The McGill Daily

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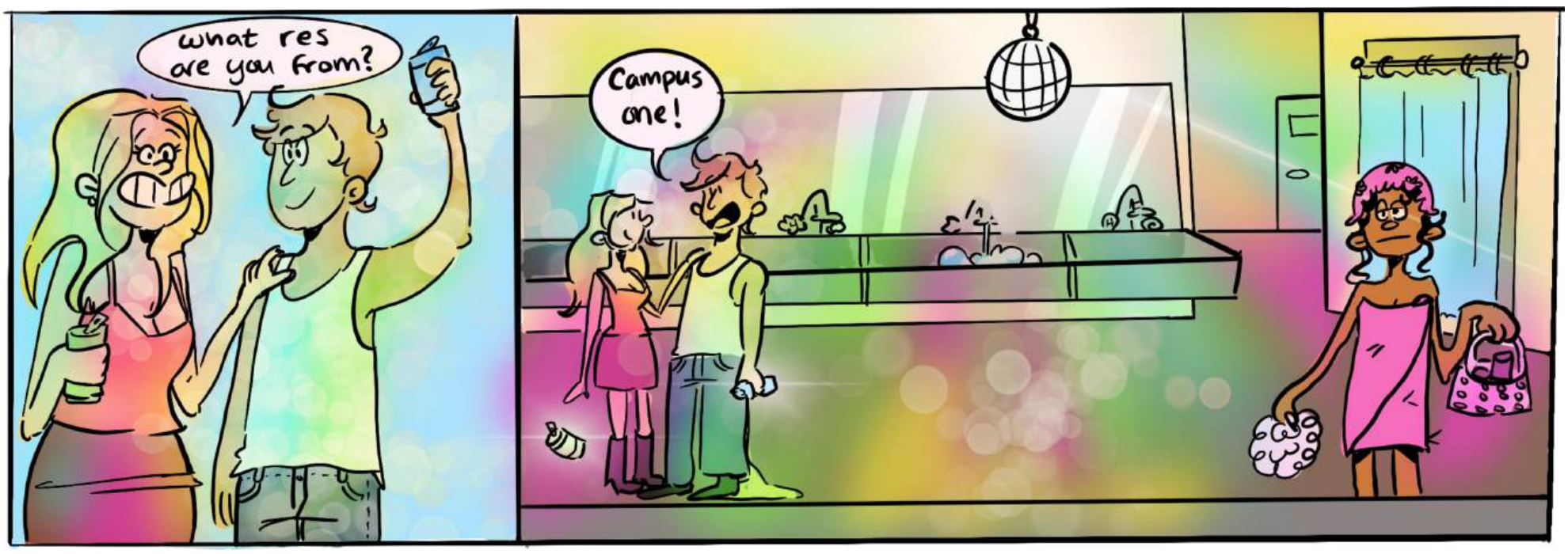
McGill DAILY le délit

DPS SPD

DAILY PUBLICATIONS SOCIETY
SOCIÉTÉ DES PUBLICATIONS DU DAILY

Published by The Daily Publications Society, a student society of McGill University.

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Zoé Sanguin
Staff Illustrator

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- Events at McGill
- Events in Quebec
- Canadian affairs
- Interviews

SCI + TECH
- Scientific news
- Technological organizations

CULTURE
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- Festivals
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- Narratives
- Human-interest pieces

COMMENTARY
- Opinion pieces (subjective, persuasive)

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To apply, a DPS member must have submitted at least one visual to the *Daily*. To remain a staff illustrator, a DPS member must contribute at least two visuals a month.

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Keeping our unhoused community warm this winter

On October 23, Paul St-Pierre Plamondon released plans to fulfill his first campaign promise as Premier: allocating an additional 28 million dollars to the 48 million provincial budget to operate warming shelters for unhoused people this winter. Around 16 to 18 million dollars of this budget will be set aside for Montreal, which, according to *The Montreal Gazette*, encompasses around 5,000 unhoused people as of last year, almost half of Quebec's unhoused population.

However, funding only goes so far. "Homelessness becomes a municipal issue when it appears in public spaces, though it starts long before then," says Mélanie Fournier, a PhD student in psychology at UQAM. There are individual and structural factors at play that can determine housing situations, including: low income or unemployment, rent inflation, immigration complications, social reintegration after incarceration or hospitalization, unstable relationships and domestic violence, addiction, and mental illness.

Investing in warming shelters is not enough, as shelters and homes are not synonymous. This distinction is especially pertinent for "situational" or "hidden homelessness," where people seek shelter in their vehicles, hotels, and other forms of temporary housing. Nonetheless, some individuals find themselves in the visible category of being unhoused, falling under cyclical or chronic subtypes. These groups may find themselves inhabiting makeshift shelters and abandoned infrastructure, leaving them unhoused for longer. Since having access to temporary housing does not guarantee safety, invisible homelessness can quickly become visible. This also extends to resource access. Despite having access to warming centres and temporary shelters, some, like Jocelyn Motard, prefer makeshift "cabin-like" shelters away from the heart of the city. This allows Motard to avoid precarious social interactions or squabbles with other unhoused individuals. "[These shelters] are the kind of place[s] that you can find a lot of darkness," he says. While the city of Montreal invests in winter warming centres, access to these shelters is not universal, even with street outreach teams responsible for communicating with and directing unhoused people to them.

Nonetheless, warming centres can be vital to the survival of unhoused peoples amid declining temperatures. Without them, makeshift heat sources in encampments pose fire risks which, if not monitored, can quickly turn life-threatening. This was the case last month at the Notre-Dame encampment, where 180 unhoused people presently reside, when an unhoused woman died following a fire at the Notre-Dame encampment. These improvised heat sources are most often propane-fuelled trash fires, but solar panels and generators have also been used. As a result, these encampments can become municipal fire hazards, requiring what fire service chief Martin Guilbault calls "case-by-case" reviews. If a makeshift warming centre is found to pose a fire risk, it is supposed to be taken down for "people's safety." This approach begs the question of how safety is defined and whose is deemed more important. Devint, a resident of the Notre-Dame encampment, says his biggest safety concern is the encampment being dismantled after last month's tragedy, which would leave him vulnerable as winter comes. According to CBC, the city of Montreal has cleared out the area multiple times in the past. This makes their promise to withhold from tearing down the encampment in the future seem disingenuous.

The new budget, however, aspires to prevent history from repeating itself by shifting to 24-hour, municipally-regulated shelters at designated locations. Coinciding with Premier Plamondon's campaign promise, Montreal mayor Soraya Martínez Ferrada announced the opening of "nine warming centres [equipped with beds] across seven boroughs." This could be significant not only in mitigating the effects of "cold snaps" on the unhoused population, but also in serving as gateways to other social services and aid. Examples of this are the Canadian Red Cross centres in Ville Saint-Laurent and Plateau-Mont-Royal, and the Centre des femmes de convictions de Montréal, which is opening a new warming shelter in Rosemont–La Petite-Patrie exclusively for unhoused women.

While the provincial government of Quebec has announced they will provide financial aid for warming centres in Montreal, the opening of these centres is conditional on the recruitment of operating organizations and staff, and on communication with residents around the designated centres. In the meantime, there are several actions Montreal residents can take to support the unhoused population this upcoming winter.

One way to help street outreach teams is to stay informed about local warming centres on the City of Montreal's website and by calling 311 to "inquire about these centres and report sanitation issues." Additionally, one can donate clothes and winter gear, either directly to unhoused individuals or through an organization such as Chez Doris, Angels of Mercy, or Mission Old Brewery. Donating non-perishable goods or volunteering at soup kitchens and food banks like Moisson Montreal are other ways to get involved. Closer to campus, students may choose to volunteer on cleanup crews or donate hygiene products at The Open Door Montreal drop-in centre on Parc Avenue. Concerning actionable steps on campus, students can support McGill's annual fundraising for the Centraide Campaign, an initiative to combat food insecurity and the housing crisis. While donations can be made directly through the Centraide of Greater Montreal website, McGill is hosting fundraising events for the organization. Returning this year is the second annual Pet Photo Contest, with a cash submission fee to participate and/or vote — voting is open from November 15 until December 13.

