with the Pludowski family and Markovka. The exhibit will try to put things in perspective. Its focus will be about two dozen of Stefanoff's paintings from the 1940s through to the 50s and 60s when he immigrated to Canada.

Stefanoff was born in Bulgaria in 1898, and studied painting in Sofia. He was one of several artists who worked on a panorama depicting the heroic 19th century battle of Stara Zagora, one of the first major engagements of the Russian-Turkish war in 1877, in which 15,000 civilians died.

concentration camps. For four years neither he nor his wife knew each other's fate, and each presumed the other dead. After the war, he did a major painting of the Battle of Monte Casino that hangs in the gallery at Breda, in The Netherlands. European critics praised him as "a bold master of the palette knife, a master of light and colour, renowned as a portraitist, but no less genial as a landscape and still life painter."

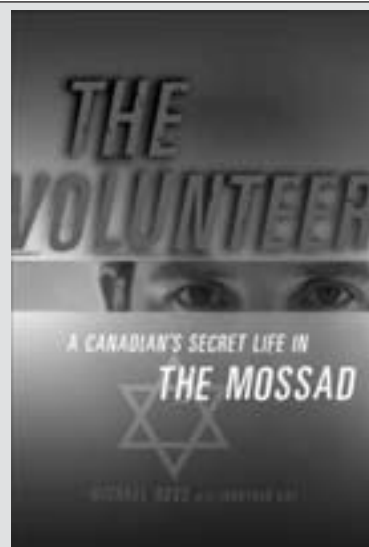
Stefanoff and his wife came to Canada in 1951 and settled in the Laurentians where Stefanoff painted rich landscapes, designed the stained glass windows for the church in Ste. Agathe de Monts, and restored the cyclorama of Jerusalem at Ste. Anne de Beaupré after the building housing it collapsed in the 1950s. ♣

THE VOLUNTEER

The riveting story of a Canadian who served as a senior officer in Israel's legendary Mossad.

For seven-and-a-half years, Ross worked as an undercover agent — a classic spy. In *The Volunteer*, he describes his role in missions to foil attempts by Syria, Libya, and Iran to acquire advanced weapons technology. He tells of his part in the capture of three senior al Qaeda operatives who masterminded the 1998 attacks on American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania; a joint Mossad-FBI operation that uncovered a senior Hezbollah terrorist based in the United States; and a mission to South Africa in which he intercepted Iranian agents seeking to expand their country's military arsenal; and two-and-a-half years as Mossad's Counterterrorism Liaison Officer to the CIA and FBI.

Many of the operations Ross describes have never before been revealed to the public.





Sharman Yarnell

Sharman Yarnell is host of 'Showtime' and co-Host of 'The Chris Robinson Travel Show' on CJAD 800

CELEBRATING A MONTREAL CULTURAL LANDMARK

Thank you Centaur for 40 Magical Years

Time for Montrealers to raise a glass and celebrate the theatre that has given our city years of innovative, provocative and classical works.

Let us raise our glasses, then, in 'A Toast to Love'—to the theatre world and all it gives to the nourishment of our souls.

On Tuesday, September 23, The Centaur Theatre is opening up its 40th season with a fundraiser that promises to be quite the extravaganza.

Among the host of goodies, included are excerpts from Montreal playwright Roger Peace's award winning musical, *Piaf: Love Conquers All*.

Piaf enjoyed an extended run at The Soho Playhouse, Off-Broadway, and is considered by many to be one of the best written and acted pieces based on the late French diva's life. It was awarded 'Outstanding Musical' at The Fringe Festival in New York last year, chosen above 300 other shows. During its run there, it played to full houses, rave reviews and standing room only.

The musical is a beautiful gift to the memory of a great songstress by Peace, who concentrates on her life's main passions:

"Every day I thank God for the two most important Things in my life:

singing and love..." - Edith Piaf

Centaur showcases a complete staging of *Piaf: Love Conquers All*, on January 23, 2009. It stars Naomi Emmerson in the lead role and, as Piaf, Emmerson is truly wonderful and transfixes her audience in total awe.

Obviously, there will be a French theme to the September 23rd evening. French bistro food will be served starting with a cocktail dinatoire at 6:00 PM including fine wines and ice cider. Then, Peace's *Piaf* excerpts will be shown, followed by an auction of luxury items, including trips, tickets on Air Canada, hotel stays, rare wines, an 18 carat gold necklace and earrings set from Roland Dubuc, Chanel products (it wouldn't be French without Chanel) and so much more.

The Centaur is a first-rate Montreal English language theatre situated on beautiful cobbled-stoned streets in the Old Montreal Stock Exchange building. It is quite appropriate that this special evening focuses on a Montreal play/musical for its fundraiser.

Centaur Theatre is not holding back on this its 40th year. Under the new Artistic Director, Roy Surette, it is producing a stellar season-long celebration with a wonderfully

diverse line-up of plays. There is something for everyone.

