

VCTA NEWSLETTER

March 2005

VOLUME 22 ISSUE 5

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S WEEK



CROSSING BOUNDARIES
CROSSING BOUNDARIES

From the Guest Co-Editor:

I have taken pleasure in co-editing this issue of the Newsletter. The occasion reminded me that the Women's Studies Program has been celebrating International Women's Week at Vanier for at least a quarter century. In the beginning, gaining recognition for our program and support for this week was a struggle. Some of the authors of articles in this issue will remember that struggle. Few of us were trained in Women's Studies.

For me, the articles in this issue represent a quarter century of development. Through women's experiences, the door to questioning the meaning of gender has been opened. Global issues are filtered through a different lens. Moreover, you will find in this issue, articles written by people who have studied Women's Studies. They enlarge the boundaries.

I extend my thanks to everyone who has contributed to this issue, including the proofreading assistance of Charles Levine. Shirley Pettifer makes it happen and allows co-editors to explore their dreams. Enjoy the read.

Arlene Steiger



Arlene Steiger has taught in the Humanities Department for over a quarter of a century. She has served as a coordinator of curriculum in this department and continues to work here. Women's Studies has been a labour of love that dates from her first years at Vanier. She takes pride and pleasure in being the current coordinator of the Women's Studies Program.

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All contributions welcome!

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VCTA Executive H-05

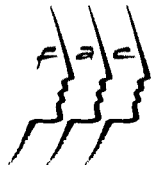
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V.C.T.A.

VANIER COLLEGE TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION



Message from the President: SYLVIE TARDIF

I begin by congratulating Shirley for the idea of inviting people to guest co-editor the *Newsletter*. What a great idea! The work of Charles Levine—a Vanier dinosaur by his own admission—on the January issue was greatly appreciated and we thank him very much. A big thanks also goes to Arlene Steiger who is the guest co-editor for this special International Women's Day issue.

I encourage new teachers to overcome their shyness and to send an e-mail or give Shirley a call if they have any interest in working on future *Newsletter* issues.

This issue is a celebration of Women Crossing Boundaries, the theme of International Women's Week at Vanier, March 7-11, 2005. Please attend the many displays, presentations, lectures, and discussions scheduled for the week. Everybody is invited to bring classes to attend and participate. Let's have a great week!

Flipping through the pages of *Le Devoir* this morning, I read that the new Minister of Education, Jean-Marc Fournier, is pleading with students* for a non-confrontational climate on the loans and bursaries issue. In his opinion, communication should be the *modus operandi*, not confrontation.

The students are demanding the return of the \$103 million which the previous Minister, Pierre Reid, converted from bursaries into loans. They are supported by Pauline Marois of the PQ opposition, who also demands that the government annul the conversion of \$103M in the student aid program.

While FECQ* and FEUQ* student organizations are seeking strike mandates throughout the province of Quebec, the students associated with CASSEE* are already, as of Friday, February 25, on an unlimited strike.

Vanier students, members of the Coalition of Anglophone Cegeps, COAC* are organizing a referendum for a one day strike mandate to join their fellow students from other students' associations. The referendum will be held on Mar. 9, from 10:00 to 4:00 in Jake's Mall. For the results to have any consequences, they need at least 10% of the students to vote.

If the referendum passes, the one-day strike will take place on Monday, March 14. By law, the college will have to modify the H05 academic calendar to add one day in order to provide a full academic semester of 82 days. The proposed day is Thurs. May 19, and as a result, the final examination period would be pushed ahead, making May 30th the last day of examinations.

An explosion of mobilization is anticipated in the whole education sector this spring. The message to the government must be clear: respect for the work we do and a new—long overdue—collective agreement.

Support staff and caretakers may join teachers on the picket line since unions representing guidance counsellors, speech therapists, librarians and other school professionals will vote next month on a two-day strike. The French primary and secondary school teachers are talking seriously about a strike in April 2005—

beyond the pressure tactics they already have in place.

As Johanne Fortier, President of the Fédération des syndicats de l'enseignement (FSE-CSQ) representing 80,000 teachers, puts it: "We want a resolution to this before June 2005".

Like us, they have been without a contract since June 2003. Their core demands are along the same lines as ours: workload, class size—increased resources in the Education budget for immediate classroom application.

If we want a new collective agreement by June 2005, we need to put real pressure on the government. By March 4, 2005, the unions of the FAC-FEC Cartel** could ratify a **mobilization-action plan** that includes

- a four-hour rotating strike across Quebec over a two-week period;
- a three-day strike;
- a Quebec-wide demonstration, by the Cartel and other federations.
- The plan also makes reference to seeking a mandate for an unlimited general strike this spring.