Ultimately, while increased government funding does not provide a permanent solution to the structural conditions surrounding unhoused individuals, this financial initiative can be strengthened by partnering with local efforts in and around our campus. These government measures complement pre-existing aid organizations and services — keeping people warm this winter is the immediate goal, while combating food insecurity and the housing crisis is the long-term objective.

The McGill Daily's Editorial Board is proud to endorse both CKUT-90.3 FM Radio and Quebec Public Interest Research Group (QPIRG) McGill during their existence campaign in SSMU's Fall 2026 referendum. Both organizations are mandated to undergo an existence referendum every 5 years, where SSMU members determine whether they will continue to exist as recognized student activities supported by student fees.

CKUT was established as McGill's campus radio station in 1966 and has since been voted Montreal's number one radio station in consecutive Cult Montreal polls. CKUT relies on McGill student volunteers for its daily operations, and McGill students currently sit on the organization's Board of Directors, as well as steering and programming committees.

QPIRG has operated on campus since 1988, and connects McGill students with the larger Montreal community through free workshops and events. The organization is a pivotal source for anti-oppression work on campus, providing vital resources to students and the Milton Parc community, including funding, a textbook loan program, and a library with alternative books, movies, and zines. The *Daily* has worked with both organizations in the past, and has encouraged its readers to engage with CKUT and QPIRG since their founding.

The *Daily* urges McGill students to vote "yes" in the SSMU referendum to the motions concerning the continued existence of both CKUT and QPIRG. Voting is open until November 6 at ssmu.simplyvoting.com.

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Princeton Professor Beth Lew-Williams Wins 2026 Cundill History Prize

At McGill's finalists' forum, authors discussed recovering overlooked perspectives and challenging established historical narratives

Lorin Kamaci
Staff Writer

Administered by McGill University, the Cundill History Prize recognizes historical writing that combines rigorous research, high literary quality, and wide-ranging public appeal. Open to books written in or translated into English, this international competition comes with a reward of $75,000 USD (about $105,000 CAD) for the winner, as well as $10,000 US (about $14,000 CAD) for two chosen finalists. Beyond financial recognition, the prize aims to bring historical scholarship to diverse audiences and encourage informed public debate.

On October 23, Beth Lew-Williams, professor of history and director of the Program in Asian American Studies at Princeton University, won the 2026 prize for her book *John Doe Chinaman: A Forgotten History of Chinese Life Under American Racial Law*. Lew-Williams' work was chosen from a pool of almost 400 international submissions, making the eight-book shortlist in September before earning top honours. Jonathan Cheng of *The Wall Street Journal* and Alexander Lee of The University of Warwick were named as the year's two finalists.

Also on October 23, before the allocation of the awards, all three writers spoke in the Cundhill Forum at McGill's Thomson House, where the *Daily* was in attendance. Moderated by McGill History and Classical Studies professor Jeremy Tai, the discussion explored the motivating research questions and resulting discoveries key to the three books in competition. The Forum formed part of the October 22-23 Cundill History Prize Festival, which also featured a lecture by previous winner Lyndal Roper for her book *Summer of Fire and Blood: The German Peasants' War*, the student-organized Cundill Fringe, and the awards ceremony.

During the forum, Lew-Williams explained that *John Doe Chinaman* began with questions about everyday life. After researching anti-Chinese violence and immigration restrictions in the 19th century American West, she realized how much was not known about the specifics of Chinese immigrant life in America. Could they enter a barbershop, for example? Where could they sit in a segregated theatre? These were things she did not know. "I wanted to understand the racial norms, the rules of everyday life," she explained.

This line of questioning led to a shift in research, moving from her previous focus on American border restrictions faced by Chinese immigrants to studying the laws that governed those who successfully became residents. Combining a review of trial transcripts from the 1850s to the 1920s with digital research, she identified more than 5,000 discriminatory laws. Machine learning helped locate potential legislation, but she personally reviewed approximately 9,000 matches to determine their relevance.

Lew-Williams also turned to trial transcripts containing testimony from Chinese immigrants for research. From this angle, she was able to uncover a more personal side of the story. Despite restrictions on Chinese testimony, Lew-Williams found that some immigrants had managed to leave behind anonymity-defying accounts in the historical record. "When you're given only fragments, you learn to make the best of them," she said.

As a part of his discussion moderation, Tai asked the finalists to share the story of someone who stood out in their research. For her part, Lew-Williams introduced Ruby Tsang, a Chinese-American woman who filed a lawsuit in 1916 in order to challenge segregation at a theatre in Reno, Nevada. In response, the theatre threatened to lobby for segregation-permitting legislation, and Tsang subsequently withdrew her case. "[T]his is not a story where she triumphs in the end and desegregates all the theaters in Nevada," Lew-Williams explained, but in her eyes that makes Tsang's story all the more important. "[W]e get a sense of [the] pushback that those in power, state governments, ha[d] against Chinese communities."

In the official winner announcement, Emily Greenwood, chair of the jury and a professor of classics at Harvard University, described the book as "a dazzlingly innovative and hard-hitting work." She highlighted its combination of data analysis and storytelling to recover Chinese voices obscured in legal and bureaucratic records.

Fellow panelist and finalist Alexander Lee described a similar challenge of working with fragments in writing his book *The First Ghetto: Venice and the Jews*. He argued that scholarship often separates Jewish residents' experiences from the surrounding Christian society, "as if the ghetto's walls were also built around the archives."

With his book, Lee examined how the Venice Jewish community's position was continually negotiated. Alongside persecution, his account considers the relationships and institutions through which residents sustained community. He described studying architecture, commerce, and domestic space to understand experiences that government records alone could not capture.

Jonathan Cheng, the third co-panellist and other Cundhill Prize finalist, was honoured for his work, *Korean Messiah: Kim Il Sung and the Christian Roots of North Korea's Personality Cult*, about the intersections of religious influence and political power through a history of North Korea's founding Kim family.

This project, Cheng explained, grew from his own curiosity about the Kim family's Christian background, beginning as a newspaper article but eventually becoming the 768-page book in question. Cheng relied on missionary diaries and correspondence, alongside critically-examined North Korean publications, to investigate connections between Kim Il Sung's upbringing and the political system that the leader established. "It is about personality cults. It is about the blending of politics and religion," Cheng said.

When the panel discussion turned to the contemporary significance of these respective histories, Lew-Williams highlighted the continuing influence of nineteenth-century anti-Chinese legal cases on immigrants' rights. Cheng, for his part, discussed the intertwining of politics and religion across contemporary societies. Lee cautioned that prejudice can persist by changing its form, even as historical circumstances differ.

Lee also emphasized the importance of empathy in historical research. "We seek to put ourselves in their shoes, to see what they saw, to feel what they felt, to know their hopes and fears," he told the audience. Together, the three books show how recovering personal accounts and stories can deepen our understanding of the laws, communities, and political systems that shape history.

NAZA: When the Perpetrators Tell the Story

New documentary uses Israeli soldier testimony to examine destruction of Gaza

Maria Hamdaoui
Staff Writer

Content warning: violence, genocide

There is something particularly disturbing in hearing someone admit to celebrating acts of violence. Even more unsettling: learning that this same violence was treated as a routine aspect of military life. Directed by Yuval Abraham and Rachel Szor, NAZA (2026) examines Israel's genocide in Gaza through the testimonies of its very perpetrators. The particular success of the documentary, then, lies not only in what it reveals, but also in the shocking reality of who reveals it.

NAZA features interviews with 24 ex-Israeli soldiers and intelligence personnel, who confess their military experiences and explain the systems behind attacks on Gaza. While the interviewees remain anonymous — their faces are hidden in shadow and their voices have been altered to protect their identities — the accounts of violence which they share are painfully detailed. That the filmmakers allow the subjects to speak for themselves is also effective; their testimony tells a story more unsettling than any other narration could likely achieve. Then there is the staging of the interviews themselves. Abraham chose to conduct his interviews on the rooftops of Tel Aviv, filming the shadowy participants against the backdrop of the illuminated city. The darkness of their admissions is thus foregrounded and unsettlingly contrasted by the bright, ordinary urban life which spreads out behind them. Perhaps the most horrifying moments come when former soldiers describe how little remorse they felt for their actions. Some recall celebrating attacks alongside their comrades. One interviewee remembers that "it was fun" and compares the experience to playing a video game. This comparison becomes even more disturbing when the film explains the meaning behind its title.

