



jhrspeak

Issue 8.4

activists for rights

NOUS sommes
les gardiens
de l'éducation!

GRATUITÉ
SCOLAIRE,
C'EST
PAS CHER

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Speak! || letter from the editor

Journalists for Human Rights (jhr) McGill, a Students' Society of McGill University club since 2003 and the McGill chapter of the national NGO, is a group of students actively engaged in informing their community about local, national, and international human rights issues through media campaigns and other on campus projects.

jhr's goal is to make everyone in the world fully aware of their rights. Creating rights awareness is the first and most necessary step to ending rights abuses. By mobilizing the media to spread human rights awareness, jhr informs people about human rights, empowering marginalized communities to stand up, speak out and protect themselves. By concentrating our programs in post-conflict African countries like the Congo (DRC), Liberia and Sierra Leone, jhr is improving human rights where they are most at risk.

jhr provides unbiased media and capacity building training to African journalists. Typically, a jhr trainer will work alongside an African journalist for 6-8 months, mentoring him or her and helping with field production. jhr stays in each country for only 5 years, in order to promote sustainability without dependency. jhr partners with local media organizations to reach millions of people at risk of abuse with information on how to protect their rights, and the rights of others.

jhr McGill also provides students with national and international human rights journalism opportunities. Through the jhr Chapters Program, we have offered McGill students opportunities for publication in national magazines and academic journals and the chance to participate in media internships in Ghana. jhr's Train the Trainer Conference on Media and Human Rights has been hosted four times at McGill.

jhr McGill is always open to new members, so if you would like to write and edit articles for Speak!, assist with the radio broadcast or TV production, or help organize fundraising or advocacy events, send us an email at jhrmcgill@gmail.com and we will add you to our listserv.

To learn more about jhr's international work, please visit: <http://www.jhr.ca>

For more info about jhr McGill and our upcoming activities, please visit: <http://jhrmcgill.wordpress.com>

We want to humbly, reverently and not-at-all conceitedly boast that Speak! is a magazine on the rise. In the past year we've grown 30 pages bigger (bringing you literally weightier words) and 10 percent shinier (see your reflection on this page?). Likewise, our staff has swelled by 20 percent its previous size (the desserts at our staff meetings have never disappeared so fast).

Next year promises to be just as exciting for us, giving us a huge base of returning staff helmed by Jenna and Olivia, our new co-editors-in-chief. But before we went full steam ahead, it seemed prudent that we take a step back and reflect on our own roles in the ongoing dialogue on human rights worldwide. jhr members are two parts rights observer and one part rights activist. But what does it really mean to be a rights activist? How do activists, in their work, strike a proper balance between breadth and depth, efficiency and efficacy, objectivity and empathy?

Our writers weigh all these questions they examine various people and ideas that power rights activism and advocacy all around the world. Doing so, we've made ourselves more aware of how jhr's own work in human rights compares with theirs. Also and as always, we hope we've made you think.

With much love,
Hatty, the jhr exec and the Speak! team
 18 April, 2012

jhr Exec 2011-2012

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Cover Photo: Haidan Dong

Creative activism: culture jamming and video activism

TAMKINAT MIRZA

The word "activist" carries connotations ranging from wardrobe choices to number of jail sentences, wherein the nuances of activism are often lost. Arguably, the major distinction between types of activists can be made between those on the front-line and the spotlight, and auxiliaries handling crucial logistics and organization issues behind scenes.

This distinction holds true across various forms of activism, two of which are video activism and culture jamming. Both these forms have few to no barriers to participation, and hold potential to generate mass awareness and community mobilization.

Video Activism

With the ease of amateur production that comes with high quality, cheaply available handheld camcorders, and even lower quality video recorders integrated into smartphones, video activism is now increasingly inclusive, especially with the presence of grassroots satellite networks.

Of these, the Deep Dish TV network has been operating since 1986, and aims to provide "new, democratic and empowering ways to make and distribute video." It links thousands of artists, independent video makers, programmers and social activists in a combined effort to challenge corporate mass media and its suppression, agenda setting and framing, and mass manipulation of information.

The role of grassroots satellite networks is crucial in this respect: satellite technology is sold wholesale, inhibiting individuals' access to it. Yet when collectives such as Deep

Dish rent airtime, collect contributed material from a variety of producers and disseminate these through satellite, amateur productions reach a global audience. In this scenario, the combination of amateur production, computers and satellites allows for global exchange between grassroots organizations.

The disseminated productions are a form of "narrowcasting." They aim for a niche audience. This is amplified due to the lack of technical skill and lower viewing quality characteristic of amateur productions, in contrast to mass media productions. Here, the focus on content increases, since audiences tend to overlook poor quality for mind-blowing alternative content.

Culture Jamming

Culture jamming relies on shock value to appeal to masses and not a niche audience, unlike most video activism. Culture jamming refers to activism that seeks to interrupt and sabotage prevalent power structures, to gain visibility through shock tactics. It aims to jostle its audience into intellectual response.

One of the better known culture jammers, the anti-capitalist AdBusters group based in Vancouver has been linked to the initial call to Occupy Wall Street. This organization "aims to topple existing power structures and forge a major shift in the way we live in the 21st century," and publishes a non-profit reader-supported 120,000-circulation magazine.

According to the website, its Media Foundation is a "global network of activists, artists, writers, pranksters, students, educators and entrepreneurs who want to advance

the new social activist movement of the information age."

Culture jammers' tactics range from defacing billboards and corporate property to producing spoof ads, such as Adbusters' subvertisements that parody corporate ad campaigns, while encouraging critical analyses of the underlying rhetorical and hierarchical structures at work in these media. These also undermine the public relations tactics many corporations rely on to maintain consumer favour as they engage in ecologically and socially harmful activities.

AdBusters' "black spot" shoe campaign reappropriates the style of Nike sneakers, placing a black spot where the Nike Swoosh would appear. The organization says: "Blackspot is an affront to the consciousness of hyper capitalism and profit dominated boardroom policies. Blackspot is about more than marketing a brand or deconstructing the meaning of cool – it's about changing the way the world does business."

The campaign enhances this comparison by parodying the Nike slogan, such as "Just douche it" and "sick of just doing it." People can participate in this activism just by favoring Blackspot shoes over those often produced by name brands in sweatshops worldwide.

AdBusters magazine also encourages readers to document and submit their own culture jams, to create a global community based on political pranks and art-production.

Within this form of activism, the difference between front-line and

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auxiliary activism can be found at work. Front-line activists prefer going out and engaging in culture jams, which carry social and judicial consequences. Auxiliary activists may prefer to engage in the dissemination and coverage of these, for example the editors and publishers of the AdBusters magazine.

Alternatively, activists may choose to work independently, like the UK-based street artist Banksy. As a political activist and graffiti artist, he has gained global recognition for both his artistic skill and the political and social commentary informing his artwork.

While he is not a self-proclaimed culture jammer, his work shows parallels with such activism and showcases the global impact an individual's culture jams can have. He has gained a massive following as a cultural icon.

However, his success and avoidance of judicial repercussions may well be related to the fact that "Banksy" is a pseudonym. His real identity remains unknown despite his burgeoning fame.

Attempting activism

Video activism and culture jamming are both relatively simple tactics that shift the emphasis from technical skills to creativity. Both hold potential to reach and to mobilize global audiences for a cause, while allowing for the proliferation of democratic production practices.

In this context, collaborating with a like-minded community gains importance, since disjointed fragments often create less of a political and social impact than collectives. Here, AdBusters and Deep Dish provide long-standing examples of the cultural impact of collective collaboration, especially through shared resources – such as airtime and circulation base – that allow for democratic production.

Marginalized movements and criminalized dissent

JENNA TOPAN



Anti-Occupy Trend (Photo credit: Business Insider)

It has been a year of protests. From the Arab Spring, to political turmoil in Russia, to Occupy Wall Street, and back to Québec's campaign against tuition hikes, it is clear that revolution is in the air. Some protests have been peaceful, while others have turned violent. All have received media attention.

One trend accompanying the rise of such political activism has been political repression - the restriction of political movement- and a resulting paradigm shift: a negative change in the way the public perceives a movement. The media is largely responsible for the criminalization of some of these movements.

The Occupy movements in particular received criticism and derogation from the media. Fox News' Peter Johnson, Jr. likened Occupy Wall Street demonstrators to "hobos, tramps, bums, hippies, and yuppies" in an interview on Fox's morning show Fox and Friends with anchor Steve Doocy. Laird Harrison and Michelle Nichols for Reuters said the movement was "firmly disorganized and driven by

dreams." Various other media outlets, such as CNN, echoed these sentiments.

While an anti-Occupy trend was generally established, not everyone joined the opposition. Alain Sherter for CBS News argued the widespread critiques the movement received tells of the media's discomfort with popular dissent and the public fury driving the cause. Though the

movement had clear-cut goals, such as the restoration of democracy to America and increased equality, Sherter argued that it received unjust and unfocused denigration.

The strong opposition from the media to the Occupy movement is but one example of marginalizing popular dissent and peaceful protest. A major side effect of such belittling of movements can be the criminalization of dissent.

ActivistRights.org.au is a self-described "expanded and updated version of Our Rights: Activist Rights Handbook," which was originally published by the Fitzroy Legal Service in March 1996. The website's many contributors address issues such as the criminalization of political dissent, thus defined as the process of making activists appear as criminals, or making protest action illegal.

The stigmatization of protesters and intolerance for movements becomes dangerous when the media creates negative portrayals of a democratic process. When media outlets and those running them do



November 3rd 2011: McGill demonstrators forced off campus by riot police (Photo credit: The McGill Daily)

not agree with a movement's aims, they demean them. Referring to the Occupy demonstrators as "domestic terrorists", as Todd Starnes for Fox News has, criminalizes a democratic movement.

Furthermore, Fox & Friends falsely alleged that the White House shooter of Nov. 11, 2011, Oscar Ramiro Ortega-Hernandez, worked with the Occupy movement, calling him the "Occupy" shooter. Reports have not proved any affiliation. Criminal accusations without evidence are dangerous, especially when perpetrated by high-ranking news outlets. In January 2011, a report from Public Policy Polling ranked Fox News ranked as the second-most trusted television news network in the US.

Peaceful dissent and public scrutiny are both crucial in a democracy. A protest may seem noisy, disruptive, or annoying to those who do not support the cause, but the fact remains the legitimate expression of dissent is vital in maintaining democracy.