Since its creation in 1969 by Maurice Podbrey and Herb Auerback, Centaur has continually provided Montrealers with thought provoking, first-class entertainment. Known for its presentation of home-grown productions, and translations of French into English shows—Michel Tremblay, David Fennario and Vittorio Rossi have all had their plays launched at Centaur—it also brings to its stages plays that have soared onto the international market.

Included in this season's roster is the one act play that opened Off-Broadway in 2004, moved to Broadway in 2005 and won the Pulitzer Prize for Best Drama, *The Drama Desk Award* and that year's Tony for Best Drama. *Doubt*, written by John Patrick Shanley is a provocative look at the topic of the priesthood and the abuse of young boys. It is a sharply written play that straddles the fine line between belief and disbelief—it reaches out and grabs the viewer with passion, sucks you in and leaves you stunned.

Centaur raises its curtains in October with *Scorched*, by playwright Wajdi Mouawad, winner of the 2007 Dora Mavor Moore Award for Outstanding New Play and for Outstanding Director. A tale *Variety* magazine called, "A universal statement on the folly of race-and-religion driven wars".

In November, be prepared to see a production that literally flies. *Skydive*, written by Kevin Kerr, takes place – you guessed it – in the air above the stage. It's the tale of sky-diving gone wrong and covers those horrendously terrifying 30 seconds with "breathtaking aerial choreography, cinematic action sequences" in an extremely imaginative and physical production.

In January, the drama/comedy by Willy Russell, *Shirley Valentine*, hits centre stage for all those women who think their life 'bland, boring and routine'. Basically a monologue (occasionally spoken to a wall!) by a lonely middle-aged housewife, whose culinary expertise is egg-and-chips for her husband—that is, until her best friend wins a trip for two to Greece and Shirley Valentine dares to do.

In March, we'll be treated to the Montreal premiere of *Age of Arousal*—a play written by Linda Griffiths that takes place in the era of the suffragette and focuses on "a modern look at forbidden Victorian desires on the brink of explosion". It's one of those magical pieces that



Naomi Emmerson.

Since its creation in 1969 by Maurice Podbrey and Herb Auerback, Centaur has continually provided Montrealers with thought provoking, first-class entertainment. Known for its presentation of home-grown productions, and translations of French into English shows—Michel Tremblay, David Fennario and Vittorio Rossi have all had their plays launched at Centaur—it also brings to its stages plays that have soared onto the international market.

leaves you laughing and thinking.

Centaur closes its 40th season in May with a play written by Brydon MacDonald. With *Bated Breaths* about a troubled gay kid who leaves his home in Cape Breton for Montreal and finds solace for a broken heart in the red light district. He soon disappears without a trace and leaves behind rumours and innuendo – gone but not forgotten.

Centaur doesn't only produce fine plays but also has a marvellous weekend itinerary geared to the young (and the kid in us all). On certain Saturday mornings, it

provides an affordable live theatre experience for children, introducing them to what will hopefully become a life-long love and appreciation of the performing arts. For the past twelve years it has housed The Wildside Festival—an event that has grown in popularity with the harvesting of daring, independent plays from near and far.

Thank you Centaur for 40 years of magic. May the sprites be with you and Puck endure. ♣

To purchase tickets for the fundraiser 'A Toast to Love', please call: 514-288-1229, Ext. 240

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MICHEL TREMBLAY—LE PARADIS À LA FIN DE VOS JOURS

Une élégie empreinte d'ironie

Dans la plus récente pièce de Michel Tremblay, *Le Paradis à la fin de vos jours*, présentée au Théâtre du Rideau Vert jusqu'au 6 septembre, le paradis est loin d'être ce à quoi on pourrait s'attendre. Comme le dit l'auteur, on n'y voit rien pantoute, dit-il), le bon Dieu est toujours aussi occupé et inaccessible ici qu'il ne l'est pour ceux qui le prient sur Terre, et le fait de retrouver ceux que l'on aime n'est pas aussi rassurant qu'on voudrait bien le croire.

Écrite spécialement pour sa muse, Rita Lafontaine, pour commémorer le 40e anniversaire des Belles-Sœurs, la pièce qui l'a fait connaître, *Le Paradis* est une élégie empreinte d'ironie à Rhéauna Rathier, la mère de l'auteur, décédée avant que Michel Tremblay ne devienne le dramaturge canadien le plus connu.

Rita Lafontaine y joue le rôle de la Nana de l'imaginaire de Michel Tremblay, la même Nana de la pièce *Encore une fois*, si vous le permettez, qui fut présentée la première fois pour fêter les 30 ans du Rideau Vert. L'auteur a retravaillé certaines parties provenant d'autres pièces, en a pris d'autres de ses romans au sujet de sa mère et y a ajouté du nouveau matériel. Il en résulte une méditation parfois prétentieuse autant que juvénile sur la vie dans l'au-delà, parsemée de doutes quant à la piété religieuse sur Terre. Mais c'est un rôle en or pour Rita Lafontaine qui, sur une scène dénudée, donne une performance éblouissante qui n'est pas sans rappeler La Sagouine, d'Antonine Maillet.