'Naza' is an Israeli military term referring to expected civilian casualties. As one former soldier explains, "You would not say '15 people have been killed,' and certainly not '15 women and children have been killed.' You say '15 Naza.' Instead of acknowledging the deaths of civilians, the military terminology reduces them into an abstract quantity. This language turns the violent eradication of entire families and communities into routine military procedure. The people being killed become numbers, obscuring the human consequences of military actions, even to those leading these attacks.

In a particularly poignant moment, one former soldier asks, "I still see the Nazis as evil. But what does that mean I am?" His words reveal a disturbing contradiction between the condemnation of Nazi atrocities and the violence carried out against Palestinians. The Nazis are remembered for their cruel persecution, dehumanization, and the systematic murder of millions of people. Yet the soldier's question forces him to confront the violence he took part in against another group of people. He questions the difference between the atrocities he condemns and his own actions. Another soldier is more blunt, and his confession is all the more horrifying. "Gaza is full of bodies," he says "It's not a grave, it's a pit."

Beyond the testimonies, one of NAZA's most compelling features is its portrayal of Tel Aviv. Throughout the film, signs of Israeli propaganda appear in public spaces while people continue their daily lives. Businesses remain open, streets are busy, and ordinary routines continue, all the while the rooftop confessions speak of unthinkable violence. This creates an unsettling, almost uncanny feeling for the viewer; Palestinian suffering — less than a hundred kilometers away — is pushed aside in the public consciousness, but its ugly truth lurks in the shadows nonetheless. This contrast raises questions about collective responsibility, indifference, and the normalization of violence. While the interviews reveal military desensitization to violence, the footage of Tel Aviv asks viewers to consider the spread of these attitudes into the general populace.

NAZA also raises questions regarding testimony and credibility. Palestinian journalists have spent years documenting the destruction of Gaza, often while experiencing the very violence on which they are reporting. Many have been killed while doing their work. Yet their accounts have repeatedly been dismissed by Israeli officials. This is the most uncomfortable aspect of the documentary's approach to portraying the violence in Gaza through the testimonies of Israeli soldiers; it is precisely through giving perpetrators of genocide a voice that NAZA offers a perspective that is undeniably revealing. Unfortunately, it would seem that the words of those responsible for violence carry more weight than the words of those experiencing it.

Ultimately, NAZA invites a reflection in its viewers that extends far beyond the film's final scenes. Through its unsettling personal approach, the work forces audiences to contend with questions of guilt, indoctrination, and perspective, as well as exposing horrifying truths of this continued genocide. The resulting film makes for an unsettling watch, but then again, if this were easy, such a work would not be needed in the first place.

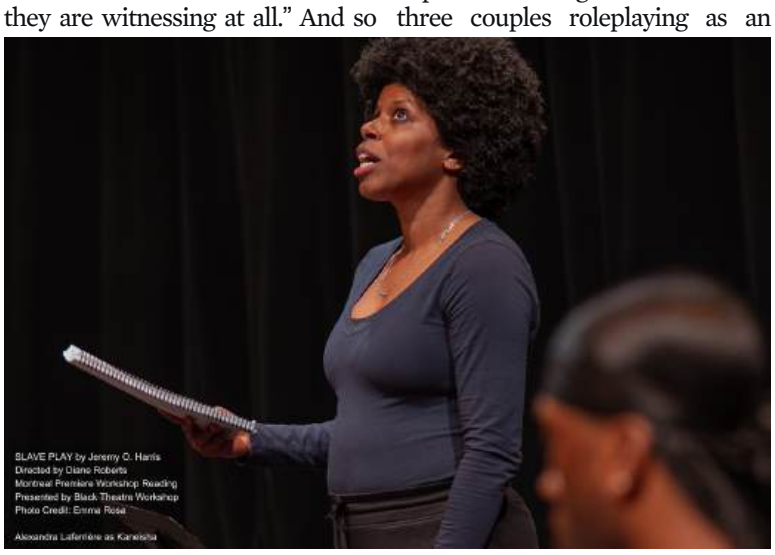
Is Montreal ready for *Slave Play*?

Black Theatre Workshop reads Jeremy O'Harris's controversial *Slave Play* as a part of their 2026-2027 programming

Amihan del Rosario-Tapan
Culture Contributor

Content warning: racism, violence

From the dark of the stage, theatre artist Esi Callender speaks: "*Slave Play* is a comedy of sorts. It should be played as such. I'm not sure where the music is coming from, but it's there. You should not work to make the audience comfortable with what they are witnessing at all." And so began Black Theatre Workshop's (BTW) Montreal reading of Jeremy O'Harris' highly controversial *Slave Play*.





In its original 2019 run on Broadway, *Slave Play* riled audiences and critics. In one talkback with the director, for example, an audience member rose from the crowd and shouted to air her grievances about the piece. The play, she claimed, was just "a whole bunch of stuff about how white people don't get how racist they are." Not all agreed with this perspective, however. Despite *Slave Play*'s ability to provoke, or perhaps because of it, many critics celebrated the work for its bold approach in confronting the historical legacies of slavery that persist within interracial relationships.

The title *Slave Play* is a double entendre; representing both the play's discussion of slavery and its use of play in the bedroom to explore those legacies. Act I sees three couples roleplaying as an enslaved woman and her overseer, a white mistress and a mixed-race man, and an enslaved man and an indentured servant, respectively. Featuring brown-skinned dildos, slur-filled dirty talk, and incendiary slave-master power play, the first act thrusts (pun intended) uncomfortable stereotypes about Black people onto the audience, to show that they subtly persist within everyday life.

Act II arrives with a twist. Titled "Process," this portion of the performance is interrupted by two therapists, who emerge from the crowd. These therapists reveal to the audience that, all along, the couples have been participants in a group therapy project known as "Antebellum Sexual Performance Therapy: A RADICAL therapy designed to help Black partners reengage intimately with white partners from whom they no longer receive sexual pleasure."



The conversations that follow are both hilarious, and deeply psychoanalytical. Characters fight, cry, and plead with one another as they explore their desires in their relationships, as well as their desires in relation to their identities. At the Montreal reading of *Slave Play* on October 24, audience members were laughing, clapping and even interjecting. I heard one person yell "Oh shit" from the crowd.

Beneath the comedy, of course, the weight of the subject matter endures. Being Black in the United States, where the historical and continued oppression of Black people pervades daily life, is not so easy, especially when non-Black loved ones cannot understand this experience.

As complicated and painful the themes are in *Slave Play*, writer O'Harris also weaves in a sublime wit. His stage directions are poetic. Music is ubiquitous. Love is the premise. None of the characters would be in therapy if it weren't for the care they had for their partner. What the play argues, then, is that care and romantic love in the United States is inextricable from its history of slavery.

Slave Play is a part of BTW's series of readings titled *tête-à-tête*, which invite viewers to engage in conversation with theatre. Rather than put on a main stage show, BTW produces three readings of plays which might otherwise not be shown due to cast size or controversy. Alongside these readings, BTW also hosts pre-show conversations, in collaboration with Concordia University's Black Community Engagement Office and University of the Streets Cafe. The goal is to bring private tensions into public discourse and ask new questions.

In an interview with the *Daily*, artistic Director Dian Marie Bridges explains that in running *Slave Play*, she wanted to "really question why do we do theater? Why are these plays important? What gives people an incentive to come to theatre? What is the role of art in the Black community? …That comes down to community. That comes down to conversation."

O'Harris is equally interested in these questions. In his documentary about the making of the play, *Slave Play. Not a Movie. A Play*, he states that Pornhub created a map of the most popular porn per state, where "ebony and lesbian porn were the top porn in New York." O'Harris continues: "[I]f all you people are going home and watching this in your secret little rooms and then also like, you know, voting for Obama but like saying the N-word when you hear a Kendrick Lamar song [when] you're all alone…I want to play with all of those aspects in this room because like, I know you can handle it…because you do at home…so let's see you handle it here."





This is the sentiment of *tête-à-tête*. Bridges tells the *Daily* that part of the reason why she programmed *Slave Play* was because she "wanted to see if we were ready for it [*Slave Play*], if we could have a conversation about it."



So what kind of conversations emerge from *Slave Play*? What does it mean to show *Slave Play* in Montreal?

For Bridges, "*Slave Play* as therapy really speaks to the psychological impact of slavery on [America]…It's a different relationship [in Montreal]."