The First Amendment of the United

States Constitution protects the right to freedom of expression from government interference, including the rights to freedom of speech, press, assembly, association and government petition. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms does the same: Canadians are entitled to freedoms of thought, belief, opinion, expression, press, peaceful assembly and association, among others.

Canadians have the right to agree publicly with a movement as much as they have the right to disagree publicly. The McGill anti-tuition protests have only grown in magnitude, to varied responses from McGill students. McGill engineering student Cameron Dagg iterated a tolerant yet frustrated opinion on the protests: "I recognize that protests in a democracy are central to maintaining an active student voice. At the same time, I don't feel these protests are going anywhere – the Charest government has made clear they're not willing to budge on the tuition hike. The protests have become a hindrance – I want to be

able to get to my classes."

Such feelings do not pose a danger to a democratic student government. On the other hand, some argue the violent removal and arrests of demonstrators – and even McGill students not involved in the protest – from the James Administration building on Nov. 3, 2011 is a violent overreaction to student demonstration.

Furthermore, the rally on March 10, 2012, during which 55,000 students gathered to protest Charest's austerity measures, resulted in police arresting ten students pre-emptively. Without cause, their thus-far peaceful protest turned into a criminal matter. Police jailed the students for 54 hours on charges of conspiracy. No arrests or injuries occurred during the protest on March 22, 2012.

Democratic citizens have rights. Protesters, within the law, have rights. Thus, when laws bend against protesters and the media supports such flexibility, dissent is often criminalized and democracy can be threatened.

Activist or terrorist? The corporate and political agenda

JESSICA NEWFIELD

“The threats [of terrorism] are real and call for a firm response from states. The response should, however, be proportional to the danger involved...the danger includes not only the harm done by terrorism, but also the harm done to the fabric of our societies by disproportionate responses that undermine democracy itself.” - Arthur Chaskalson, former President of South Africa. Today, it seems as though every subnational or “radical” group of a country has the potential to be, or to become, a terrorist organization. This perceived threat induces questionable response by governments and the international community.

Founded in 1992, the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) is an environmentalist group that uses “economic sabotage and guerrilla warfare to stop the exploitation and destruction of the environment”. In 2001, the US Federal Bureau of Investigation classified the ELF as the top “domestic terror” threat because of its “eco-terrorist” activities. While it is true that this eco-defense group has employed unlawful ways of opposing environmentally harmful corporate practices in the past, as through vandalism and arson, the ELF has never killed anyone or conducted significant coercive attacks. It is no coincidence that activists are branded “terrorists” at the same time that companies are blocked or prevented by these groups to pursue their financial interests. States and politicians have always used fear as an instrument for agenda setting and citizen submission. Whether it be fascism, communism or terrorism that the state is fighting, these ideologies are all useful in paralyzing whole populations with

fear. This can explain corporations’ and governments’ institutionalized view of activism and their growing normative response to conduct huge, top-priority anti-terrorism measures. It has even become normal for the FBI to criminalize political activism. Spreading fear among citizens and reinforcing anti-terrorist measures tampers with the objectives and effectiveness of social movements. Independent journalist Will Potter has stated that “[Terrorism] strips people of their personal identity.” So what makes activism different from terrorism? Simply put, terrorism can be defined as the use, or threatened use, of premeditated violence against noncombatant targets by non-state or clandestine groups for political ends. Activism manifests itself in nongovernmental organizations, which are generally not-for-profit private organizations that focus on social, economic and political change in a country or region. In this sense, activist and terrorist groups both take shape as transnational networks (TANs), but they are far from equal in exerting the same degree of violence. The comparison between activists’ acts of sabotage and terrorists’ suicide bombings and killings seems too big a leap to make. Yet, governments’ and corporations’ responses say otherwise. It becomes increasingly difficult to pinpoint an exact definition of terrorism. As a result, public opinion lacks clarity and guidance for deciding on the legitimacy of activist campaigns. It is not the activist groups that break laws so much as the corporations that often covertly disregard environment protection and people’s livelihoods. Greenpeace has proved this by exposing multinationals’ lack

of compliance with laws prohibiting whaling, pollution and deforestation. Therefore, isn’t the real issue actually regarding the impact activist groups can have on companies and jeopardize corporate profit, and therefore hinder their specific interests? How is it that certain types of activism and political protest are recognized by the international community, and others are not? Amnesty International has coined the term “prisoners of conscience” to qualify individuals that have been imprisoned for peacefully expressing their beliefs. Why are these “prisoners” any different from other activist groups? Is the only reason that democratic governments sympathize with these “prisoners” because their non-violent approach to human rights and justice does not pose as much of a threat to the existing political system? How do states differentiate the right to self-determination from violent acts of terrorism? Even if non-profits are established organizations, they are not necessarily “safe” from being labeled terrorists. Recently, the “War on Terror” has systemized and demonized activism to the extent that it is repetitively associated with radical, extremist behavior. Governments should not be allowed to infringe on the political ideas of social groups. In an ideal world, they would be held accountable to respect and enforce them. Expanding the concept and understanding of terrorism seems crucial for improvements in international criminal law. Still, blurring the definitions of activism with terrorism has resulted in many casualties in the process. Since the Bush administration’s response to 9/11, states and international

criminal courts have been influenced to carry out preemptive strikes against suspected terrorist groups and networks, ironically creating even more violence in the world.

All things considered, perhaps the problem is our categorization of “terrorism.” As Georgetown University Professor Bruce Hoffman wrote in an essay: “Terrorism is a pejorative term. It is a word with intrinsically negative connotations that is generally applied to one’s enemies and opponents, or to those with whom one disagrees and would otherwise prefer to ignore... Hence the decision to call someone or label some organization ‘terrorist’ becomes almost unavoidably subjective, depending largely on whether one sympathizes with or opposes the person/group/cause concerned.” This allows for criminalization of activists and causes anti-terrorist measures to be counterproductive.

Counter-terrorism has exacerbated the opposition between civil society and the nation-state, resulting in many more victims than necessary, domestically and across seas. Non-profits have become equally infamous for their actions as well as respected actors in global politics. Whatever their organizational methods or tactics, they have taken on a new role that frightens financial incentives and challenges conventional forms of governance. Rather than a divisive time, this should be a learning moment to promote cooperation between governments and transnational networks. It would be sad to assume that governments are solely successful in persuading and mobilizing their citizens through the manipulation of their beliefs and fear-mongering. There is something to be said about incorporating an alternative outlook to sustainable living in our judgment of government responsibility, international institutions and citizen rights.

COMMENTARY

A unique catalyst for change

OLIVIA ZEYDLER

“Everyone’s rights are the same, student or not, your voice will be heard”, stated one 19-year-old McGill student in reference to the tuition hikes. Students took to the streets on March 22 to strike and speak out against tuition hikes. Students of all different backgrounds united on common ground, utilized their rights as citizens and stoop up for their beliefs.

Some might deem the inexperience or young age of students as inhibitors to their ability to affect social change. I disagree. Activists are defined by dictionary.com as being “vigorous advocates of a cause.” This means that power dynamics and social standings aside, mere passion can ignite change.

In the democratic society, people’s voices are respected, no matter who they are. We, as citizens, can unite in our shared beliefs, and funnel this collective spirit to take action.

Surrounded with information in university, students can stay informed and are constantly challenged to back up their opinions. Morally driven, contentious and often even rebellious, students are the critical analysts of the world and are the catalysts of change.

For example, the #6party at McGill University represented a group of students demanding the university to take action. Their occupation of the James Administration building



The demonstration reaches the McGill campus.

drew considerable attention from peers, faculty and university staff. Regardless of the criticism they received, it is undeniable that they were able to exert a certain force on campus, demonstrating the extent and capabilities of student activism. As one 24-year-old female student from UQAM shared at the strike Thursday, “Heck, we’re not sitting on the couch! I’m here because I care!”

As UC Berkeley professor Edward

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Placard used in March 22 Tuition Demonstration

PHOTO CREDIT: H Aidan Dong

A unique catalyst for change continued from page 7

Sampson expressed in an article, "Youth has always been a period of restlessness, of searching for unbounded energy." It is these generations that will comprise the future. Student activism varies widely, and can range from topics on education issues, humanitarian and

equity rights, or foreign relations. If the goal is to disseminate passion or a shared identity, anyone can speak on these topics.

In terms of activism, it is not a matter of who the activist is, because each person has an equal right to have and express his or her own opinion. We live in a society where freedom of speech is welcomed, and that allows citizens of all

kinds, including students, to express their opinion. Otherwise, we'd be living in a caste system where our speech is predisposed by our social standings. If the activism of students is deemed disrespectful, excessive, or disruptive, then it is not a question of student activism, but of peaceful activism, which should be observed no matter the circumstances.

Students take stand on Russian elections



Photo courtesy of The Other Russia

Protester from Opposition March in Moscow on Feb. 4

LAUREN REDIES

On March 4, 2012, Vladimir Putin was reelected to his third term as president of Russia. Discontent and outrage have spread across the Russian population, sparking riots and revolts against a government that the citizens believe is corrupt. Students are particularly active in these riots, with organized youth groups protesting against Putin and his United Russia party.

These activists riot for good reason. Putin, who served as president for two terms from 2000-2008, became prime minister in 2008 when the Russian constitution forbade his third term as president. In 2012, he ran again for president

and won, sparking some of the largest riots in Russia not seen since the end of the Soviet Union.

These riots mainly consist of the Russian middle class and the urban population, who are fed up with corruption. Student activists, such as Maria Gaidar, are also playing a remarkable role in these protests. Gaidar is the founder of DA! (YES! in Russian), a youth movement opposed to Putin's rule.

She has also formed a group known as "The Other Russia," another anti-Putin organization, whose main strategy during the election was to simply vote for anyone but Putin.

"The message is 'we don't want

this anymore' and the way to transmit this is by not voting for Putin," Gaidar told msnbc.com. Unfortunately, this strategy did not work because, according to Gaidar, the opposition parties were more focused on establishing fair elections than finding adequate leaders to run.

Social media has also played a large role in these past protests. A site called Grakon.org ("Citizen's control") was organized by

several students from the Moscow Institute of Physics and Technology with the primary purpose of connecting voters together. Mikhail Ponko, one of the site's founders, told Worldcrunch.org, "We are an independent, neutral platform. We are prepared to work with everyone who is in favour of fair elections."

The site is funded only by donations, while the team works for free. Ponko believes that social media is making a real difference concerning democracy by monitoring elections and any signs of fraud.