The likelihood of militant action in April—in the entire Education sector—has never been stronger than it is at present.

Not far away, the Elementary Teachers of Ontario (ETFO), representing 65,000 public elementary school teachers and education workers in 1,223 public elementary schools across Ontario, voted by a margin of 97 % (of members in attendance) to give their union a mandate to take any and all action, including a strike, to achieve their contract goals.

The Liberal Government of Quebec was elected two years ago because they set their priorities as health and education. Patience has its limits. It is time for the Government to deliver on its promises.

Syndically yours,
Sylvie

* Students' organizations include FEUQ, Fédération étudiante universitaire du Québec, representing 170,000 students; FECQ, Fédération étudiante collégiale du Québec, representing 80,000 college students; ASSE, l'Association pour une solidarité syndicale étudiante, representing 20,000 students; CASSEE, Coalition de l'ASSE élargie, representing 40,000 student and regrouping 30 independent students associations like the Concordia Student Union, currently in a disaffiliation process, representing 20,000 students; COAC, Coalition of Anglophone Cegeps, regrouping student associations of Champlain, Dawson, John Abbott, Marianopolis and Vanier.

** The FAC-FEC Cartel consists of our federation FAC, Fédération Autonome du Collégial, (17 Cegeps) and FEC, Fédération des enseignantes et enseignants de Cégep, (7 Cegeps) which is affiliated with the CSQ, Centrale Syndicale du Québec, a federation representing workers in education, health, social services and daycare centres.

International Women's Week:

March 7-11, 2005

By Arlene Steiger



This year is the tenth anniversary of unprecedented international organization by women. The decade began in 1995 at the International Conference on Women in Beijing. It was marked by the World March of Women in 2000. Women and men from more than 157 countries deposited demands with their governments to address poverty and violence against women.

Around the world, we marched together and I was one of the marchers. I can still feel the heat of the sun that shone upon us as we clambered off the bus in Hull. We were a few teachers and twenty odd students from Vanier and we joined 30,000 demonstrators on Parliament Hill.

That night, through internet connection, I watched a smaller but equally enthusiastic group make its way through the streets of Ouagadougou in Burkina Fasso. By the end of the week, a petition with five million signatures had been delivered to the United Nations.

The march goes on. On March 8, 2005, the groups associated with the World March of Women will launch the *Women's Global Charter for Humanity* in Brazil. The charter, adopted in Rwanda in 2004, will make its way around the world to arrive in Burkina Faso in October 2005. We draw attention to this charter and to some of the problems that it might address in our display in the Carrefour during International Women's Week.

In conjunction with this global movement, we have chosen to celebrate *Women Crossing Boundaries* during International Women's Week. One of these events has already been presented in the last issue of this Newsletter (see Marilyn Bicher's article). I remind you that on Monday at 2:30, we will be pleased to welcome Fellows of The McGill Middle East Program in Civil Society and Peace Building for the second annual Lea Roback Memorial Lecture. A Jordanian, a Palestinian, and an Israeli woman explore the experience of working together to develop social service strategies for their respective communities.

One event must be postponed: Yolande James, a Vanier graduate, the youngest woman Liberal, and the first African Canadian woman to be elected to the National Assembly of Quebec may come at a later date.

Women cross boundaries in many ways. Breaking the

silence around issues that affect our lives has been one of the important steps in our march. Our goal is to pass this message. This week includes a presentation and discussion of intimate partner violence (March 8, at 1:00) and a panel on women's sexual diversity organized by the Open Door Network (March 10, at 11:30).

Men have always joined the march and we have a long tradition of recognizing them in our *Men Against Sexism* Panel. This year Marc Belanger and Eric Lamoureux join with students Grant Robinson and Paul Vadan to discuss masculinity on March 9 at 1:30. James Pettit and our own Maureen Jones use gender to explore advertising on March 10 at 10:00.

International Women's Week at Vanier includes a display outside of the library that illustrates the global origins of our community and honours the role of women in building and maintaining human connection in the passage across geo-political borders. In mounting this display and exploring the immigrant experience, we have joined with Student Services, The Learning Centre, Quebec/Canada Studies and the multiculturalism group of the English Department. The screening of the film *Double Happiness* (March 1 at 6:00) and the forum on *Women and Ethnicity* (UB March 2) are very much part of International Women's Week.