At the talkback following the show this weekend, audience members were curious about actors' relationship to their characters. They asked questions such as, "Did you take your role seriously?" and "Was it difficult to play a character with trauma that might parallel your own?"

Perhaps these questions demonstrate that despite not being in the United States, we all have something to take away from the intrinsic complexities of race and traumatic history within our identities and how they affect our relationships. Or that as the stage directions declare, "Everything in life is a performance."

Whether ugly, beautiful, explicit, poetic, or painful, language is the power that shapes us all. It can poke at us, hang over us, or give us a voice. *Slave Play* plays with all of these factors, highlighting how conversation is where we can make sense of it all.

For The Love of The Game: The Story of Seat Alert

The founder of Seat Alert on the important things in life

Beau Milelli
Culture Contributor

It doesn't matter how prepared you are — course selection day is a gong-show. CRNs get mixed up and you end up in a closed section; your bird-to-hard course ratio veers off course as one of your choices, normally the bird, fills up; you're in the winter section applying for fall, and none of your courses are valid. Or you sleep through your alarm and miss the entire thing, left to dig through what's left.

For McGill students, the solution to these qualms comes in the form of a website, with shrouded origins and a dead-simple user experience, called Seat Alert.

Seat Alert, for the shrinking minority that has never heard of it, is a service that notifies students when free spaces open in full courses or their waitlists. Using Seat Alert is a straightforward process that involves paying two dollars to receive text updates as spots open in a class you're interested in. Because of the demand for certain classes at McGill, that notice is crucial. If at the start of the year you hear a text chime at the library followed by rabid typing, that person probably just got a Seat Alert.

Despite its growing presence on campus, the history of the website remains obscure; some peers I spoke to even thought it was an official McGill website. The interface, anachronistically simple at a time when anyone can build a glitzy website in one or two AI prompts, stands out. The website gives one nod to its origin at its very bottom: the name Ethan McAuliffe, in small print.

To learn more about the story of Seat Alert, and why it looks so unique on the internet today, I decided to give him a call. As it turns out, the complete lack of ads, branding, or any commercial zeal isn't an accident. Ethan has it exactly as he wants it.

Ethan is from Toronto, and began as a student at McMaster in 2018, where he completed a joint degree in engineering and business. In 2021, as COVID-19 put school online, Ethan opted instead to do a co-op, one of many during his degree. During this time, he found himself driving his sister and her friends to their university of choice — McGill — for the start of term. On the road, the topic of course selection and how difficult it was to get the schedule you wanted came up. A friend in the car then mentioned a service called Get A Seat, where McGill students could pay to be notified when space in a class opened up. This type of service was new to Ethan as nothing like it was offered at McMaster; but was one that he knew would be appreciated, especially given the lack of waitlists at his school. Ethan, armed with the necessary technical abilities, decided to build a similar website for McMaster.

The service was a quick hit, spread only by word of mouth. In time, while McMaster remained the most active hub, Ethan expanded the service to Laurier and other schools, though Seat Alert is now no longer offered at them. Despite having connections at McGill, there was no need for his service here; it remained Get A Seat's territory, and Ethan didn't strike me as the Machiavellian type. During this time, Ethan reached out to the creator of the service looking for advice on how to grow his own, but never got a response.

It remained this way until 2023, when Ethan received an email from a student at McGill inquiring about whether he had any plans to spread Seat Alert to Montreal. Get A Seat had shut down, he was told, supposedly because of a routing issue. Ethan figured out how to fix the error and launched his service at McGill that same year. At the start, it was free for McGill students as Ethan expected more errors to come and didn't feel that charging people during that time was good practice. He also knew that a free service would spread quickly — and it did just that. He attributed this to a market in need, and Seat Alert showing up as the first result when anyone searched for the now-defunct Get A Seat. To get the word out further, Ethan also posted on the McGill subreddit and got his sister to spread the word to friends. He didn't pay for any marketing, and instead focused on making something that worked reliably.

As his service expanded, so too did the security procedures enacted by many of the schools where Seat Alert was used. Many of them started to require a secure login to be able to access the class information. This is why Seat Alert is no longer available outside of McMaster and McGill, where secure logins aren't required. With AI posing new risks to institutions' cybersecurity, this could soon change.

I asked Ethan about the possibility of hiring students with secure logins at these defunct schools to gather the necessary information. Ethan had thought about it, but an experience he'd had in the early days of Seat Alert, where he was called into McMaster's IT department and questioned about what he was doing, deterred him from putting other students at risk of disciplinary action in this way. Looking at past student-focused startups, his worries aren't unfounded. OneClass was a startup founded by students at the University of Toronto in 2010, that allowed students to share course notes and lecture materials online. It grew quickly and raised venture capital, but at the expense of its own reputation and certain copyright laws. In 2016, it was issued a cease-and-desist by the University of Waterloo and in 2020 it was fined $100,000 by the Canadian government. The startup has since ceased operations.

Ethan has now graduated from McMaster, and has been working on other projects since then, with Seat Alert covering costs in the background. When I asked if Seat Alert could ever be his full-time job, Ethan laughed and responded that the revenue was far lower than I must think.

I followed up by asking him why he wouldn't increase the price by even a dollar — a 50 per cent increase in revenue that I didn't think would deter many students from using the service. He responded that with rising costs related to running the automated texts that are core to the service, he may soon be forced to. Barring this, he didn't think it would be fair to raise prices arbitrarily in order to make a greater profit. This is what interested me most about Ethan: his idealism and complete lack of self-interest in the face of a culture that values prestige and profit above all else.

Undeterred, I asked him about bundling, which would let users buy alerts for multiple classes at once. This would lower the cut of revenue that Stripe (the online payment platform he uses) takes from each order. He agreed with the principle of this idea, but felt that it might ruin the simplicity that makes the site so user-friendly. Bundling would mean introducing accounts, which require emails and passwords, and storage, which is expensive. I also asked him about waitlist intelligence, an additional service that could tell people how quickly spots typically opened up in a class. He hadn't thought about it, but was interested in it.



Photo of Ethan McAuliffe
Courtesy of Ethan McAuliffe

As a big fan of David Fincher's *The Social Network*, I found myself during parts of our conversation comparing Ethan to Mark Zuckerberg, who, in his pre-Facebook life, had made a website that showed the courses a user's friends were taking. Their motivations both centred around making tools they themselves wanted, and both prioritized speed and simplicity for the user. However, this is where the similarities ended. Ethan appears to lack the greed and unsettling guile that has made Zuckerberg a persona non grata the world over. More importantly, Ethan sounds cool. He's easy-going and doesn't take himself very seriously, even when being asked about a business he created. At this point in our call — with me pressing him to raise prices on a service for students in need — *I* was in fact the Zuckerberg, which wasn't a great feeling. Ethan, as aware of this as I, laughed and said that if he implemented a price hike, he'd be putting me down as the person who had recommended it.

Despite his idealism, or perhaps because of it, Seat Alert has been growing at a pace of about 5 per cent per term for the past two years, according to Ethan. Even so, Ethan has doubts as to whether he'll pursue it much longer, given other projects on his horizon and his distaste for web development. He clarified that this would just mean taking a further step back from it, and not shutting it down completely unless he is forced to.

I'm confident that Seat Alert will remain reliable, regardless of how deep Ethan's involvement remains. The website's continued success is a good reminder to all of us that not everything in life or in business must be made with growth and profit margins in mind. In the end, simplicity and honesty prevail in making the world, course selection included, better. If I'm wrong, or if Ethan cedes control to me, be ready: price hikes incoming.

Bio-Weapons: Cregger Plays a Game

"Yeah! Video games!" - Bryan Hodukavich, *Resident Evil* (2026)

Elouan Thomas
Culture Contributor

Spoilers ahead!

Content warning: brief mentions of fictional violence

I will preface this article with a disclaimer: I'm not a horror movie fan. I haven't seen *Obsession* or *The Shining* or almost any other horror movie you could name. I don't usually enjoy them. I do, however, like video games, and all of my self-granted authority to write on the recent *Resident Evil* movie adaptation — *Resident Evil* (2026), directed by Zach Cregger — comes from the fact that I have played the games and enjoyed them very much.