However, not all student activist groups are against Putin's rule. The Young Guard, a pro-Kremlin group and the youth section of the United Russia Party, as well as Nashi, a political youth movement, both rallied to support Putin in December 2011.

Students take stand on Russian elections

Nashi and Stal ("Steel"), another pro-Putin youth group, organized 20,000 activists to monitor the streets on election day, March 4. One newspaper, Ria Novosti, recorded Nashi commissioner Maria Kislitsina calling the opposition protester "representatives of the Russian opposition and their foreign sponsors."

The legitimacy of Putin's victory has been seriously shaken because he has been accused of vote rigging and debarring all plausible opponents. According to RIA Novosti, there have been more than 1,100 cases of election irregularities including illegal campaigning. The Central Electoral Commission, a government bureau, reported on Feb. 3, 2012 that it received a total of 1686 notices of irregularities.

Dissent versus disobedience: a McGill perspective

JASMINE STASIUK RIDDELL

The distinction between student activism and behaviour considered disruptive under the McGill Student Code of Conduct (SCOC) has been much debated this year on campus. In the wake of the Nov. 10 tuition-hike protest and the resulting police action, it struck many that the line between unacceptable behaviour and freedom of speech is not as well agreed upon as could be hoped.

Allison Cooper, a McGill student who has played a role in both the "Independent Student Inquiry into the Events of November 10th" and the McGill Association of University Teachers' (MAUT) report on the same subject, pointed out that one issue discussed within both reports

However, the committee only upheld 195, or 11.5 percent of these after investigation.

Putin has two choices now. He can either try and reduce the corruption within the regime and carry out the reforms he's promised the Russian people or he can try and suppress the discontent. Considering his anti-West rhetoric and past record, the second option seems much more likely.

If he wishes to commit to reform, he must first promise not to run again in 2018 and wholly commit to free elections. If he does not, demonstrations may continue into his next term and may not remain as peaceful. Though they are unlikely to see the end of Putin's rule until 2018, student activists such as Gaidar and Ponko will continue to work towards fair, free elections.

was the vagueness and inconsistency of the language in the SCOC.

Section 5 of the SCOC forbids any student from deliberately obstructing university activities, including teaching, research, studying, administration and public service. However, Section 5 (c) also states that the SCOC shall not be construed to prohibit peaceful assemblies, demonstrations, lawful picketing or inhibit freedom of speech.

To delve further into its ambiguity, Section 6 forbids Unauthorized Entry and/or Presence, Section 7 has to do with Theft, Damage and Destruction of Property while section 8 covers Physical Abuses, Harassment and Dangerous Activity. Tying together all of the above prohibitions in an activist context, section 13 pertains

directly to demonstrations, as it forbids any threat of violence to groups or individuals or towards behaviour that violates the SCOC.

According to the Code of Conduct, the obstruction of university activities is illegal, but removal of the obstruction must not inhibit peaceful demonstrations and freedom of speech. Dean of Law Daniel Jutras's "Report of the Internal Investigation into the Events of November 10, 2011" admitted to the gaps in this code. The Dean wrote "Even if free speech and peaceful assembly are broadly defined at McGill, the limits on those rights – and the justifications for those limits – remain uncertain."

Indeed, in the wake of the James Administration Building occupation, also known as #6Party, McGill has seen it necessary to put in place a provisional protocol that clarifies what is acceptable and unacceptable at a student demonstration. The Provisional Protocol explicitly forbids several things not mentioned in the Student Code of Conduct including demonstrations that compromise the university's safe and secure environment, impedes the conduct of university activities as defined in the SCOC, pose a risk to university property, occur in private spaces or other restricted areas, obstruct access to buildings, or continue past the normal operating hours of the university.

The protocol provides clarification of some aspects of the SCOC. Many of these clarifications were called for in the Jutras Report, such as a statement on whether protests can take place at any time and location on campus. Since many of the things formally mentioned in the Provisional Protocol were already implicitly forbidden, and there has been little resulting enforcement of the Provisional Protocol, arguably the Provisional Protocol has not further restricted freedom of speech on campus. However, there is also

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Dissent versus disobedience: a McGill perspective continued from page 9

an argument that it has “changed student sentiment by making explicit the way that the university has criminalised dissent, even if it hasn’t been enforced,” Cooper said.

A perception of the criminalisation of dissent may be in many ways just as hazardous as its actualisation when it comes to the free exchange of ideas on campus. With explicit consequences for illegal but non-violent forms of dissent such as McGill Residence and Student Housing’s decision to fire two floor fellows who participated in #6party, students may be scared away from legitimate forums for dissent, even forums that are set up explicitly for that purpose.

Following the Jutras Report, the university has attempted to put in place positive legal forums for dissent and discussion on issues like freedom of speech. Cooper has criticized the Open Forums, stating that students seemed outnumbered and “it felt like a media show”. Whether from a lack of student interest or availability to attend the forums, or deliberate boycotting brought on by these negative perceptions, there has been low attendance and general student disapproval of these forums, as reported in both the McGill Tribune and the McGill Daily.

The line between freedom of speech and disobedience at McGill is perhaps now messier than ever. There is hope that the Dean of Arts, Christopher Manfredi’s upcoming report on the results of the Open Forums, announced for June 9, will lead to more recommendations on how to move forward – through permanent alterations to the SCOC, a re-evaluation and reform of the currently existing forums, or the creation of effective new types of forums for political expression and dissent on campus.

The ambiguous role of advocacy in humanitarian aid

TIPHAINE MONROE

On March 8, after weeks of brutal attacks on Homs, Syria by government forces, the International Red Cross gained limited access to the city to provide desperately needed humanitarian aid.

In current situations of political turmoil in Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Libya, to name a few, humanitarian aid plays a critical role in the care and survival of many civilians. Each humanitarian organization abides by its individual policies of advocacy in relation to humanitarianism.

The Red Cross upholds a system known as “silent diplomacy,” whereby the organization will only in rare circumstances comment on the situations they witness during their missions. This policy was adopted to allow the organization increased access to civilians living in politically volatile situations.

By contrast, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), or Doctors Without Borders, maintains a policy of “témoignage.” MSF was created by a group of Red Cross doctors and French reporters who refused to remain silent on the atrocities of the civil war in Nigeria in 1971. “Témoignage” is outlined as MSF’s commitment to speaking out about human rights violations and demanding international attention for those victims who cannot.

Although a globally known and respected NGO, témoignage has sometimes prevented MSF from gaining entrance into certain countries, such as those whose governments practice human rights

violations. For instance, MSF has not been granted access to Syria. Instead, it remains on the country’s borders to provide aid to civilians lucky enough to escape.

Médecins du Monde is an even more vocal group born from a split within MSF. The group supports the policy of speaking out against human rights crimes, but also maintains conditional aid policy. Médecins du Monde has withdrawn missions in countries where the government has supported or ignored violations of human rights.

The variations of advocacy policies for humanitarian organizations have been hotly debated among different advocates. Despite this, the international humanitarian community agrees that the fundamental mission of each of these groups is to save lives, reduce suffering and strengthen human dignity.

It is crucial to look at these policies in terms of their effect on the actual humanitarian workers applying them in the field. Before joining an organization, each individual needs to consider the same ethical dilemmas founding members did. Should they opt for silent democracy and focus on the patients’ suffering in the present context? Or should they bring international attention to these crises in hopes of introducing lasting change, even if it means jeopardizing their access to people currently in need?

Christopher Cushing, the current president and CEO of FIM-Forum

for Democratic Global Governance, recently came to McGill and touched on the issue of aid and advocacy during his presentation. Cushing, a lifelong humanitarian, has experience working for MSF, the Red Cross, the UN and CARE Canada. In an email correspondence with Speak!, Cushing wrote, “For most humanitarian workers, you are constantly faced with a no-win situation where you want to support a vulnerable population but sometimes have to choose to either speak out, remain silent or try quiet

diplomacy. This calculation changes every hour.”

The chaos of a conflict or natural disaster places humanitarian workers in charged political environments, where they are expected to make such difficult decisions. Cushing wrote, “Medical groups like MSF and Médecins du Monde will have a natural predilection to favour keeping on working in the face of rights abuses because they don’t want to abandon a population under threat. This is natural, but has to be balanced against the larger human

#Hashtag activism

FRANCESCA MITCHELL

Whether through “hashtag activism,” Facebook “likes” or viral video campaigns, it is undeniable that social networking technology is transforming the face of advocacy as everyone knows it. With the invasion of social media into the everyday lives of millions of people, such online presence is of new and fundamental importance to advocacy groups and individual campaigners worldwide. So-called social media gurus are increasingly consulted and employed by awareness-raising organisations in an effort to maximise the potential of this new arena.

There are significant benefits to this new type of advocacy, not least the huge potential audience to be gained in the 845 million active Facebook users, 175 million Tweeters, and 262 million Myspace users worldwide. The presence of human rights organisations on these networks is now of fundamental importance for contemporary advocacy, as the exposure given to their activities exceeds anything previously possible. Amnesty International USA’s Facebook page, for example, has almost 450,000 fans able to receive daily updates,

while Human Rights Watch has a Twitter following of 301,649.

Moreover, due to social media users’ ability to share and re-tweet information, the gross potential audience for the information shared by these organisations is far greater still. Many organisations, such as UK charity Tearfund, now actively encourage their supporters in pursuing their own social media advocacy, making the most of their followers’ enthusiasm. Furthermore, with the advent of “trending” and other such content monitors, there remains a distinct possibility of campaigns and messages going viral in the online sphere.

In this way, mass awareness of and advocacy for human rights issues can be raised with unprecedented methods and unparalleled speed, at a fraction of the cost of traditional advertising, marketing or advocacy campaigns.

However, this new ‘hashtag’ activism faces numerous challenges. The potential to reach a wide audience may be greater than ever but nevertheless, the importance of maintaining a large and active following cannot be underestimated. Campaign information must be kept

rights context.”

The advocacy policies of humanitarian organizations serve as guidelines for workers in the field. It remains the job of each organization and individual to first decide where to draw the line between speaking out and silence, and pinpoint the moment when human suffering becomes too pervasive.



consistently up to date and alive in order to retain the interest of an audience all too prone to fickleness and apathy.