As you can see from our schedule, International Women's Week brings many displays and films that pose questions. Kalmunity, a Hip-Hop fusion group with a difference, performs during UB on Wednesday, March 9. The Raging Grannies appear on March 11 at noon.

We hope that you will encourage your students to take advantage of the learning experiences that this week offers and that you will join with us in spreading the idea that women's issues are human issues. I look forward to walking with you through International Women's Week 2005.

Arlene Steiger has taught in the Humanities Department for over a quarter of a century. She has served as a coordinator of curriculum in this department and continues to work here. Women's Studies has been a labour of love that dates from her first years at Vanier. She takes pride and pleasure in being the current coordinator of the Women's Studies Program.

Union 101: For Non-Permanent Teachers

by Charles Levine

This article deals with the situation of our young (and not so young) teachers who have not yet received *permanence* (tenure). You've already been hired, so I won't say anything about that. Plus, I must offer a disclaimer: Although I have fought with the administration of Vanier College about many issues over the years, I must acknowledge that the College has generally dealt fairly with its non-permanent teachers.



How do you achieve tenure? The general rule is that you must occupy a *poste* (post) for three years. When you sign your third (more or less) consecutive contract in a *poste*, you become a tenured teacher. The trick here is that all the

allocation for your *poste* must *belong to you*. If, for example, you are replacing someone full time, you get credit for a full year of service, but it's not *your poste*. (The College has always been quite careful about this, though there are occasional borderline cases). This accounts for the fact that a number of our colleagues have taught full time for years without ever getting a *poste*, hence, no tenure.

How do you stay around long enough to get tenure? The thing you must do is turn in the letter referred to as the General Offer of Services in the month of April. If you fail to do this, you will lose your priority on the hiring order. Don't forget!

Finally, there is a new element in the picture, which may turn out to be a dark cloud, or not. Last year, the College established a new Summative Evaluation policy. First, a little clarification. Our Departments/Programs all have Formative Evaluation policies. We distribute evaluation forms in class, the students fill them in, and only the teacher sees the results. This is done in an effort to improve teaching.

Summative Evaluation is carried out by the Administration, and may result in the teacher being fired. The College has always had the right to do this, but in the past it was only used where complaints had been made. The new policy will apply to all non-permanent teachers. Unfortunately, anyone with less than three years of seniority has little or no chance of winning a grievance if the College fires them for any reason whatsoever. Thus, the potential for great future harm to non-permanent teachers cannot be denied. Since this is a new policy, it remains to be seen what the effects will be. The VCTA has promised to be vigilant about the application of this new policy.

Good luck to all my young colleagues.

Charles F. Levine is a self-confessed dinosaur who has spent many years on the CRT, the VCTA Executive, and the Executive of FAC, our Provincial Federation. He has worked with previous editors of the Newsletter, was the gracious co-editor of the January 2005 issue, continues to volunteer his proof-reading skills as well as teaching Political Science and Humanities.



Celebrate With Us...

After 567 long days and nights, we are celebrating the freedom of the Vega family.

Please join us for a Pot-Luck dinner

Friday, March 18th at 4 pm
Sports Complex - 2nd Floor

Please bring one of the following:

Main Dish
Salad
Dessert
Wine or Beer

If you are unable to bring a dish or drink, a \$10 donation will be requested at the door.

We hope you can join us and show your continued support for this wonderful family.



RSVP

Doug Miller	at 7218	millerd@vaniercollege.qc.ca
Dany Brown	at 7884	brownd@vaniercollege.qc.ca
Janet Perkins	at 7898	perkinsj@vaniercollege.qc.ca

and let us know what you will be bringing.

Feminism is not Solely about Women

By Tricia Bell

When I announce International Women's Week events in my classes, inevitably one bold student asks: "When is International Men's Week?" Even though one lone voice asks the question, I think others wonder why we should focus solely on women. This presents a great opportunity to challenge a myth about feminism: it is only about women.

The term 'women's studies' or 'feminism' often evokes the idea that it is only about women's experiences, but nothing could be further from the truth. Using a feminine-derived word certainly politicizes the reality that women's contributions to political and cultural life throughout history have been marginalized.

Yet, an equally important goal of gender analysis is to pinpoint the intersections of multiple, and perhaps contradictory, power relations within a society. Men are not excluded; quite the opposite is true. Feminism encompasses a study of the relationship *between* men and women in society.