Cregger is a rising star in the horror cinema world, with previous hits like *Barbarians* (2022) and *Weapons* (2025) arriving to commercial and critical acclaim (from what I understand of the plot, "Resident Evil" would have been a good title for *Weapons*, but that's just my opinion). But even with his experience, it was a risk for Cregger to take on adapting the *Resident Evil* games for the big screen, as no previous *Resident Evil* film adaptation had ever seen commercial or critical success among the game's fanbase or wider audience.

The *Resident Evil* game franchise, developed by the company Capcom in 1996 is a survival-horror game franchise from Japan. It was originally named "Biohazard" in Japanese; that trademark wasn't available in the US and the English name came from a company-wide naming contest. The classic game series largely follows the stories of various survivors of an out-of-control biological weapon developed by the shadowy Umbrella Corporation. Protagonists fight mutated and virus-infected organisms in post-urban environments ranging from police stations to ruined cities to supposedly abandoned mansions — all with limited resources (most crucially, ammunition). Cregger's movie sidesteps a lot of the wider game lore and doesn't follow the storyline of any one game, opting instead to amalgamate elements from different games across the series. The movie focuses on what's at the very core of the franchise: the gory, science-gone-rogue body horror that defined its essential style and gave rise to the survival horror genre. This has allowed the *Resident Evil* movie to remain relatively accessible to the wider public while giving a nod to the game's fanbase — a rarely-achieved balance.

Cregger's risk has paid off. *Resident Evil* premiered in Los Angeles on September 15 and was released to the general public on September 18. At the time of writing, it has grossed $216 million globally through the box office alone, with opening weekend pulling in $108 million worldwide against the film's $75 million production budget. It's the first *Resident Evil* movie to cross the $100 million threshold domestically. The film was equally successful among critics and viewers, earning a 96 per cent score on Rotten Tomatoes, making it the highest rated video-game-turned-movie adaptation ever. It garnered critical praise for the actors' performances, its faithfulness to in-game elements, and its use of the fear factor.

The film kicks off with an opening shot of the main character from behind, invoking the perspective of a third-person video game. The audience is introduced to Bryan (Austin Abrams), a meek courier who delivers organs to hospitals. Bryan is contracted for double pay to deliver a high-priority package to the isolated Raccoon City, a task he uses to avoid a difficult conversation with his pregnant girlfriend. On his way into the city, however, he is waylaid by aggressive mutated beings… and so the nightmare begins.

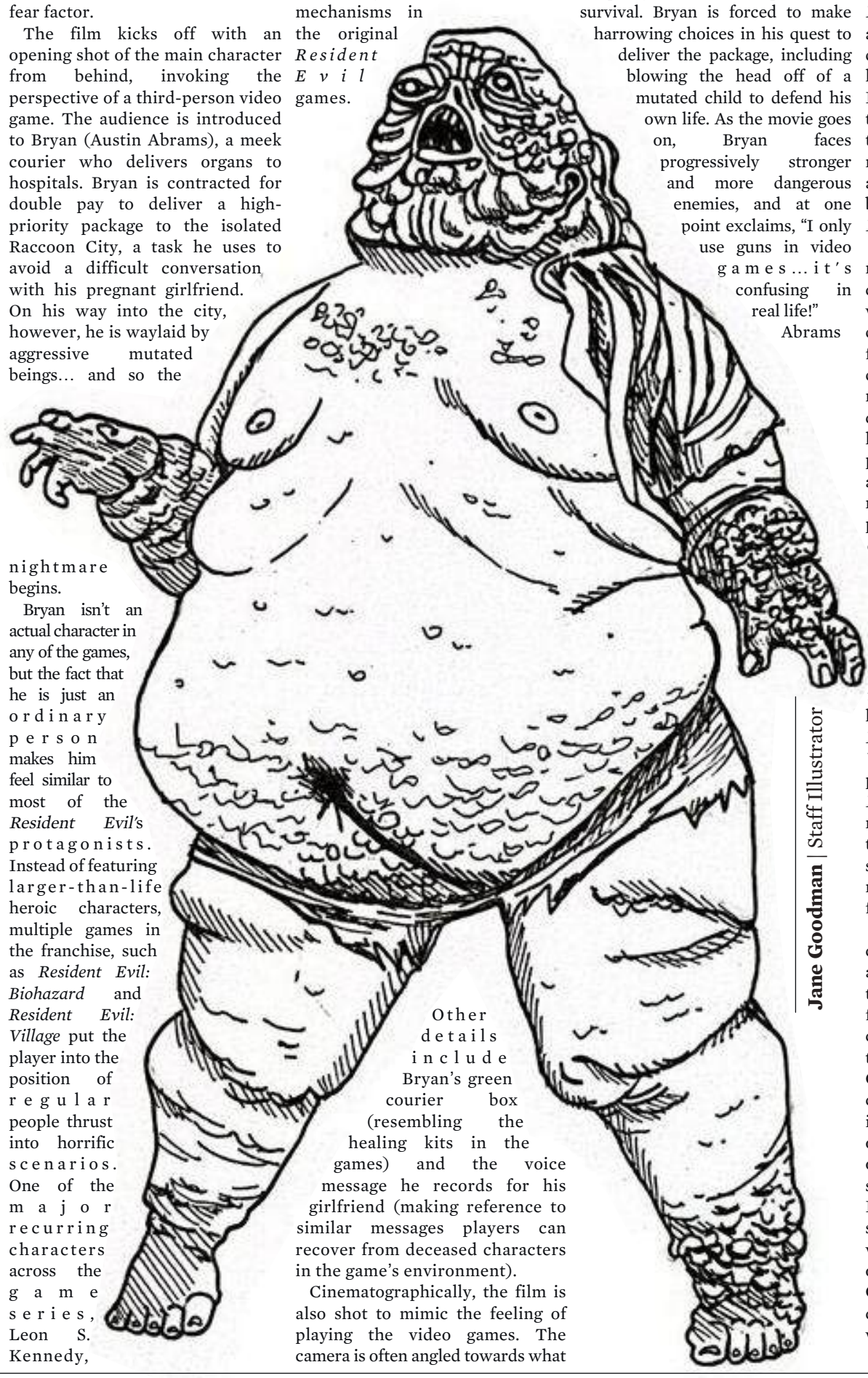
Bryan isn't an actual character in any of the games, but the fact that he is just an ordinary person makes him feel similar to most of the *Resident Evil*'s protagonists. Instead of featuring larger-than-life heroic characters, multiple games in the franchise, such as *Resident Evil: Biohazard* and *Resident Evil: Village* put the player into the position of regular people thrust into horrific scenarios. One of the major recurring characters across the game series, Leon S. Kennedy, starts out as a police rookie before becoming trained as a skilled federal agent.

The movie itself plays out much like a video game, and players of the franchise will catch several easter eggs. A scene in which Bryan explores rooms in a farmhouse is reminiscent of the Baker property in *Resident Evil: Biohazard*, and the overall feeling of the exploration mechanics occur in all of the games. His painstaking accumulation of bullets is a task all players are familiar with, and the inclusion of a room with a typewriter is a nod to one of the old game save mechanisms in the original *Resident Evil* games.

> "I only use guns in video games… it's confusing in real life!"
> Abrams

Other details include Bryan's green courier box (resembling the healing kits in the games) and the voice message he records for his girlfriend (making reference to similar messages players can recover from deceased characters in the game's environment).

Cinematographically, the film is also shot to mimic the feeling of playing the video games. The camera is often angled towards what Bryan is looking at through over-the-shoulder third-person shots, or creating tension through first-person perspectives (a fair amount of Resident Evil gamers play in VR; a friend of mine who tried it said he couldn't bring himself to open the doors in the game). The soundtrack features ominous pulsing tones that reflect the unsettling scenes and environments, suggesting stress to the audience and intensifying the atmosphere of danger. The jumpscares, ever present in any horror media, are effective and well-executed. The movie is also unapologetic in its depiction of survival. Bryan is forced to make harrowing choices in his quest to deliver the package, including blowing the head off of a mutated child to defend his own life. As the movie goes on, Bryan faces progressively stronger and more dangerous enemies, and at one point exclaims, "I only use guns in video games… it's confusing in real life!"