Moreover, there is also potential for advocacy to be abused or tarnished through the use of new technologies – for example with the circulation of false or inaccurate information or videos. It is here that the necessity of specialist roles for social media advocacy has been highlighted and implemented by activist and humanitarian organisations worldwide. Many of these roles have to date been filled by interns and volunteers, but as the human rights field increasingly recognizes the importance and challenges of social media engagement, such online advocacy positions are demanding more experts or senior members of staff.

Only time will tell how this new method of advocacy will be used and developed. What can be seen clearly though is that social media provides an avenue for activism like nothing the world has seen before, and if its potential is truly unlocked, the face of human rights advocacy might just be changed forever.

OP/ED KONY 2012. In Black and White



Joseph Kony, leader of the LRA. Photo Courtesy of Associated Press

PAULINE CHERY

No other documentary concerning Uganda's security situation has made its way around the world faster than Invisible Children's Kony 2012. But for all the hype generated by Facebook and Twitter, the video has been greeted with an equally fierce backlash amongst prominent Ugandan and western experts.

Kony 2012 has raised many questions on the legitimacy of advocacy techniques used by Western NGOs. The film and the discussion it inspired have revealed the fundamental question of whether advocacy organizations should focus on quantity or quality when raising awareness. Ultimately, is it the quantity of people being targeted that is most important, or the quality of information being disseminated?

In the 30-minute video clip, the story of Joseph Kony is recounted by Jason Russell, co-founder of Invisible Children, to his 5 year-old son. In the simplest terms, he tells his son that the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), led by Kony, has kidnapped between 20,000 to 30,000 children in northern Uganda to use as child

soldiers and sex slaves. The solution, according to Russell, is equally simple: share the video with as many people as possible to ensure the hundred US military advisors, sent by President Obama in 2011 to help the Uganda military capture Kony,, remain there.

This one-dimensional framing presented by Russell can be easily explained: the video was designed to go viral. By oversimplifying the issue, Invisible Children could guarantee that Kony 2012 would reach as many people as possible. This distortion of information regarding the complexity of the issue, however, does more harm than good.

Russell's claim that military intervention is the only viable solution is misleading on many accounts. Nigerian novelist Teju Cole explains that "success for Kony 2012 would mean increased militarization of the anti-democratic Yoweri Museveni, who has been in power in Uganda since 1986 and has played a major role in the world's deadliest ongoing conflict since the war in the Congo."

Many scholars have even argued that in the early 2000s, the Ugandan army was more than capable of destroying the LRA once and for all.

Museveni, however, chose to let the LRA relocate so that he could use their security threat as a justification to avoid democratization. In any case, as Angelo Izama, a Ugandan blogger points out, "Killing Mr. Kony may remove him from the battlefield but it will not cure the conditions that have allowed him to thrive for so long.

Regardless of whether one agrees with the proposed military solution, one could argue that the sole strategy of spreading awareness of the LRA's massive human right abuses is an intrinsically positive thing. However sometimes, not all publicity is good publicity, especially when it comes to pushing forward implicit messages that reinforce the white-savior industrial complex.

An additional criticism of Kony 2012 is that it leaves no room for Ugandan agency. As Dr. Payam Akhavan, a professor of international law at McGill University explains, "The video is ten years too late. Watching it, one imagines that nobody was ever involved in this struggle before they started filming. Back in 2003,



Right: One of the many anti-Kony 2012 Internet memes
Photo Courtesy of BinaryZeroMusic Blog

Left: Promotional Poster for Kony 2012
Photo Courtesy of Invisible Children



we devised a brilliant strategy with highly competent Ugandan officials on how to eliminate the LRA by depriving them of rear-bases in southern Sudan. Within two years, the war in Uganda was over and Joseph Kony's force of several thousand was reduced to a few hundred fugitives in the Congo."

Embedded within this account of horrific human rights violations is the idea that Africans

are helpless victims waiting for the West to come and save them with its money and good intentions. Herein lies the most damaging and harmful aspect of the Kony 2012 campaign: the dis-empowerment the people most affected by the issue. "You shouldn't be telling my story if you don't believe that I also have the power to change what is going on," Rosebell Kagumire, a Ugandan multimedia journalist, has stated.

The video's purposeful targeting of twenty celebrities to help spread the word highlights the extent to

which the campaign prioritizes quantity over quality. "The fact that we only care when celebrities bring this sort of thing to our attention underscores how black and white the issue has become. In this case, pun intended... it only reinforces

“ This distortion regarding the complexity of the issue, however, does more harm than good ”

the idea that if white Americans care about something we can fix it no matter how little we've grasped from the complexity of the issue," said Daniel Douek, a PhD candidate in political science at McGill. Kony 2012 answers some important questions regarding NGO advocacy strategies. Raising awareness amongst millions of previously ignorant teenagers by painting an oversimplified and patronizing picture of a conflict is not a viable solution. Instead, advocacy groups should focus on explaining the

complexities of the situation and acknowledging the agency of those whose lives are most affected, even if this means that fewer people are involved in the execution.

All advocacy groups share an internal ethical desire to "make a difference." But these good intentions, no matter how gratifying, often overly simplify the issue and rarely translating into lasting positive impacts.

Advocacy groups around the world need to stop selling the idea that "anyone can change the world and it's easy to do so." Instead, groups should propagate that "Anybody can change the world, but it's difficult. And you should do it anyway," said Grant Oyston, an Acadia University student and the founder of the blog Visible Children.

Only by focusing on quality over quantity will advocacy groups achieve their ultimate goal of making a positive difference.

Regional dynamics behind Kony 2012



LRA members in Garamba National Park
Photo Courtesy of News Time Africa

HUGO MARTORELL

Kony, the tip of the iceberg

The image of Joseph Kony, leader of Uganda's Lord Resistance Army (LRA) militant group, has spiked much attention and controversy in the beginning of March. By March 11, this video made by the NGO Invisible Children's (IC) for its Kony 2012 campaign already had 72 million views on Youtube. The campaign also called for students and youths to cover local towns with Kony posters and stickers on April 20 for its "Cover the Night" project.

The video asked that American advisers be allowed to continue assisting the Ugandan army to capture Kony. Kony, however, is only the tip of the iceberg.

The co-founder of Invisible Children, Jason Russell, admitted that his viral video was oversimplified the issue, but quickly added that IC's goal was to stop Kony. But according to Adam Branch, a senior research fellow at the Makere Institute of Social Research, students ought first to learn about the conflict before acting. Behind Kony's image lays

and resilient terror, lasting now 25 years in central Africa, abducting young children as soldiers and sex slaves in the tens of thousands, and causing immense suffering across an expansive territory. In 2006, the LRA fled Uganda and entered peace negotiations, but resumed massacres in Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in late 2008. The Ugandan army was permitted to enter DRC soil a few months after.

The LRA was also supported by Omar al-Bashir's brutal regime in Khartoum as a proxy to fuel social turmoil in South Sudan against the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/ Army (SPLA/M). The LRA entered the Southern Sudanese Western Equatoria district in mid-2009.

However, according to the government of Uganda, the LRA is a now a "weakened group with numbers not exceeding 300." It is divided into small groups of 10, all hiding in "grey zones," highly inaccessible and inhospitable areas that reach to the Central African Republic.

Uganda's large neighbor, the DRC, has been hit hard by several waves of insecurity since 1994, most notably the spillover effects of massive refugee flows following the Rwandan genocide, and two invasions by the Tutsi-led Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF). All of these events involved neighboring states, the plundering of natural resources and the importation of ready-to-use weaponry.

In 2001, Joesph Kabila succeeded his father Laurent-Désiré Kabila as DRC's president. Both have used their army to systematically undermine democracy and sustain an elite few. Since the late 1990s, smaller militias have mushroomed in many parts of the country in order to take control of mineral resources, a phenomenon social science theorists

call the "honey pot effect." In the fog of war, different groups have transited minerals via Rwanda. The market of some minerals, like coltan, has diversified, and are now used in personal computers and cellular phones.

The DRC army and UNAMIR, the United Nations peacekeeping forces, have been mostly ineffective in protecting civilian populations against the LRA and other militia groups. The UN has a weak mandate. DRC's army (FARDC), much like Ugandan's, is undisciplined and attracts mostly unqualified and poor labor who see the military career is as a way to collect bounties. The institution has been itself is a governmental tool to limit civil society. In Sudan, the elites of the "liberator" SPLA have used their oil revenues to buy houses in Kenya, instead of distributing it, subsequently fueling conflict with other ethnic minorities.

American involvement

The United States are supporting Museveni, Kagame's RPF and are now training the SPLA, in a comprehensive strategy that serve their interests in the region.

Washington has put forward strategic alliances throughout the African continent with the institution of the AFRICOM central command, signed in 2008 by Obama. The main goals are fighting al-Qaeda linked cells in the Sahel and Somalia, AQMI and al-Shabaab, but critics have noted a second interest in securing viable flows of energy resources in the region. Uganda has served both interests well in the past decade.

First, the United States refuses to send troops in Somalia since the 1992 fiasco of Operation Restoring Freedom. It has thus mainly conducted its combat operations, AMISOM, through drone attacks, the UPDF and the Kenya Defense Forces (KDF). Al-Shabaab has responded by attacking directly Kampala, Uganda's capital, and the UPDF has lost several hundred soldiers in the war.

Second, as an effort to fight the

LRA, the UPDF has forced internal displacement in the northern Acholi region, pushing its citizens into refugee camps and grabbing their lands. Milton Allimadi, the news editor at Ugandan American Black Star, calls this the "Second Acholi Genocide". In the Albertine region, west of Lake Alberta, oil was discovered in 2006. Corruption issues have shaken the political landscape, directing criticism towards the London-based Tullow Oil Company.

Moreover, the United States has been containing Sudan, whose president Omar al-

Bashir has also an arrest warrant from the International Criminal Court (ICC), since the country took a radical Islamist stance and harbored Osama Bin Laden in the 1990s. Sudan has also been at the forefront of China's oil strategy in Africa. China provides massive aid to Sudan in exchange of petroleum.

Finally, the U.S. intervened in the region in 2008-09 in Operation Lighting Thunder, which consisted of coordinating efforts to chase the LRA in the Garamba National Park in North DRC. It failed, partly due to communication problems with Uganda's national army and the difficulties penetrating grey zones. These events were mostly overlooked by Western media.

Uganda is in a strategic location between East and Central Africa, and the international community needs to incorporate all the regional dynamics to avoid dramatic spillover effects. Moreover, the high-tech industry's demand for minerals, direct involvement of multinationals in the region, and the support of murderous regimes like Kagame's Rwanda and Museveni's Uganda all make Western nations guilty of fueling the conflict.