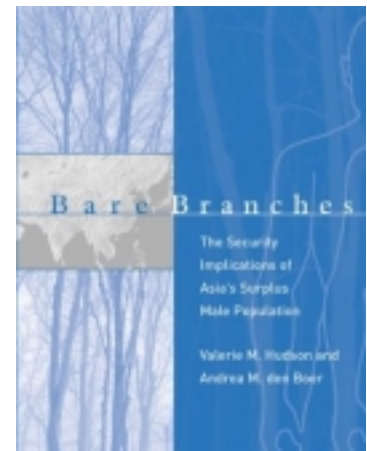
Moreover, inquiries are not limited to a one-dimensional model of power, in other words, men dominate women. Feminists examine multiple and intersecting oppressions, whether it involves race, class, sexuality, (dis)ability, the environment, or others.

Patriarchy has taught us to dominate, exploit and oppress the world around us, and it provides a system of rewards for those who do so, whether they are male or female. Men, women, animals and our planet all require liberation from the power relations built into our institutions, which inform our values and structure our daily lives.

Women's studies scholars bring to light suffering under an exploitative regime, as well as attempt to re-establish principles of respect, cooperation, and equality, just to name a few. In the long-run, domination and exploitation are not simply values to reject, but a society that has them in its very fabric is unsustainable.

Throughout history and at present, women and men have struggled against oppression as it touches their lives, whether they identify it as a 'feminist act' or not. The guests that the Women's Studies Program has invited to International Women's Week are part of that tradition, and the events allow us to celebrate in their successes as well as share in their struggles. I hope many will join this celebration of music, film and guest speakers; it is inclusive to all, not solely women.

Tricia Bell teaches Humanities courses with the following themes: the role of current media in democratic societies, the extension of colonialism under 'third world development', and the ethics of constant war preparations. Before beginning to teach at Vanier in the winter 2004 term, she worked as a freelance researcher and writer advocating social and environmental justice.



Hudson, Valerie M. and Andrea M. den Boer. (2004).

Bare Branches. The Security Implications of Asia's Surplus Male Population, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

What happens to a society that has too many men? In this provocative book, Valerie Hudson and Andrea den Boer argue that, historically, high male-to-female ratios often trigger domestic and international violence. Most violent crime is committed by young unmarried males who lack stable social bonds. Although there is not always a direct cause-and-effect relationship, these surplus men often play a crucial role in making violence prevalent within society. Governments sometimes respond to this problem by enlisting young surplus males in military campaigns and high-risk public works projects. Countries with high male-to-female ratios also tend to develop authoritarian political systems.

Hudson and den Boer suggest that the sex ratios of many Asian countries, particularly China and India — which represent almost 40 percent of the world's population — are being skewed in favor of males on a scale that may be unprecedented in human history. Through offspring sex selection (often in the form of sex-selective abortion and female infanticide), these countries are acquiring a disproportionate number of low-status young adult males, called "bare branches" by the Chinese.

Hudson and den Boer argue that this surplus male population in Asia's largest countries threatens domestic stability and international security. The prospects for peace and democracy are dimmed by the growth of bare branches in China and India, and, they maintain, the sex ratios of these countries will have global implications in the twenty-first century. (Description from the sleeve of the book)

I must admit that as I write this, I have not yet finished reading the book. However, it is one of the most interesting approaches to gender inequality that I have read. In this age of terrorism, it is interesting to read a very different perspective dealing with other threats to democracy. Though an academic text, the read is most enjoyable, clear, and definitely worth your while. I am sure you will enjoy it.

Lyne Marie Larocque teaches Sociology, Methodology and Explorations courses.

Women and Ethnicity: A Self-Portrait

By Dr. Mariam Pirbhai

This article was initially presented for both students and teachers as the keynote address, at the Women's Forum: Women and Ethnicity, Vanier College, March 2, 2005. We are pleased to present it to VCTA Newsletter readers in its entirety.



Consider yourself a painter. You've been asked to paint a portrait which puts into images the combined terms "women" and "ethnicity". So what do you see? Well, you're naturally predisposed to thinking in COLOUR. So, colour is the first thing you see. A woman of colour.

Now go further. What do you see? Beauty comes to mind. Something exotic, sensual. A woman with jet black hair brushing the end of her seductively exposed tawny-skinned back. A Pocahontas, maybe. Or Salma Hayek. Or maybe even that beautiful Greek actress on *CSI Miami*. You know the one: she's the most useless chief of police you've ever seen but she's a hot ethnic prop, more decorative than a Florida sunset.

Or maybe your mind's eye shifts to other kinds of goddesses. Like one who's draped in a vibrantly sequined sari. Her slender brown wrists adorned with glittering glass bangles of every imaginable shade and hue. Is this what you see? Yes, but not only this.