Jane Goodman | Staff Illustrator

Abrams is phenomenal in his role. He embodies an appropriate level of sheer terror at his situation, mixed with disgust, disbelief, and an occasional comedic relief that brings much needed levity to the film. His facial expressions are particularly relatable and funny, especially when he displays shock at having done something ludicrous or encountering a new monster. The real stars of the movie, in a way, are the monsters: morbidly obese sewer dwellers, acid spewers, and otherwise mutated creatures. Some of the monsters are recognizable from the *Resident Evil* game titles, but most are new creations by creature-design legend Shane Mahan and his company Legacy Effects. Inspired by past game installments, they're skilfully designed to inspire terror through their behaviour, movements, and most critically appearances, amping up the core body-horror element of *Resident Evil* to the maximum.

Thematically, the film's main message is about how delaying change will only worsen the bill when it comes time to pay. But I didn't go to a *Resident Evil* movie for its moral messaging, and I doubt anyone else did either. The movie isn't meant as an analysis of community like *Weapons* is — here, narrative depth isn't the point. Instead, the blend of action and progression with game-reminiscent cinematography produces a devoted love letter to one of the greatest game franchises of all time. In my opinion, the strongest meaning lies in the film's title. What makes *Resident Evil* truly terrifying is that the title implies that what you're dealing with isn't some far-off threat, or abstract eldritch horror or magic. Titles like *The Last of Us* are bleak, while *The Walking Dead* gets straight to the point but sounds kind of funny, and *Resident Evil* is ominous. The name makes it known that the threat is inside your house, so to speak, and emerging from the mundane, which raises the scare factor exponentially.

While avoiding spoilers, the conclusion of the movie — although paced alarmingly quickly to the point of feeling rushed — I found to be appropriate considering Bryan's character and the elements of the games that Cregger chose to focus on. Of course, you'll have to go and watch it yourself to form your own opinion on it. It also leaves the door open for a sequel, though no statements on that have been made. I personally think that ending the series with this most recent movie wouldn't be a bad decision, but if other directors choose to follow in Cregger's footsteps, some good could definitely come of it. The only way to find out is to keep playing.

Fine Print

No Returns

Erandy Rogel
Culture Contributor

My closet contains an unreasonable number of clothes for the lives I am no longer living. There are dresses for parties that ended years ago, shoes bought for the sort of life I was always on the verge of having, and several garments I keep for no better reason than that I once looked beautiful in them. My closet is where I keep all the women I have failed to become. Opening it feels less like getting dressed and more like being confronted by witnesses. I have never been good at accepting that an outfit, like a love affair, can simply be "over."

My inability to accept an ending may be most evident in the fact that my closet has long since exceeded its architectural limitations. Fabrics peek out when the door is closed, the clothing rods have begun to bow into little U's, and removing a hanger requires the kind of patience I usually reserve for bureaucratic mattters. I own enough dresses that several are forced to share hangers, pressed against one another in arrangements they certainly didn't consent to. The drawers are worse. Every time I do laundry, I have to decide whether the clean clothes are worth the considerable engineering required to get them back inside.

I have clothes for bodies I no longer have, parties I am no longer invited to, and women I have not yet managed to become. Every time I open my closet, years of bad judgement fall on top of me. Fortunately, some of my best memories are tangled up in there too. Obviously, the "reasonable" solution would be to get rid of some things. Unfortunately, being reasonable has never been my strong suit, particularly when clothes are involved. My problem is that I believe, with very little supporting evidence, that I might need everything again.

Rather than chronologically, I like to remember my life sartorially. I don't remember "summer 2024," I remember the summer of the white cotton maxi dress. A relationship becomes the silky royal-blue top with lace detailing I wore on a second date, when I realized, somewhat inconveniently, how much I liked him. A friendship becomes the little black velvet dress my friend was always borrowing.

So, I don't clean out my closet as much as re-negotiate with it. Some people keep diaries, I keep every dress I've made a mistake in. Clothing provides unusually intimate evidence. Clothes were there in the moment; they touched your body while the thing happened. I refuse to treat fashion as frivolous simply because it's beautiful.

"Fashion," of course, is tied to the idea of novelty. New season, new trend, new you. But if buying clothes is an act of optimism about the future, keeping them is something closer to loyalty to the past. In that way, my closet collapses time. After all, fashion itself has never been particularly good at letting go; trends themselves do tend to return. Things once declared hideous become desirable again.

The cruelest part of cleaning out a closet is having to decide which versions of yourself are officially not coming back. Why can't I just get rid of my old clothes? Because I start to think: maybe the garment belonged to a happier time. Maybe I looked beautiful in it. Maybe somebody loved me while I wore it. Maybe it represents a version of myself I don't want to admit is gone. Throwing away clothes forces me to acknowledge that I may never be that exact person again. Not because I've become better or worse; but because time has passed, and I am no longer the same.



The Sexual Politics of The Trade War

The rhetorical parallels in Trump's description of of Canada and his victims of sexual assault

Anneke Goodwin
Staff Writer

Content warning: mentions of sexual assault

In an essay opposing the Canada-US Free Trade agreement of 1987, writer Margaret Atwood wrote "Canada as a separate but dominant country has done about as well under the US as women, worldwide, have done under men; about the only position they've adopted toward us, country to country, has been the missionary position, and we were not on top." Notably, Atwood expressed similar ideas in her 1972 guide to Canadian literature *Survival*, in which she posits Canada as a metaphorical rape victim of the United States. Exposed to Atwood's writings in lecture this past week, I was shocked at their continued applicability. As the trade war between the two nations continues to make headlines, and Trump himself faces new sexual assault allegations, I start to see that Atwood was on to something very real and continuously relevant.

On October 25, at a campaign rally in Port Huron, Michigan, Trump said the trade war would end "soon." Trade with Canada has been one of the Republicans' sorest spots in the polls, and an issue that many American voters have at the forefront of their minds as they head into the upcoming midterm elections. A Pew study in July 2026 found that 60 per cent of Americans disapproved of tariff increases, while only 37 per cent approved. At the campaign rally in Michigan, Trump described Canada as "willing to give us anything at this moment." This past summer Trump also said, "We don't need anything that Canada has…but they need everything that we have." The note of sexual dominance in Trump's language is palpable here.

While Trump's history of sexual assault remains either a point of indifference or disillusionment for many of his followers, it has never had nearly as large an impact on Trump's popularity as any economic policy he has implemented. It is public knowledge that 28 women have accused Trump of sexual assault or rape since the 1970s into the 2010s; including his first wife Ivana, who claimed in their 1989 divorce deposition that he had physically and sexually assaulted her, and writer E. Jean Carroll, to whom Trump was found liable for $5 million in sexual abuse and defamation damages in 2023, and another $83.3 million in further defamation charges in 2024. Trump is also accused of significant involvement in Epstein's child trafficking network, with sources such as CBC reporting that his name is mentioned at least 1,500 times in the initial files, and sources including The New York Times reporting this figure as being closer to 38,000, when the search terms were extended.

Many of us have also seen the abhorrent video from Access Hollywood in 2005 in which Trump says, "You know I'm automatically attracted to beautiful women… I just start kissing them. It's like a magnet. Just kiss. I don't even wait. And when you're a star they let you do it. You can do anything … Grab 'em by the pussy." As uncomfortable as it is to contend with this quote, when read closely, it bears uncanny resemblance to Trump's ways of speaking about Canada. The American President views both women and Canada as fragile, weak, boundaryless, belonging to him, for his ravaging. Trump has shown us time and time again that he simultaneously views women's bodies as property for his taking and he views Canada as a geographic version of the same thing: his for the taking, on his terms.