Recommendations

Pushing for further American intervention is a problem because it revolves in supporting American interests in the region. Uganda is one of the most corrupt nations in the

world, and strengthening the military institutions will reduce any prospects of democratization. This happened in Rwanda. Sending massive aid to Uganda will only serve to satisfy Western humanitarian guilt and may lead to a Haiti-like scenario of dependence.

Capturing Kony and defeating the last remnants of Kony's army before it regains strength is important. However, his army still comprises of many children. Community-based self-defense forces and initiatives appear to be the most effective forms of organization in the region. They need to be assisted when they can with, for example, greater access to radios, telephones, and health and education facilities.

The African Union has declared that it will send 5,000 combat troops on March 24, to capture Kony. Yet, the international community needs to denounce once and for all the arms trade and mineral industry. Supporting autocratic governments to attack militias is not an option, because the price to pay is too big for the citizens, which have suffered enough. This process is much slower than the immediate action that IC advocates, but it is more conscious of the context of its operations.

Finally, governments in the region need to stand accountable for their own human rights abuses. More transparency is also needed for "first-world" citizens to understand how their own leaders and multinationals have benefited from the fog of war.

These dynamics play out from Sudan to Congo, Rwanda, Uganda and the horn of Africa, involving dozens of armed groups and Western countries. It is complex, hence less "empowering" than the Kony 2012 video. The Kony 2012 campaign has opened a window of opportunity to understand an issue, but if the international community wants to help the Central and East Africa civilian populations,

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at minimum it needs to understand these dynamics.

Branch's three questions remain relevant:

What are "we," American citizens, "already doing to cause those

conflicts in the first place?"

"How are we, as consumers, contributing to land grabbing and to the wars ravaging the region?"

"Finally, how are we allowing our government to militarize Africa in the name of the 'War on Terror' and its efforts to secure oil resources?"

Is Kony 2012 dubious? A look into charity evaluations

BRENDA CHANG

Kony has become a ubiquitous and infamous name in cyberspace, thanks to the release of a short documentary-like film produced by Invisible Children. A massive uproar swept social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter, where people all over these Internet platforms "shared" and "retweeted" his name in the hopes that, as the Invisible Children film mandated, his name would become famous and his crimes pervasively known.

However, doubts about the legitimacy of the Kony 2012 campaign and of the organization which produced it soon emerged. Critics of Invisible Children have looked towards charity-evaluation institutions such as Charity Navigator for substantial claims against the organization.

Charity Navigator is just one out of many non-profit programs that evaluate American charities. The organization's self-described mission is to "[provide] information on over five thousand charities and... [evaluate] the financial health of each of these charities....By guiding intelligent giving, we aim to advance a more efficient and responsive philanthropic marketplace, in which givers and the charities they support work in tandem to overcome our

nation's most persistent challenges."

Charity Navigator's ranking system uses three main categories: Financial Health, Accountability and Transparency and Results Reporting, which is programmed to be in effect in July 2012. Overall, Invisible Children has earned a 3 or 4-star rating. Where Invisible Children lost points was in Accountability and Transparency.

As Charity Navigator states on its website, "The main reason Invisible Children earned just 2 stars in Accountability & Transparency is that it has less than 5 independent Board members," who are also required to form a majority on the Board. Indeed, Charity Navigator has placed significant emphasis on the plurality of board members because they believe a more democratic and diverse board leads to a greater likelihood that unethical and unlawful behaviour can be prevented, especially when it concerns money management.

The factor that pushed up Invisible Children's ratings was its Financial Health. In regards to Invisible Children's financial health, Charity Navigator gave the organization a 4 out of 4, because it "spends upwards of 80 percent of its budget on its programs and services. As

such, Invisible Children is actually outperforming most charities in our database in terms of how it allocates its expenses." A crucial point that Charity Navigator reinforces is the fact that Invisible Children aims largely to raise awareness for the plight of Ugandan children under Kony's military, instead of actually investing in programs to alleviate these problems.

Other charity-evaluation organizations look to similar factors when ranking charity groups. MoneySense, Canada's first charity ranking system, looks to three main elements when evaluating charities. The efficiency of a charity's fundraising is important. The smaller the rate a charity spends to get returns for its cause, the higher its rating. The charity must also act transparently, the charities must be willing to provide information about their expenditures to the public. Lastly, the organization must have enough reserve funds to sustain itself with donations for at least three months.

However, as Sarah Efron, creator of MoneySense, wrote on the organization's website, these factors are not enough. "There are crucial things you need to know about a charity that can't be captured by comparative data. There's no quick solution. To find a charity you can support with confidence, you need to do some research, and some thinking," Efron wrote.

The American Better Business Bureaus (BBB) also has a charity rating system. Its main mission is to research and provide information about businesses for potential customers. This helps ensure businesses maintain ethical responsibility and reliability. BBB, however, does not have an explicit set of factors outlined for its charity evaluations. Instead, BBB looks to how an organization spends

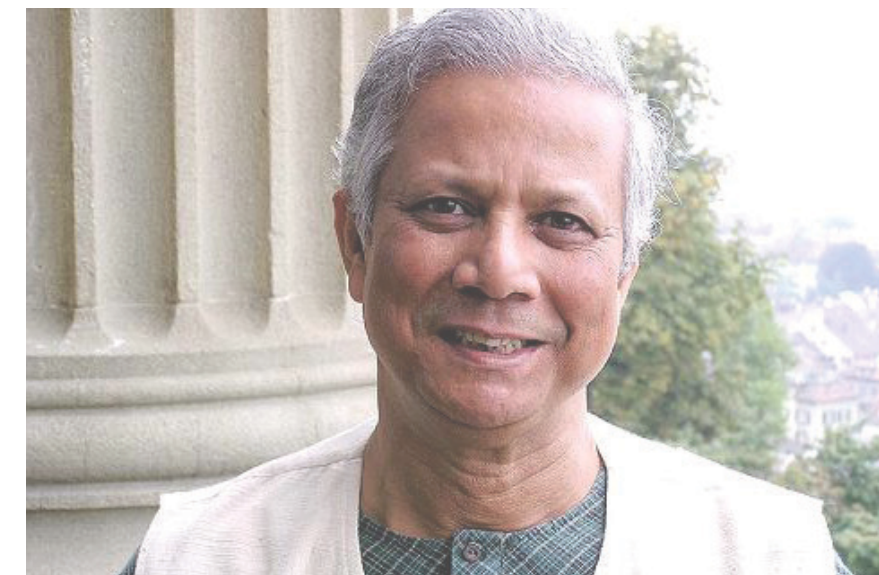
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its donations, its IRS Form 990 for its taxes, its annual report, recent audited financial statements and a completed questionnaire. It also has a separate standard for the sole measurement of a charity's accountability. As stated on the BBB website, these standards focus on how much information organizations are willing to provide about: "...how they govern their organization, in the ways they spend their money, in the truthfulness of their representations, and in their willingness to disclose basic information to the public."

A recurring factor in many of these charity evaluations is transparency and accountability. Generally, charity-evaluation organizations seek to answer questions of a charity's validity through government forms and audits, as well as personalized questionnaires that probe at the charity's expenditures and mode of decision-making. Ultimately, it comes down to how open the organizations are about their accounting and how much money is being invested in the causes that donors care about.

Perhaps one lesson that the Kony 2012 campaign has taught, therefore, is that donors must always be educated about the cause they are supporting - the way funds are allocated, the mode of decision-making within the organization and exactly where the money is being invested are all factors that one ought to consider. Like Invisible Children, an organization may not be investing its donations directly in mitigating a social problem, but rather in raising awareness for it. As the philosophy behind charity-evaluation organizations show, neither pursuit necessarily is better than the other, but being aware of where a charity's money is going should be crucial to the donation process.



Microfinancing: the good, the bad and the promising

KATIA FOX

Social activism is becoming an increasingly large part of modern culture. A variety of development efforts have sprung up in response, ranging from child-sponsorship to livestock donation to building wells in rural villages. Most recently, microfinancing has become an especially intriguing avenue to those seeking to make a difference in impoverished countries.

The Consultative Group to Assist the Poor defines microfinance as "the supply of loans, savings, and other basic financial services to the poor." These resources allow the poor to not only access money for emergencies and investments, but also to obtain other benefits, such as insurance. Regular banks seldom give the poor this chance; the poor are viewed as unreliable and insignificant investments. Microfinancing Institutions (MFIs) are

giving developing economies the opportunity to grow from the bottom up, seeking not only to alleviate poverty, but also to create a more dynamic and inclusive worldwide economy.

The microfinancing method, however, is not as new as it may seem. Although Muhammad Yunus, winner of the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize, is widely viewed as the "father of microfinance," the idea of microcredit sprouted as early as the 1700s with the Irish Loan Fund System. Throughout the 1800s, people's banks, credit unions, and saving and credit cooperatives spread throughout Europe and North America. They were highly successful and community driven, freeing people from feudal ties and fostering self-sufficiency.

Yunus expanded the boundaries of community-based microcredit,



which only served to provide loans, to a nationwide independent bank with 90 percent of its shares owned by its borrowers. This was Grameen Bank, established in 1983. It emerged from the Grameen Project, which started as a \$27 loan to a group of women in the village of Jobra, Bangladesh. The bank has since grown to serve four million Bangladeshi citizens in 2010 alone. According to Yunus, Grameen Bank has lifted close to 20 million people out of poverty in the last 10 years. Its success has led to the rise of many similar institutions such as ACCION International, SEWA Bank and FINCA. The World Bank estimates 160 million people in developing countries are currently being served by MFIs.

Though the concept of microcredit has been around for centuries, the idea of microfinance as a method

of socially conscious aid only developed around 2005. 2005 was proclaimed the International Year of Microcredit by The Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, who stated, "Lasting peace cannot be achieved unless large population groups find ways in which to break out of poverty. Micro-credit is one such means."

Both governments and individuals were urged to support MFIs. The allure of MFIs lies in the fact that, through organizations like Kiva, lenders can choose the recipient of their money and follow the impact made by their loan, similar to other sponsorship programs. With microfinancing, the money given is a loan rather than a donation, allowing lenders to make a difference with minimal effort and zero cost. Kiva boasts a 98.9 percent return rate, meaning, "You can now use [the money] to fund another loan, donate it to Kiva, or withdraw it to spend on something else."