You close your eyes and picture ... A face, black as an African midnight. Yes, that's more like it. She's walking down a hot dusty road. No, better yet. She's walking barefoot along an arid savannah under the sweltering heat. And with effortless skill, she's balancing a round straw basket on her head, a basket that she herself wove by hand the week before; a basket filled with cassavas, okra, taro root and other alien-seeming vegetables that she will sell, at the risk of life and limb, at the

edge of some dirty, unpaved road in some faceless, nameless, poverty-stricken, war-torn country like the Congo, Rwanda or Zimbabwe. No? That's not the image you see?

Perhaps this is what you see, then? A woman—at least the silhouette of a woman—covered from head to toe in what looks like an over-sized black sheet, only her eyes peering mysteriously through a shadowy veil. You can't tell if she has a face as black as night or bangles the colour of a rainbow, because in fact you can't so much as see her face! Your heart goes out to her. What must life be like living in virtual anonymity? You move on, dissatisfied, angered.

Are all these women too foreign, distant, far-removed? You live in Canada, not Zimbabwe or India or Greece or Iran or even Miami. Maybe you're sliding off-track in your mind's eye. Maybe you don't have to leave your own backyard because, after all, you live in a "Canadian mosaic": now, the last time you checked, that meant that there were plenty of colourful women to look at right here; plenty of things that fell under the category of "different," "other," "ethnic"; like those other women who put the "multi" in "multicultural"!

Yes! Now you've hit it! Well, that kind of imagery calls for a different set of paints and brushes altogether! Yes, a different woman even. Not the foreigner out there, but the foreigner in our midst. The insider/outsider. Your neighbour? Your hairdresser? Who knows, maybe even your teacher? And,

for the sake of argument, maybe even the woman you call "mother," or "grandmother" or "sister" or "aunt" or "girlfriend"; a woman who taught you the first and perhaps the only words you remember of your native language; a woman who talks of her own childhood in a country you have never known or perhaps only visited once in your life; a woman who looked "different" perhaps, to the other mothers in your school; a woman who didn't bake cookies and grill hamburgers for your birthday parties but prepared moussaka, tamales, pierogies, samosas or Jamaican patties. Maybe this is the woman you see.

But now you're getting ahead of yourself. Carried away with inspiration. Even a bit dazed and confused. Because you've come full circle, haven't you? That woman you left back in the African savannah selling her goods at the roadside, or that Indian woman in her sari with her glittering ornaments, or that faceless, nameless woman behind the veil ... well, those women over there and your women over here are beginning to look a lot alike.

The paint fumes are getting to your head, no doubt. For how can it be that those foreign women in foreign clothes bearing unpronounceable names from countries you only hear about on the news as places of disaster, famine, human rights violations or war ... how is it that those women out there are beginning to take on the same features as these women over here? The features of the mother you love, the grandmother you miss, the girlfriend you

have come to know, the teacher who inspires you (or, let's face it, that teacher who gave you an insultingly bad mark in your last essay assignment!)... maybe even the woman whose reflection you sometimes catch from the corner of your eye as you pass the display window of *GAP* or *Le Chateau* ... the same features as the woman who greets you from your bathroom mirror each morning ...

So now that the picture of your ethnic woman is becoming clearer, it is paradoxically becoming somewhat blurred, because these individual portraits are merging into one full-blown portrait in your mind's eye. Those women, these women, are becoming "This Woman."

So you paint this woman as if she were all women. What would she have to say, this woman, on behalf of all women? How do you capture the expression of one woman and all women simultaneously? Is it possible?

You close your eyes again; a shape begins to take form. No, not so much a shape as an area of darkness, an opaque edge, a sinister undertone, a visage in crisis. Yes, you must be in the heat of inspiration now because you can almost hear this woman, this woman who is coming to represent the plight of all ethnic women, maybe even all women.

You can hear her because she's calling your name, begging you, beseeching you, imploring you to look at her more closely; she's beckoning you to hear her silence, to feel her suffering, to see her quiet imprisonment, to assuage her torment, to release her from bondage, to paint her victimhood. And now this is your all-consuming, totalizing impression of her. So you feverishly paint paint paint.