Kara Fan | Visuals Contributor

Not only in Trump's language of abuse, but also in his language of minimization and retaliatory disparagement, can we draw parallels. In December of 2024, as tensions and counter-tariffs rose from Canada (we were, it turned out, not the pushover he had expected), Trump began referring to former PM Justin Trudeau on occasion as "Governor Trudeau." This demeaning nickname hauntingly mirrors Trump's behaviour towards the women he wishes to discredit. Historically, the American President has responded to accusations of sexual assault by refuting the alleged-victim's attractiveness, and thus claiming a lack of interest. When journalist Natasha Stoynoff alleged that Trump had pushed her against a wall and forcibly kissed her in 2005, the President was quoted as saying "[t]ake a look. Look at her. Look at her words. And you tell me what you think. I don't think so." When Jessica Leeds claimed that Trump had violently molested her in the first class cabin of a 1970s flight, Trump called this "fiction," adding that "[b]elieve me, she would not be my first choice. That I can tell you." Though these acts of minimization may seem to exist in separate spheres, I see Trump's intentions as one and the same. Any one who publicly challenges his violence and/or his attempts at control is to be met with degradation and humiliation. Trump gets what he wants, or else he pretends it was not worth wanting in the first place. We can also draw parallels between sexual violence and geo-political menace in the narratives which Trump weaves around his victims, wherein he positions himself as the injured party. At this same campaign rally in Port Huron, Trump claimed that for years, Canada had been "ripping" the U.S. "off" via trade. In September, Trump said "[Canadian] leaders have taken advantage of our stupid leadership for many, many years. They felt emboldened....They act like they're totally innocent. They're not. They were very bad. But now they're being taught a little lesson." In a similar vein, Trump repeatedly describes his female assault victims as attention seekers set on destroying his reputation. Of E. Jean Carroll, Trump said in 2019, "Shame on those who make up false stories of assault to try to get publicity for themselves, or sell a book, or carry out a political agenda."

As we have seen, there appears to be no video that can resurface, no picture that can be released, no assault Trump can commit on women that can seriously affect him in the polls. It is not a lack of information, but rather a complete and utter lack of integrity on the part of his supporters. There would be no logic in these women trying to destroy Trump with made-up claims – it does not work. They have no motive other than justice. You do not get praise and fame for accusing one of the most powerful men in the world of sexual assault. E. Jean Caroll understands this all too well. In her memoir, *What Do We Need Men For?*, Caroll wrote, "[w]hy I haven't I come forward before now?...Receiving death threats, being driven from my home.. .only to see the man turn it around, deny, threaten and attack... doesn't sound like much fun."

As certain tariffs on paper and machinery products from Canada recently rolled back, and Trump makes promises of the end of the trade war, his fear of losing his grip on his domestic political standing in the midterms is palpable. I only wish Trump's fear was as palpable in response to a proportionate backlash towards his sexual misconduct — a backlash that never manifested into something strong enough to truly frighten him, reinforcing Trump's belief that women are his for the taking with limited consequences, if any. Atwood argues that Canadian culture is steeped in its victimhood as a result of America's economic and cultural domination, which in turn fosters a culture of artistic freedom. What art will future generations be producing, what culture is fostered in America, where women watch their rapist elected into power? Both Canadians and women at large have a history of finding cultural roots in defending one's self, but we also deserve the liberty to find cultural roots that are not rooted in the violence perpetrated against us. Our lives, our culture, our words deserve to be defined by more than our victimhood.

The American President views both women and Canada as fragile, weak, boundaryless, belonging to him, for his ravaging.

Both Canadians and women at large have a history of finding cultural roots in defending one's self, but we also deserve the liberty to find cultural roots that are not rooted in the violence perpetrated against us.

When "Boys Will Be Boys" Means Boys Killing Girls

A look into cases of incel-related murders and what must be done to end them

Stella Phipps
Commentary Contributor

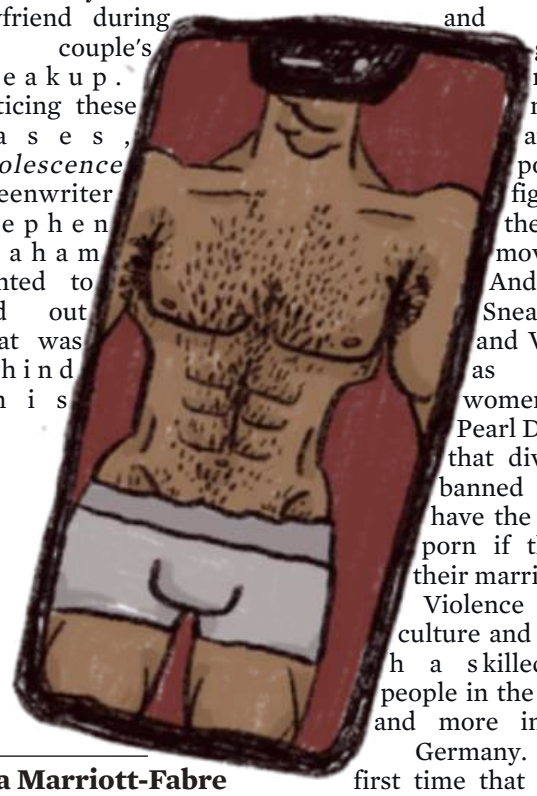
Content warning: misogyny, violence, and death

In 2025, Netflix released psychological crime drama *Adolescence*, a British TV series that would change the way we think about the manosphere, online incel culture, and its implications on contemporary misogyny. The story, set in South Yorkshire, follows the arrest of a 13-year-old boy on suspicion of murdering his female classmate after she rejected his romantic advances. Each episode is shot in one take, inviting us into the story in its entirety; every moment of silence, every improvised line, every facial expression brings us closer to the feeling that we are there in the room, with those characters — whether we like it or not.

The story of *Adolescence* did not come from nowhere. Rather, it was a response to the frequent cases of gender-related knife crimes occurring in the United Kingdom. This included the murder of Ava White, a 12-year-old girl in Liverpool who was stabbed by her 14-year-old schoolmate Harry Gilbertson following an argument over a Snapchat video. He was given a minimum sentence of 13 years, while the three other boys involved in the incident were released without charge. Elianne Andam, a fifteen-year-old student from Croydon, London, who aspired to be a human rights lawyer, was stabbed to death by her friend's seventeen-year-old ex-boyfriend during the couple's breakup. Noticing these cases, *Adolescence* screenwriter Stephen Graham wanted to find out what was behind this terrifying "male rage" responsible for the deaths of innocent young girls, remarking "this kind of thing didn't happen when I was a young lad."

Surprisingly, the term "incel" (short for "involuntary celibate") was actually coined by a female university student in Toronto who wanted to create a community for people who had difficulty forming romantic or sexual relationships. Her website, *Alana's Involuntary Celibacy Project*, was founded in 1997 and was open to people of all genders and sexual orientations. As her own dating life improved, she stopped maintaining the website and passed it on to someone else. It was only in the mid-2000s that the "incel" discourse came to be dominated by men. Men who felt resentful about their lack of romantic and sexual experience and who chose to displace the blame onto women. Following the tragic Isla Vista attacks of 2014, in which 22-year-old Elliot Rodger murdered six people in the vicinity of a sorority house to "punish" all women for rejecting him, the creator of the "incel" term expressed regret for the way her project had become tragically misinterpreted. She compared herself to "a scientist who invented something that ended up [becoming] a weapon of war."

Later in the 2000s, incel communities thrived on online platforms like Reddit, 4chan, 8chan, and Gab. They also turned to the dark web for their more insidious communications which included planning and promoting gender-related murders and attacks. Today, popular online figures within the manosphere movement include Andrew Tate, Sneako, Clavicular and Vox Day, as well as anti-feminist women like Hannah Pearl Davis, who claims that divorce should be banned and that men have the "right" to watch porn if they don't want their marriages to fail.



Eva Marriott-Fabre
Visuals Editor

Violence linked to incel culture and the manosphere has killed as many as 50 people in the US and Canada, and more in the UK and Germany. In Canada, the first time that a court made a finding of incel-motivated terrorist activity was in 2023, following 17-year-old Oguzhan Sert's brutal murder of a female receptionist in 2020. He had written a note reading "Long Live The Incel Rebellion" prior to the attack and used abusive language during the murder, calling the woman a "whore" and repeating "die, die, die."

McGill University students who were interviewed on the topic in my own investigation expressed mixed knowledge about such incidents; 100 per cent of women interviewed were aware of both incel culture and cases of incel-related violence, compared to only 60 per cent of male interviewees. One male student noted the existence of different types of incel figures online, including "looksmaxxers" who encourage young men to undergo unsafe cosmetic procedures or take steroids as a measure to attract women. Most students attributed the rise of these cases to online trends and cultures. However, students also acknowledged that whilst this particular form of misogyny is relatively new, extreme incidences of gender-based violence, femicide and misogynistic ideologies have been around since the beginning of time. A particularly poignant example is the École Polytechnique massacre of 1989, in which fourteen women were shot in a savage anti-feminist attack. Perhaps what is most shocking is the return of such heinous instances during an age of supposed progressivism. When asked if they view these cases as a personal threat to themselves, 100 per cent of female students said yes, while 100 per cent of male students said no. One male student stated "I've never read an article in the news and thought, 'this is a personal threat to me.'"