The money goes straight to those in need, and is paid back with minimal interest, enough to cover administrative costs. With the additional focus on female empowerment and the global fueling of entrepreneurial spirit, microfinance soon became the poster child for poverty alleviation.

In 2009 and 2010, however, widespread criticism of the microfinance method and MFIs surfaced, showing significant flaws in implementation, if not the concept of microfinance itself. The Associated Press reported that more than 200 Indians committed suicide in late 2010 because were unable to repay microloans. SKS Microfinance Ltd., India's largest MFI, was directly linked to 7 suicides in Andhra Pradesh province alone. Loan officers allegedly harassed borrowers, forcing them to sell their belongings and even instructing them to kill themselves if they could not pay. In 2010, SKS became

only the second MFI in world to go public, with an initial public offering worth hundreds of millions, raising eyebrows among government leaders and other MFIs alike.

Yunus has commented on this problem, "The concern is that when you put an IPO, you are promising your investors that there is a lot of money to be made and this is a wrong message. Poor people should not be shown as an opportunity to make money out of." According to the Associated Press, SKS officers lacked training. They gave out more loans than were sustainable and encouraged bigger loans than borrowers could pay back, all in order to make a bigger profit.

Vikram Akula, founder and then-CEO of SKS, simply responded, "Professor Yunus was right," before resigning in late 2011.

Similar problems arose in Nicaragua and Bolivia where politicians advocated for the poor not to pay back their loans as a political move to gain electoral support, leading to the collapse of MFIs such as Banex. While this level of corruption is not universal, it exacerbates other challenges facing microfinance, including those of a fundamental nature.

Some even question the fundamental principles of microfinance. As far back as 1997, development analyst Vijay Mahajan warned that, "although improving poor people's ability to withstand financial shocks is important, it doesn't make them less poor in itself. It needs to support business yet the majority would rather have a safe job than take the risk of running a business."

It is true that there are a multitude of entrepreneurial successes that arose with the help of microfinance, but the majority of microloans go towards borrowers' basic needs. Recent studies show that microloans

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rarely make an impact on bottom-line indicators of poverty even though they do stimulate some microbusiness start-ups. Alongside the success stories are 60-percent drop-out rates in East Africa and a 30-percent growth in outstanding microdebt per year in countries such as Bosnia-Herzegovina, Morocco and Pakistan, as reported by The Guardian.

Grameen Bank is one MFI that

has managed to operate with a relatively high success rate.

Even so, Thomas Dichter, a long-time evaluator of microfinance programs, argues that, "No country that is rich today did so through microloans for the poor." Economic transformations that end poverty involve combining labor and capital in ways that are not possible in poor households.

David Roodman, senior fellow at the Center for Global Development and the popular face of microfinance criticism, argues that "the well-meaning flood of money into microcredit distorts the industry toward overreliance on this one, risky service," arguing that because it deters money from structural investments it does not give rise to sustainable growth.

Nevertheless, he acknowledges that the method is not to be dismissed entirely, saying, "Microfinance is no silver bullet for poverty, but it does have things to offer. The strength of the movement is not in reducing poverty or empowering women, but

in building dynamic institutions that deliver inherently useful services to millions of poor people."

The fact of the matter is that MFIs simply need strict monitoring and legislation to deter corruption and profiteering, and their strategies need to be refined to target structural investment as well as individuals in need. Microfinance is an excellent concept for developing countries faced with poverty, but it is still a work in progress.

Kofi Annan, another Nobel Peace laureate, explained, "Microfinance recognizes that poor people are remarkable reservoirs of energy and knowledge...untapped opportunity to create markets, bring people in from margins and give them the tools with which to help themselves." With the implementation of credit bureaus and a revision of policies, microfinance can contribute greatly to global poverty alleviation, providing the poor with all the benefits that others have felt entitled to for decades.

OP/ED

In defense of microfinance: a socially responsible form of aid

MORGAN VLAD-MCCABE

The New York Times' Nicholas Kristof wrote in his blog, "Microcredit is undoubtedly the most visible innovation in anti-poverty policy in the last half century."

According to the World Bank, in some developing countries, upwards of 50 percent of adults lack access to basic financial services such as the procurement of loans or credit. This obviously restricts the type of economic activities that a household

can partake in, and thus its chance of improving its standard of living. Microfinancing, which gained significant attention in the 70s, was heralded not only as a way to provide reliable financial services to low-income households, but also as a means of achieving ulterior social development motives, such as women's empowerment or nutritional improvement within households.

The effort to extend objectives

beyond simply improving a household's finances has enabled Micro-Finance Institutions (MFIs) to evolve into a more socially conscious form of aid. Loans, savings facilities, insurance, transfer payments and even micro-pensions are all examples of the range of services provided. However, these services are not solely devoted to entrepreneurial endeavors; instead, MFIs can finance educational, health and other social needs like marriages, funerals and home improvements.

Ultimately, MFIs seek to facilitate a shift from subsistence living "to a future oriented outlook on life and an increased investment in nutrition, education and living expenses," according to Eric Uhlfelder at Businessweek.

Traditional forms of aid lack the holistic and comprehensive approach of micro-financing



because they typically only focus on one issue. Otherwise, it is often blind to the actual needs of the recipient, especially when improving a company or organization's public image is the main objective in providing aid.

For example, too often, aid-in-kind - such as provision of machinery, food or clothes - is analogous to a painkiller. It provides temporary reliefs yet fails to remedy the actual source of discomfort. While a bulk shipment of food might satisfy a village's hunger for a time, it will eventually run out and leave the families in the same situation in which they started. Furthermore, aid-in-kind can be ill-suited to its recipients' needs and capabilities, particularly in the case of machinery. The technology may be too advanced for the beneficiary to fuel or operate.

The operative word in micro-finance is empowerment. Beneficiaries have the opportunity to direct their path out of poverty, and donors can choose where their money

goes and later monitor the success of their investment. Recently, peer-to-peer online platforms like Lend for Peace, Kiva and the Microloan Foundation have developed as a new means for people in the developed world to lend a helping hand. Individuals are able to transfer loans directly to recipients of their choice without having to consult a third party. Organizations like Kiva boast repayments rates as high as 98.9 percent on their website and are working in more than 60 countries. This novel form of MFIs attests to microfinance's ability to promote social responsibility.

Founded in 1998, the Comité d'Echanges de Réflexion et d'Information sur les Systèmes d'Epargne-crédit (CERISE) is a self-declared "knowledge exchange network for microfinance practitioners." It created a standardized social audit tool known as the Social Performance Indicator (SPI) in 2004 to "measure to what extent a MFI dedicates the means

necessary to fulfill its social mission" according to Cécile Lapenu, director of CERISE, in her paper entitled "Combining Social and Financial Performance: A Paradox?"

Furthermore, Lapenu explains that the Social Performance Task Force (SPTF), an international working group founded in 2005, defines social performance in terms of four main components: "1) serving larger numbers of poor and excluded people; 2) delivering high-quality and appropriate financial services; 3) creating benefits for clients; and 4) improving the social responsibility of MFIs." Together, the SPI and the SPTF have made it much easier to determine whether or not micro-finance is a more socially conscious form of aid.

CERISE's assessments have indicated that MFIs generally pay attention to clients' needs, but that some perform better in one area compared to another. For example, traditional banks tend to exclude more customers but have higher ratings in the quality of service provided. MFIs that promote rural development are more adept at developing participatory governance models. Non-governmental MRIs' strength lies in their proactive targeting.

Nevertheless, after conducting more than 200 in-depth evaluations, CERISE concluded that it is entirely possible for MFIs to combine financial, social and environmental objectives into one cohesive, sustainable management strategy.

Microfinance has the unique ability to drastically improve lives through its emphasis on individual empowerment and social responsibility. Not every MFI has been able to replicate the success of the Grameen Bank, yet this does not mean that microfinance is inherently flawed. Rather, struggling MFIs should seek consultation from organizations like CERISE if they truly wish to foster change and development.



Translating lives into numbers: how human rights organizations obtain statistics

JUAN CAMILO VELASQUEZ

Earlier this year, The Sunday Times reporter Marie Colvin and photographer Remi Ochlik died while covering the conflict in Syria.

The Colvin and Ochlik case is not an isolated event. Human rights violations against media organizations and reporters are widespread. Several accounts from human rights watchdog organizations like Reporters without Borders (RWB), Amnesty International (AI) or the Human Rights Watch (HRW) paint a bleak picture for reporters and journalists.

According to the official website of RWB, "Overall, 2011 took a heavy toll on media freedom. The Arab Spring was at the centre of the news. Of the total of 66 journalists killed in 2011, 20 were killed in the Middle East (twice as many as in 2010)."

However, it is worth questioning the source of these disconcerting statements before taking them for fact. How do organizations come up with these statistics? How do they compile numbers and use them to assess human rights situations? How is it that they gather the deaths of all the Marie Colvins and Remi Ochliks in the world to make them numbers on a sheet of paper?

Amnesty International (AI), Human Rights Watch (HRW), and Reporters Without Borders (RWB) have reputations as authorities on human and media rights. Governments, non-governmental

and intergovernmental organizations (NGOs and IGOs) increasingly rely on these organizations' reports to conduct affairs and create policy. The thing that all these organizations hold in common is that they monitor different sources of information to come up with their numbers and statistics.

According to the website of Al New Zealand, "We monitor thousands of media outlets, and gather information from government bulletins, legal documents, medical reports and our contact with reliable sources of information all over the world."

This multifaceted approach means that on top of monitoring media outlets and government statements, AI contacts sources like diplomats, government agents, lawyers, journalists, humanitarian agencies and community workers. This plurality of sources is used to construct data and reliable estimates of human rights violations that activists across the world have come to respect.

It is in the combination of sources where the difference between these three organizations and journalistic research lies. When HWR releases a report on human rights abuses in Syria, it will include Colvin and Ochlik's case. It will include Aljazeera's or the BBC's report on the event. It will contact diplomats in Damascus. It will search for these reporters' death certificates and other documents, and it will seek

the government's response to the situation.

However, HRW will not dwell on the particularities of this case. It will not explain that Marie Colvin was bound to leave Syria on the same day she was killed. The report will not explain her life and death story. She will only be a statistic, a number.

During her final TV report, Colvin wondered "What is going on and why is no one stopping, this murder in Homs that is happening every day?" Colvin's attachment to the cause she was covering will not make it into the report, but it will not be forgotten either. It will continue to be diffused through the media to reach the homes of all of those who are watching. This is also a fundamental difference between journalistic research, and the research behind these watchdog organizations' human rights violation indexes.