And as your portrait begins to crystallize, you realize you have seen this image, this face, this expression somewhere else. You sigh, because this might suggest that you are hardly an original artist. Almost a copy-cat, one could say. Not so much an Impressionist as Impressionable. For how many times have you passed a news-stand or turned on the TV only to see this same woman's

sad, sullen, pathetic, pained expression captured in a *National Geographic* cover page or a *Times Magazine* centerfold or a *CBC Newsworld Special*? How many times have you seen this face below headlines that read: *Victim of Domestic Violence; Victim of Sexual Harassment; Victim of Rampant Honour Killings; Victim of Forced Marriage; Victim of Crimes of Passion; Victim of Growing Sex Trade; Victim of Child Labour; Victim of Ancient Sadistic Rituals like Foot-Binding, Witch-Burning, Self-Immolation (Sati) and Genital Mutilation; Victim of Unequal Pay, Unequal Voting Rights, Unequal Voice, Unequal Choice . . . Victim of Being a Victim.*

Yes, you've seen it all before. You've met this woman before. You know this woman, you tell yourself. And you pat yourself on the back, because you realize that in painting her, you have given a voice to the voiceless, given a face to the faceless. And now you are so much more than a painter. You are a visionary, a spokesperson, a hero.

But when the portrait is complete and your mind begins to shift to the other more important things that fill up your day, you (being the perfectionist that you are) begin to have a nagging suspicion that your portrait has revealed only half the story concealed by your "ethnic woman's" gaze. The story of another woman you did not paint.

But what is the other half of the story? you ask yourself.

No one's ever told you the other half of *this* story. You've never seen it covered on the news. You've never heard its voice in your head.

So instead of turning your attention to the business of the day, you are filled with a longing for this other woman whose identity you can't place, whose story you can't tell. You can't, won't rest till you see for yourself this other woman. But where will you go to find her? How do you even begin to recognize someone you feel you've never met?

Well, don't give up just yet, because this is where I step in to your picture. And where each of the women sitting in this audience today, or gracing the

halls of this college, or walking down these cold Montreal streets, enter this picture. We will help you, if you care to listen. Let us walk you through the canvas of this other woman's story. Let us help you imagine and visualize and materialize this other woman.

This other woman's story begins in a simple question: "What is the opposite of victim?"

The opposite of "victim" is a woman who knows she doesn't live in a black and white world of simplistic binaries like bad and good, tradition and modernity, primitive and progress, darkness and light, east and west, land of the subjugated and land of the free, dictatorship and democracy. This woman knows that the woman you first painted, the one who lives in that nameless African country, may seem oppressed to you, but for all you know she had gained the right to vote and the right to run for the highest government post way before you did, here in the West.

Yes, in fact the last time she checked, Swiss women (women who probably wouldn't come to mind as being either "ethnic" or "oppressed") had been denied the right to full citizenship—had been "silenced" in the way your voiceless ethnic woman seemed silenced—until 1971, the year in which Switzerland finally granted them the right to VOTE (Johnson 2004). Can you imagine that? A woman in Northern Europe not being allowed to vote till the late twentieth century!

And this is just an aside, but you know those Afghani women we see on the news a lot these days as women who have been purportedly emancipated by western liberalism? Well, believe it or not, but they had full suffrage six years before our Swiss maiden and thirty years before the Afghan invasion!

So this woman would ask you: does being denied a basic human or civil right (like the right to vote and participate in government) automatically make one "ethnic"? Conversely, does having the right to vote automatically grant a

Continued on page 25

Non-Tenured Teachers Committee Welcomes New and Non-Tenured Teachers

By Eric Durling

The Non-Tenured Teachers Committee held its bi-annual information session for new and non-tenured teachers on Wednesday, February 9 at Universal Break. More than a dozen new teachers were hired this semester and are now members of the following departments: Nursing, Business Administration, Humanities, Building Systems, Economics, History and Sociology. Many of them, and some of their other non-tenured comrades, attended the session where they were supplied with general information, discussed faculty evaluation and were made aware of Vanier's Human Rights Policy.

The VCTA Executive was on hand to officially welcome new teachers to Vanier before committee member Hode Erdogan went through some important basic information. First on the list was the all-important *General Offer of Service* that non-tenured teachers must renew every April if they are to maintain their hiring priority and move up the seniority list. Then basic responsibilities were discussed: teaching, department meetings, office hours, and availability.

Finally, the intricacies of individual teaching loads, more commonly known as CI (*charge individuelle*), were explained to our non-tenured colleagues. This complex formula involves the following factors: hours of class per week, hours of preparation for different courses, and the number of students enrolled per section. A part-time teacher, having a minimum of 60 CI units, has priority in continuing education and in summer courses to complete a full-time load of 80 units.