Et même si ce n'est pas du Tremblay du meilleur cru, les réflexions de Nana sont toujours

divertissantes. Libérée enfin de toutes ces maladies qui la rongeaient sur Terre, elle parle librement de tout ce qui lui tient à cœur ou qui l'énerve. Pieds nus, les mains sur les hanches, elle s'adresse directement à l'auditoire et nous fait voyager dans une époque révolue où les épouses canadiennes-françaises découvraient de nouvelles façons de se libérer de même que du sentiment de culpabilité qui accompagnait ces entorses à leur foi catholique romaine lorsqu'elles saisissaient ces occasions.

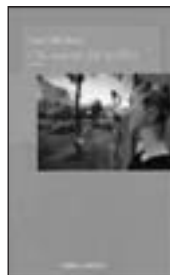
Le nom de Frédéric Blanchette est inscrit comme metteur en scène mais il a eu bien peu de choses à mettre en scène car Rita Lafontaine est si vraie dans la peau de Nana que si elle n'est pas véritablement la mère de Michel Tremblay, elle est la parfaite mère porteuse de son oeuvre.

Rita Lafontaine dans *Le Paradis à la fin de vos jours*.

Louise V. Labrecque

Lu

Cette riche mosaïque humaine



On aurait dit juillet
Josée Bilodeau
Québec Amérique
2008

Les témoignages sont à la mode. On raconte sa vie. Dans le roman de Josée Bilodeau, la ville désarticulée est au contraire mise en scène, sur 188 pages, avec un impression-

nant patchwork de personnages, tous plus hétéroclites les uns que les autres. Au détour des rues et des ruelles, dans les clameurs urbaines, On aurait dit juillet nous transporte dans une ville inconnue – j'aime bien imaginer qu'il s'agit d'un Montréal chargé de vie-, s'observant au travers mille et unes vitrines, comme des scènes parfaitement liées au décor de la ville.

Josée Bilodeau peint ses personnages avec mordant, comme de

petits croquis précis trouvant la place dans une sorte de tableau vivant, urbain. Même si l'aspect demeure parfois un peu caricatural, le comportement de chacun des personnages ne manque pas de détails, ce qui nous les rend convaincants, sans pour autant les rendre vraisemblables. Ainsi, à la lecture de ce roman, nous restons souvent incrédules, ayant toujours à l'esprit que nous sommes en train de lire, à juste titre, un roman. Est-

ce un défaut ou une qualité ? Je ne sais pas. L'exagération ne manque pas de charme, et pour ma part, j'aime bien pénétrer la psychologie des personnages.

Toutefois, l'auteure s'efforce de mettre en lumière des gens ordinaires, qui font des choses de la vie de tous les jours, de manière à permettre au lecteur d'observer, en catimini, cette simplicité fascinante. Le rapport à l'intime, dans cet aménagement de la banalité, possède quelque chose de touchant. Rien de morbide, pas de prétention misérabiliste, et oui, c'est un roman québécois ! Parfois, on devine bien la tentation d'un éloge muet, par exemple dans des phrases entre les amants fragiles, ou chez les rescapés de l'espoir. Ainsi, l'auteure ouvre pour nous toutes les portes, cela sans en refermer aucune en cours de route, et nous demeurons donc confortablement installés sur nos positions, sans pour autant perdre de vue un seul instant le fait que l'action d'un personnage a des répercussions sur les actions d'un autre, tout ceci dans un immense casse-tête de liens de causalité.

La réalisation des désirs ressemble souvent à une parodie des

plus profondes aspirations et, en écrivant tout ceci, je me rappelle une rencontre avec une écrivaine, laquelle expliquait que c'est le talent qui permet d'accorder une attention presque égale à tous les personnages, sans tomber dans la platitude linéaire. Le talent donc, et cela bien avant l'expérience. Bref, la soixantaine de scènes de *On aurait dit juillet* ressemblent à une série d'images, comme un collage qui, à tout moment, surgit aux yeux du lecteur, tandis qu'il marche, parfois tel un funambule, tant on se demande s'il existe une cohésion fondamentale, ou si la poésie, justement, n'a pas pour but de doter les personnages de multiples facettes afin d'étoffer le schéma narratif ; on marche et on suit néanmoins l'auteure.

Bref, sous une canicule printanière incroyable, chargée de sensualité, *On aurait dit juillet* se déploie à l'intérieur d'une seule journée, dans la recherche personnelle de chaque personnage à trouver son destin, niché au cœur de nos exigences contemporaines. Roman moderne, voire postmoderne, il révèle, dans toute sa splendeur, la riche mosaïque humaine. ♣



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