This is not to say that one approaches to human rights research is better than the other. Both are created to serve different purposes, to tell different stories. Both approaches feed off each other and give a different dimension to the understanding of activists' struggles across the world.

Reports compiled by organizations like AI, HRW and RWB are purely descriptive. They do not examine causation or correlation, and they

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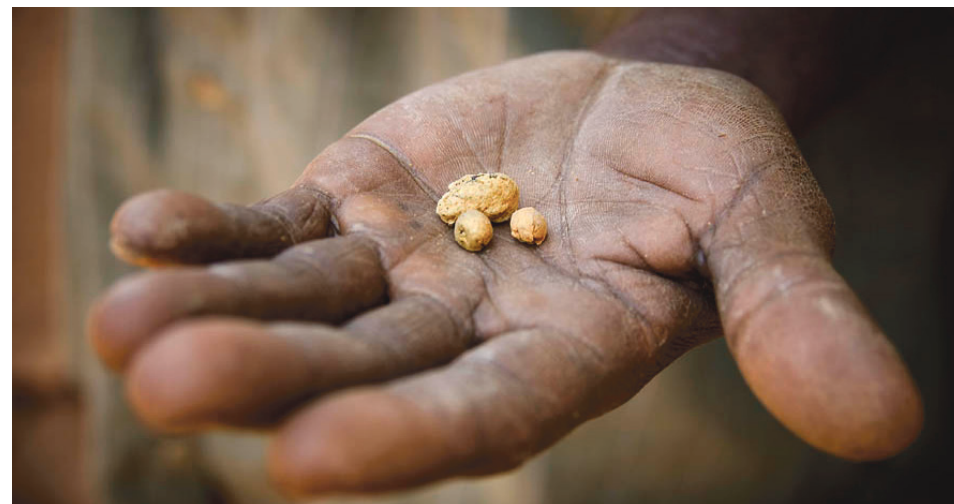
Translating lives into numbers continued from page 21

rarely propose hypotheses. Given this approach, these organization can claim objectivity in their reports. Thus, they enjoy a degree of credibility not many other organizations can boast. According to AI, "Journalists, researchers, governments and United Nations experts rely on our reports. In another measure of our success, the governments we criticise very rarely offer a detailed rebuttal of our information."

In this way, even though these organizations are n not academic entities and generally do not do

academic research, they can be of help to professors, students and researchers.

Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and Reporters without Borders have become household names in human rights activism. As such, their annual reports will reach many people. However, when looking at the number of murdered reporters in 2012, one should recognize that each one of those numbers is a different story, and that buried beneath the technical jargon there is the life and career of valiant people like Marie Colvin and Remi Ochlick.



Public-private relations in development: the growing presence of mining in Canada's international development strategy

ALEX BADDUKE

In October 2011, African Barrick Gold (ABG) began construction on a 14-kilometre long concrete wall that will stretch around its North Mara Gold Mine in Tanzania. The mine has been the source of tension within the community.

The wall is an attempt at keeping local Tanzanians from entering the mine lands and searching for minerals on their own. Police, who guard the mine, and the locals, have clashed several times.

On May 16, 2011, approximately

1,500 people entered the mining site illegally. ABG called the police, and in the end, five were killed in the event. As a result of this, ABG has embarked on implementing strategies to increase security, which includes building the wall – set to finish sometime this year – along with investment in the community to alleviate poverty and to increase human rights compliance.

Lau Masha, Tanzania's former minister of home affairs, said ABG's response was "way too late" and now CFOs need "to calculate the cost of not doing things the right way." He proposed that mining companies "do research at the exploration stage," and search for ways to "actively engage communities on the ground."

Masha spoke at the Conference on Public-Private Partnerships for Sustainable Development on March 29. The conference was put on by the McGill Institute for the Study of International Development and aimed to discuss the growing responsibility of the private sector in international development.

Discussions at the conference revolved around three main questions: What are the challenges facing public-private partnerships in aid? What are some effective solutions? What can government and NGOs do to help this relationship?

Masha spoke of his work as a lawyer in Tanzania, where he had to balance the interests of mining companies and surrounding communities, which differ greatly. Whereas mining companies aim to make money, surrounding communities want to see tangible value of the mine within their own society.

Masha stressed the importance of employment and community-ownership, stating "people on the ground need to see a benefit." Tensions are created between the two groups because many mining companies bring in workers from outside the local communities. Despite the strenuous relationship,



Public-private relations in development continued from page

Masha believes "a harmonious environment is possible for mines and communities around them." He spoke of "investing in sustainable programs that would outlive the mine in terms of benefits for the local community."

Because of the social and environmental conflicts involved in the mining sector, Canada has promoted the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Strategy. Most mining companies working both abroad and within Canada now work with CSRs. These strategies outline frameworks for working with local communities and how to properly manage mines with a socially and environmentally safe mindset. Although a look in the right direction, these strategies have been criticized for being too "soft," as they are simple guidelines, not hard laws.

Mining Watch Canada (MWC) has also called the CSR Strategy for a "poorly articulated attempt by the Government of Canada to help mining companies appear to offset the development deficits they



Photo courtesy of The Globe and Mail
Above: Local Tanzanians illegally search for gold in rocks left behind by Barrick mining truck at the North Mala African Barrick Gold mine. Right: McGill International Conference on Public-Private Partnership for Sustainable Development Toward a Framework for Resource Extraction Industries

are creating at local and national levels."

A report by MWC highlights the flaws of this new strategy. It states that "the mine-site CSR projects that CIDA [Canadian International Development Agency] is now funding in partnership with mining companies do not address the macro-economic factors that deepen poverty as developing countries become more dependent on mining."

In 2007, Canada had about \$73.3 billion invested in mining and energy extraction internationally. Mining companies in Canada have \$60 billion invested in developing nations, notably \$41 billion of this is in Latin America. Because of Canada's investment in this industry, CSRs are important to keeping development on track while also keeping private interests met.

Bev Oda, Canadian Minister of International Cooperations said at the Devonshire Initiative CEO Summit last September, "the Canadian extractive industries – particularly mining industries – are the largest in the world, working in many developing countries that have an abundance of natural resources. Working in partnership with the private sector, these resources can contribute to poverty reduction in

many of these countries and improve the standard of living for their populations."

Oda also mentioned, "CIDA is supporting Canada's Corporate Social Responsibility Strategy for the Canadian International Extractive Sector with initiatives that will contribute to sustainable economic growth, create jobs and long-term poverty reduction." Oda spoke of pilot projects opening in Colombia, Peru, Bolivia, Ghana and Burkina Faso, all of which would include working CSRs that would initiate skills training for surrounding communities.

Ian Smillie, author and chair of Diamond Development Initiative, and another keynote speaker at the conference, emphasized the need to look forward while also learning from past mistakes. "Private-public sector acting in development is anything but new," he said.

It appears that new projects and new mines will continue to open, making it key that the private sector learn how to engage with and include local communities, while those critical of the extractive sector should take new approaches that aim towards sustainability and productivity.

Smillie concluded, "it is possible to be naïve and overly optimistic, but it is also possible to overly pessimistic."

Social Justice Committee: volunteers for rights

AMANDA MURPHY

The Social Justice Committee (SJC) is a Montreal-based non-governmental organization that was founded in a church basement in 1975. It has since evolved into a secular organization, with its headquarters in the heart of downtown Montreal.

Derek MacCuish is the editor of the SJC's quarterly journal *Upstream*. *Upstream* defines itself as a publication providing "a Canadian perspective on global justice."

Though the SJC has a wide range of projects, process reform is one area in which they are particularly active, especially in regards to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Lately, according to MacCuish, the SJC has been "very active in trying to ensure the IMF establishes fair and objective evaluations of its programs".

What makes the SJC stand out is its extremely strong team of volunteers. The organization was featured in *Activism that Works*, a volume of essays compiled by three university professors on what makes activist groups and organizations successful. "What worked here very well was the level and quality of volunteer involvement" said MacCuish about why the SJC was approached for the book.

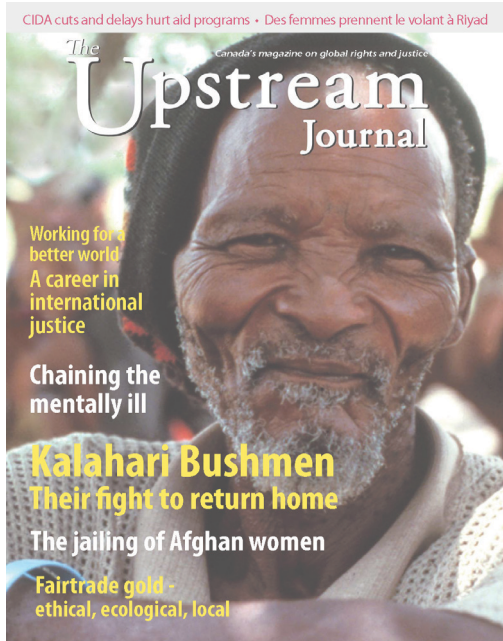
The SJC receives most of its funding from private donors, but also, "what we want to do is include people in campaigns" said MacCuish. *Upstream's* articles include mention of easy ways for people to get



HATTY LIU

Spotlight on The Montreal Media Co-op

The Montreal Media Co-op belongs to The Media Co-op, a coast-to-coast network of co-operatives that provides people-centred, democratic media coverage of their communities and of Canada. The Media Co-op evolved from *The Dominion*, an independent news magazine dedicated to exploring news stories and angles ignored by mainstream Canadian or international press. The Media Co-op continues to publish *The Dominion* today, in addition to running virtual working groups where members can discuss news events and identify areas in need of further coverage.



Above: a volunteer tables at a conference organized by the SJC.

Left: cover of *Upstream* journal, Winter 2012 issue

involved, such as publishing the mailing addresses where readers can send letters to campaign for social justice. The SJC is also big on teaching human rights, social justice and activism. "We run about 50 educational workshops a year," said MacCuish.

One of the main roadblocks that SJC has come up against lately is the current Canadian government. "Canada is a problem" said MacCuish. "They are actively eliminating funding for NGOs that are doing any advocacy work."

Furthermore, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) has re-formatted its financial aid structure so that NGOs must apply to carry out projects mandated by CIDA. Under the old system, groups submitted self-devised projects for funding approval. The SJC is considering possible action against these adversities.