Dave Oram, Vice-President of the VCTA, led a discussion of faculty evaluation, explaining that formative evaluation is widely used by departments at Vanier for the professional development of their members. These evaluations are for the benefit of the teachers involved and remain confidential. Summative evaluation, however, is a management tool used for non-re-engagement (i.e. firing) purposes and is the prerogative of the college administration. Dave pointed out that the college is trying to implement such a policy in relation to non-tenured teachers, but our collective agreement effectively forbids faculty involvement

in the summative evaluation of colleagues. Finally, teachers have the right to know if they are being evaluated for summative or formative purposes.

Marilyn More, from the Human Rights Office (N-123), presented the Vanier Human Rights Policy to the non-tenured teachers present. She thanked the VCTA Executive for their collaboration on the policy and



distributed information on discrimination, harassment and sexual harassment. Marilyn explained that a large part of her job involves giving advice to members of the Vanier community, whether they be complainants or respondents, and she encouraged teachers to feel free to consult her if they should have any questions. She also mentioned that she is available if teachers would like her to do classroom presentations on harassment.

Throughout the meeting, non-tenured teachers were presented with a host of information regarding the status of teachers (regular, continuing education, full-time, poste, replacement, part-time, and hourly-paid), acquiring tenure, leaves, and professional development. All of this information is available in the VCTA office: C101.

Finally, we encourage new teachers to seek advice from an experienced department member, and as chairman of the New and Non-Tenured Teachers Committee, I know I can count on the Vanier community to make these new members feel at home.

Eric Durling has been teaching English at Vanier since 2000. As well as being the chairman of the Non-Tenured Teachers Committee, he is Vice-President of the VCTA and chairman of Academic Council's Standing Committee on Formative Assessment.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The maximum amount available to individuals has been raised to \$500. Teachers with less than a full time workload receive the proportional funds. i.e. half a workload = maximum of \$250.

Applications and guidelines are available at the VCTA Office: C101. Applications should be submitted to the PD Committee, c/o the VCTA Office - C101, 3 weeks before the start of any activity.

There is no need to submit an application for Employee Fitness activities, but you do need a receipt to claim the expense.

The VCTA General Assembly of October 12, 2004, voted to continue the practice of combining 2 years of PD funds for one event.

Members of the bipartite PD Committee for the 2004-05 year are Dave Oram for the VCTA and Nancy Wargny for the Administration.

Aging Gracefully

By Fran Davis

I am so flattered to be asked to join in this community conversation that I have agreed to write this particular article, though I think I may represent a very small number of people for whom aging is a concern.

It is certainly a concern that arises in Women's Studies, so perhaps this March VCTA Newsletter is an appropriate place. It certainly fits in with this year's International Women's Day theme, Crossing Boundaries. And I have to admit that aging gracefully is my current obsession. I hope what I have to say will resonate with some, and for others perhaps it can be a beacon of what might await you, many years down the line.

Part of the obsession is the idea that I, personally, have found very few models of the graceful aging which I am attempting to explore, and perhaps this little outline of what I am after may inspire others to continue the exploration for themselves, at some appropriate time.

Many things militate against aging gracefully. First of all, everything around me encourages me to deny aging altogether. When I press the search key on any collection of books and articles, I am instructed to *Think Young!*, *Rediscover Your Twenties (After Sixty-Five)!* *Stay Fit Forever!* I am also encouraged on every side to think of my retirement as a time when I can finally do exactly what I like, as if it were some much improved kind of childhood. I am told that I have paid my dues (an interesting metaphor for a founding member of the VCTA, and a current member of the VCTRA) and I need not feel any of the social responsibility that has been such a huge part of my life. None of this makes much sense to me.

Another issue that militates against graceful aging is the unavoidable frailty of the body and all the disappointment, energy loss, and pain that go along with this creeping decrepitude. One simply does not feel graceful being carried feet first out of a party and trundled off to a trauma unit. On such occasions, it's hard to keep one's smile from turning into a death's head grin. And this goes for much smaller and more common complaints, seemingly insignificant but, like typographical errors in a book, an accumulation of them can be totally exasperating.

Still, these are the challenges – to define for oneself what aging will mean, and to cope with its stresses. Certainly this is what we did with the other great adventures

of our lives: our careers, our intimate partnerships, our roles as parents, and so on. I see aging as the next adventure, and I feel truly challenged to face it honestly and to do it with grace and dignity.