Recognizing these cases as nothing short of wicked and pernicious acts of violence against young girls and women, and treating them as such in court and beyond, is essential to combatting the normalization of incel culture. Former UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer praised the *Adolescence* series, welcoming Netflix's initiative to make the drama available for free screening in secondary schools and in parliament. The UK has incorporated potential incel radicalization into its national counter-extremist monitoring program, "Prevent," but has not yet categorized severe incel attacks as terrorism (the UK's Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation concluded that its current legal definition of terrorism is broad enough without needing a new category specifically targeting incel-related attacks.) Meanwhile, Canadian authorities have prosecuted incel-linked attacks, such as the Oguzhan Sert case, under terrorism legislation, and Public Safety Canada announced over $25 million in funding to deal with radicalisation and incel-related violence. The US government recognizes incel extremism as a single-issue motivator to terrorism, but has historically treated cases as hate crimes rather than terrorism. Legally, then, Canada has taken the most steps toward treating incel-motivated violence as the destructive and harmful crime it is.



It is one thing to enforce legal consequences for incel-related violence, and another to prevent it in the first place. In this respect, the UK has taken the most effective measures in implementing anti-radicalization measures into its national curriculum. Schools are mandated to teach students about incel culture, as well as the links between pornography and misogyny and what constitute positive conceptions of both femininity and masculinity. Canada and the US, meanwhile, lack national equivalents, and responses tend to be fragmented across provinces and states. NGO White Ribbon offers free online training for teachers in Canada, but this alone is not sufficient. As one McGill interviewee said in my investigation, sexist and misogynistic tendencies "sadly start young," making proper education and the prevention of these ideologies in the classroom crucial. Of course, any number of factors can contribute to harmful ideologies, from a particularly influential older brother to a humiliating romantic rejection. But the influence of the environment in which children spend at least six hours a day in must not be understated.

Spreading wider awareness, implementing effective prevention mechanisms, and passing strict legislation and proper online regulation are all steps governments must take to deal with this relatively new phenomena. These girls and women, many of them students, had futures full of possibility. Yet they were made victims of brutal misogynistic murder for the crime of their very existence. They should be remembered and honoured through real efforts at change.

Youth and Climate Activism

Are young people disengaging from climate action?

Léah Tattersall
Commentary Contributor

"To refuse to participate in the shaping of our future is to give it up. Do not be misled into passivity either by false security or by despair. Each of us must find our work and do it." - Audre Lorde



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Albert Lalonde, co-spokesperson for the 2019 student movement Pour le Future de Montreal (PLF) since its inception, agreed to speak with me about his experience: "The first call to protest was for February 15th 2019 through an anonymous Instagram story, and suddenly we were 400 kids skipping classes protesting downtown," he recalls. On September 27 of that year, more than 500,000 people mobilized in the streets of Montreal, demanding climate justice; which at the time, was the biggest climate-related protest in Canada since Earth Day in 2012.

I remember 2019 vividly: I was 15 years old when I first heard Greta Thunberg's Stockholm speech, famously denouncing global leaders and their lack of action in the face of the climate crisis. I was outraged. This speech marked a shift in much of my generation's collective consciousness. Adults and leaders of the world were largely not stepping up; radical action had to be taken, and this fight would have to be led by us, the youth. At only 17 years old, Lalonde helped create a movement led by high-school students that disturbed the status quo, bringing the issue of climate change to the forefront. "We were going against all these different levels of authority: our parents, our teachers, principals, the school board, including the Minister of Education."

Today, however, this sense of responsibility towards future generations seems to have been erased from our collective memory. In October, I posted a questionnaire on Instagram, asking people I know between the ages of 18 and 24 years old to describe how they felt about the current state of the world and the environmental crisis. It quickly became clear that the overwhelming majority felt helpless, describing themselves as anxious, scared, tired, stressed, hopeless, and doomed.

This September, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) released a report sounding the alarm about the increasingly unavoidable overshoot of the Paris Agreement limit, a legally binding international treaty aiming to hold our global temperatures to 1.5 °C. It urged the need for immediate, drastic mitigation efforts from governments worldwide. In contrast, over the past few years, there has reportedly been a downward trend in engagement for environmental mobilization. Now, according to GlobeScan and BBMG, 42 per cent of youth (between 18 and 24 years old) were disillusioned with individual action in 2024, up by 24 per cent since 2020. The report suggests this decline is due to young people feeling more and more powerless in the face of climate change.

Considering the global socio-political context of the past few years, this is not all that surprising. "In times where there is more urgency, the climate always falls to the wayside," says Dr. Sejhal Bharghava, a young global health advocate and family doctor based in Ottawa, who agreed to discuss the issue with me after guest lecturing at McGill. Bharghava who is involved in many climate action organizations around the country, does not blame youth for choosing to step back from the overwhelming issue that is the climate crisis: "How much do people expect young people to do? We're in school, we're unemployed, we have debt and in our spare time you want us to fix your mess?" It is no longer effective to just tell people about how bad things are; instead, Bharghava strongly believes "we need to present people with a vision of what we can move towards."

The CEVES — a student-led Quebec sustainable action collective that included organizers from PLF — did have a vision to share. In 2019, coalition of young plaintiffs (some students behind this collective including Lalonde were preparing to call for an unlimited strike where they would host workshops on different school campuses and share perspectives on how climate justice could become part of school curriculums. However, these promising plans came to a halt when the global lockdown was called two weeks before they were set to strike. Between 2020 and 2022, core organizers started to experience burnout, making attempts to build on the movement's momentum difficult.

Lalonde, along with many other young PLF participants, decided to focus his attention on more local issues. "One thing that we saw during the pandemic is that all of these networks didn't just vanish. They just transferred onto other projects and work that, in many ways, are more rooted." Indeed, all the young and motivated people who had been engaged in the cause had come too far to do nothing with all the valuable knowledge gained. Many shifted their efforts towards issues such as indigenous sovereignty, migrant rights, LGBTQ+ rights, and Palestine. In that way, these young PLF organizers have remained active in their fight for justice, and — by extension, environmental justice — at a grassroots level.

At 24 years old, still motivated by the issue of the climate crisis, Lalonde is actively working alongside Our Children's Trust, a of which were part of the CEVES) suing the federal government for their lack of commitment toward solving climate change. Though this lawsuit has been ongoing for 7 years, the Federal Court is only now proceeding to a five-week trial that started on October 26 in Vancouver. Despite the disappointing conclusion to the PLF movement's promising prospects, Albert still affirms that the solution to this deep feeling of doomism among the youth (the belief that catastrophic outcomes of global crises are inevitable) is to get out there and do something.

And, fortunately, many young people are. Sustainable Youth Canada (SYC), a non-profit organization led by youth for youth, organizes climate-related events across the country, hosting workshops in schools and communities, as well as providing policy writing and consultation opportunities. In our email exchanges, Sara Carling and Allie Wang, co-directors of SYC in Montreal (SYC's oldest and most established Canadian branch) say that people get involved on a volunteer basis as youth-climate activism lacks funding. Though they notice that news related to climate change is rarely positive, Carling and Wang contend that engaging with SYC allows them to "have a different perspective, and see people working alongside each other towards making positive change."

Bharghava is part of the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment (CAPE), an interdisciplinary group uniting health care workers in Canada to connect the dots between the impacts of climate change and human health to governments and the general public. "I think finding community is huge. I know it's said a lot, but truly, joining CAPE was the best thing I could have ever done for my mental health and my sustainability and resiliency in this movement, because it gets hard," she admits. People who stay engaged in these important issues continue to be hopeful, even if that sometimes feels radical.

When we turn to the rest of the world for evidence of hope and important activist work, we can find it everywhere. As many of us find ourselves grappling with eco-anxiety or a general sense of doom, let us use these inspiring people and movements as a reminder that we don't have to deal with these emotions on our own. The healing nature of community cannot be underestimated as an antidote to doomism: "Community isn't very far and you don't have to look very hard for it but you do have to make a bit of an effort to make those connections." Indeed, to Bharghava, getting involved is all about taking the first step, and that should be the easiest part: "Any sort of advocacy is better than nothing — anything is better than nothing!"

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