The SJC can be found online at www.s-j-c.net and *Upstream* can be found online at www.upstreamjournal.org.

The world's news in brief

HATTY LIU, JENNA TOPAN, OLIVIA ZEYDLER



1 By-elections in Burma

The National League for Democracy (NLD), the opposition party in Burma headed by Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, won 43 out of the 44 seats it contested in the country's parliamentary by-elections on April 1.

These were Burma's first free elections since 1990, when Burma's standing military government annulled the NLD's landslide victory in that year's general elections. Suu Kyi has spent most of the 20 intervening years under house arrest, while her party was outlawed.

The NLD remains a minority party in Burma's 664-seat national parliament. Reports of voting aberration are widespread.

Nevertheless, the elections round out a spate of reforms that the parliament passed in the last year, including greater press freedom and release of some political prisoners.

If judged fair by the international community, the elections may ease economic sanctions against Burma.

2 FARC frees captives, pledges end to kidnapping

The last ten captive police officers and soldiers held by Colombia's largest rebel guerilla group, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), were released on April 2.

FARC has also said that it will renounce kidnapping civilians for ransom.

Tensions persist between FARC and Colombia's government. The government alleges that FARC held at least 12 police and military hostages prior to April 2. It also urges the rebel group to release and account for civilians still in its custody.

Ransom from kidnappings is one of FARC's principal sources of income, though it is now being

eclipsed by extortion. The narcotic drug trade remains FARC's biggest avenue of funds.

The hostages released on April 2 are said to have been among the longest-held in the world, having each lived in the jungle for 12 to 14 years.

3 Ongoing crisis in Syria

Though President Bashar al-Assad's army has agreed to a pullback of troops, no signs of withdrawal have come so far.

The internationally brokered truce deal by UN-Arab League envoy Kofi Annan called for troops to withdraw by April 10 and a ceasefire by April 12. Assad reportedly accepted Annan's terms in late March, but the deadline has passed and there has been shelling in the village of Marea and mortar fire in the city of Homs.

Annan remains positive for the possibility of a truce and the restoration of some stability.

4 China censors coup rumours

China has cracked down on a variety of websites as rumours of a possible coup attempt circulate online.

Speculation of fighting within the Communist Party sprouted after Bo Xilai, party chief of a major city, was dismissed from his post amidst in a public scandal. The government censors or blocks any online discussion about Bo. Three of China's top Internet portals pledged to work with the government to banish online rumour-mongering.

Sixteen websites closed down and multiple micro blogging sites temporarily turned off their comments sections, including QQ and Weibo, a Chinese microblogging platform akin to Twitter. Officials fear such social networking sites as possible springboards for protests

and demonstrations in China.

5 Coup d'état in Mali

The Malian army instigated a separatist uprising on March 21.

Dissatisfied with the elected government's actions to control the northern rebels, the army, called the National Committee of Restoration of Democracy and State, attacked government buildings in Bamako, Mali's capital, seeking to force President Amadou Toumani Touré to step down.

The military invasion disrupted the government's regular counteroffensive against Tuareg rebels in the north, and has allowed the Tuareg to push further south and take over Mali's northern half.

Touré has agreed to step down. Parliamentary speaker Dioncounda Traoré will become interim president.

The Tuareg rebels in the north are trying to declare themselves the independent nation of Azawad.

6 Trayvon Martin killing

Trayvon Martin, a 17-year-old African American youth, was fatally shot on Feb. 26 in Sanford, Florida.

The perpetrator, George Zimmerman, was a community watch coordinator licensed to carry a firearm. He was monitoring the neighborhood when he came across Trayvon Martin, who was walking home from 7-Eleven back home. Zimmerman was suspicious and began to follow Martin.

Zimmerman claims that self-defense motivated his decision to shoot. He was charged with second-degree murder on April 11.

Upcoming events in Montreal

HATTY LIU, JENNA TOPAN, OLIVIA ZEYDLER

What: Media, Politics and Protest Camps in the Occupy Social Movement

When: April 17, 18, 24, 25

Where: Broadcast on Canal Savoir TV

Catch an hour-long broadcast of "Media, Politics and Protest Camps in the Occupy Social Movement – The Way I See It" with keynote speaker Chris Hedges, a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and author. Hedges and others address the Occupy movement and the media, political and social themes involved. Broadcast of panel discussion to follow.

What: Festival Accès Asie

When: May 3-May 19

Where: various locations; visit accesasie.com for details

This festival celebrates Asian Heritage Month by showcasing the work of visual and performing artists from more than 20 Asian countries. The festival has a three-pronged goal of presenting Asian or Asian-Canadian artists to a Montreal audience, of creating a receptive public for these artists' work, and of fostering greater cultural understanding and diversity in Quebec society.

What: Blue Metropolis Montreal International Literary Festival

When: April 18-April 23

Where: Montreal OPUS Hotel, 10 Sherbrooke St. W.

Literary people take note! This annual event hosts authors, literary critics and publishing house representatives hailing from all around the world. These guests will share their writing and publishing experiences in a variety of panel discussions and workshops open to the public.

What: McGill Surgical Global Health Conference

Where: Martin Amphitheater at the McIntyre Building

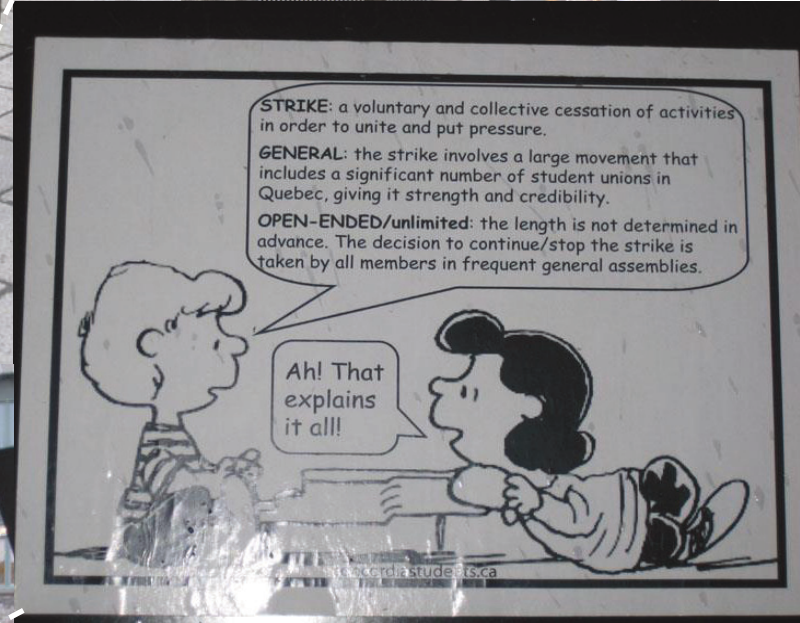
When: Saturday, May 12th, 2012, 12:30pm-6:00pm

Students from McGill's Faculty of Medicine and surgeons from the McGill Health Center will come together to discuss the challenges and approaches to the field of surgical global health. The conference will include panel discussions and guest speakers such as Dr. ElSharkawi from the Canadian Red Cross. It will also be followed by a cocktail event to keep the discussion going!

PHOTO ESSAY

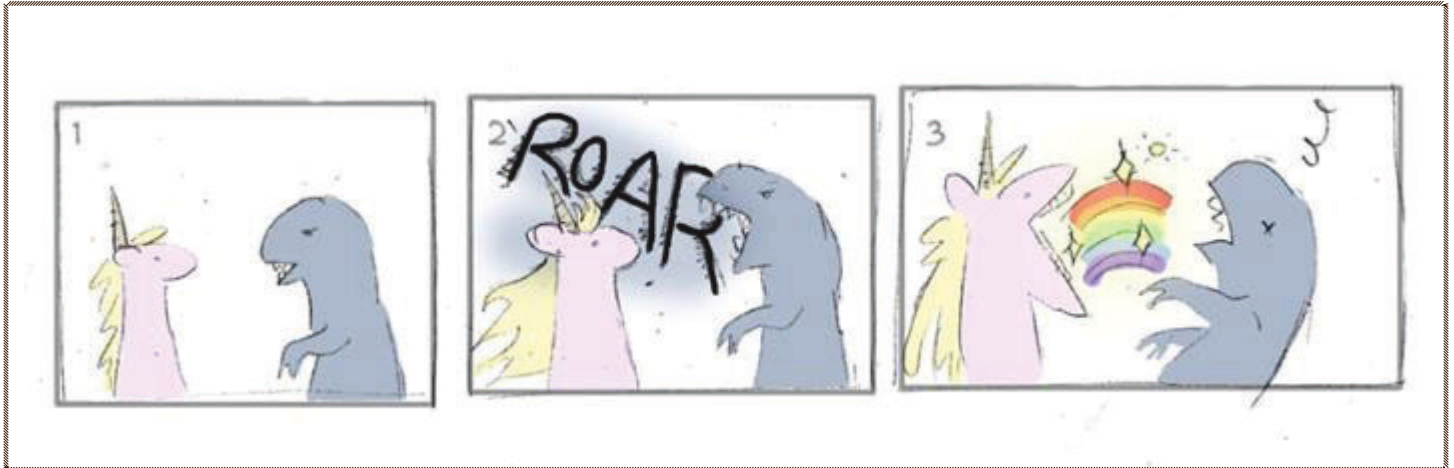
March 22 demonstrations and the city

H Aidan Dong



How to hold a conversation

HAIDAN DONG



jhr's Core Principles

jhr is an organization that:

- seeks to eliminate the need for the work it does
- creates change without creating dependency
- runs needs-based programs with sustainable, long-term impact
- works with local media on pressing local human rights issues
- believes in the inherent equality of all human beings
- respects all human rights equally
- believes in the power of open and free discussion to create positive change
- upholds the most stringent of human rights standards in its own operations
- builds long-term and respectful relationships with its partners, volunteers, staff, funders and stakeholders
- actively works with local partners in countries of operation
- recognizes the power of all forms of media
- ensures all projects and programs are ethically responsible
- is non-partisan
- respects local knowledge systems

jhr is an organization that does not:

- deviate from its core mission or principles
- create a need for itself
- run short-term programs without substantive follow-up
- provide band-aid solutions
- prioritize one human right above another
- assume it knows better than its local partners and stakeholders
- provide monetary support to media outlets



jhr

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<http://jhrmcgillspeak.wordpress.com>