I have had a lifetime of extraordinary passages, all of which have given me both intense enjoyment and some serious pain. I will never forget them. But now I come to this next one, aging. Without being morbid, I have to admit that it seems to be the last passage, though I may change my mind about that. Whatever it is, it seems to me absolutely imperative to explore it fully, and to make of it an opportunity to keep on growing. It feels like a last chance to discover everything that's inside me, to call on aspects of myself that earlier phases of life did not really give me the time or the courage to explore. I feel now that I have nothing to lose by an honest confrontation of this process – and everything to gain.

Aging gracefully does not mean giving up on keeping fit, being lighthearted, or getting involved in interesting projects. In fact, it definitely includes these behaviours. For me, however, there is more grace in accepting what I cannot do, like running or skiing, than in allowing myself to become enraged about my limitations. There is grace in finding the fun in something I would never before have chosen to do, like starting a small business so that mini projects can be undertaken now that the larger ones are too much for me.

Above all, aging gracefully involves not being envious of the young or devaluing the importance of their experience. It seems imperative to continue to admire and encourage all those people who are engaged in what I have left behind. If there is anything I want to work at, it is to maintain this sense I have of the worth of every person's unique experience of the world.

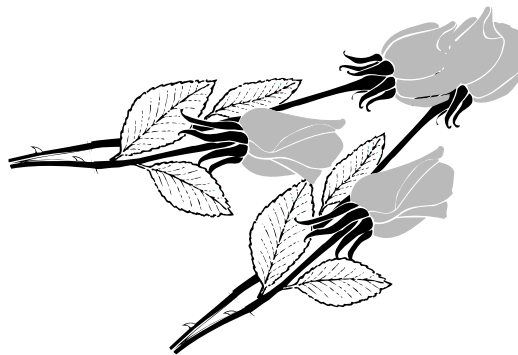
None of this is very easy, to tell the truth. I think it might be easier to deteriorate into a crotchety old woman,



Continued on page 11

Fair Trade Flowers

By Janice Paquette



Many of us (including the VCTA) use fair trade coffee. It is time to expand our support for workers in the developing world to include **fair trade flowers**. Most of the flowers given to symbolize “love and caring” in Canada are tended by low-paid, mostly women workers in Columbia and Ecuador. Besides low pay and few labour rights, these workers face terrible health conditions when working with the flowers that we love. Many pesticides and chemicals are used in growing the flowers and the spraying is done with the workers present, causing them many health problems.

Now, however, we can buy **fair trade flowers** in Montreal, thanks to European NGO’s who have set up a system of certification of growers who respect the workers’ health and safety and pay better wages too. Yes, they do cost about 10% more than the other

flowers. But for the prices of a few cappuccinos (hopefully made with fair trade coffee!), we can show our solidarity for the flower workers in Columbia and Ecuador. And don’t forget that anything that makes the women sick will probably also affect their children. What better way to show love, than to give flowers that do not rip off the workers in the developing world?

The biggest problem at the moment is that not enough people are asking for fair trade flowers because many people don’t know about them. We are too late for Valentine’s Day but Mother’s Day is coming. If you are in a florist shop, ask them if they have fair trade flowers. The more people that ask, the more likely that florists and food stores will offer them. Evidently they carry a Sierra Eco label.

In Sweden, more than 70 million fair trade flowers are sold each year. Let’s spread the word in Canada too! Happy International Women’s Week and think of Bread and (Fair Trade) Roses.

Janice Paquette started teaching at Vanier in 1980. She currently teaches Sociology and IP and has also taught courses in the Explorations Program, and before that, Access.



She has served on the VCTA Executive, represented Vanier teachers at FNEEQ (the federation we belonged to before we joined FAC) and at FAC. Janice is a past editor of the VCTA Newsletter and currently sits on Association Council.

AGING GRACEFULLY *Continued from page 10*

going around telling everyone that nothing is as good as it used to be. Harrumph.

But I can’t. I won’t. At this point, I don’t even feel like that. Aging gracefully is my challenge to myself, to keep my own self-respect and to offer a kind of tentative model of what others might explore further, when their time of aging comes. If to no one else, I want to offer this to my very close friends and family, whom I could make quite miserable by raging against aging, or whom I could encourage to consider, with me, that life is an adventure, to the very end.

Fran Davis is a founding mother of Vanier College, helping to hire the first English teachers in 1970. She has taught English, Women’s Studies and Liberal Arts. She has also coordinated these departments. She worked with Arlene Steiger for eight years on a reduced course load to do research on Feminist Pedagogy and Women’s Education. She helped design the Ministerial Examination in College English and wrote, with Susan Woodruff, the student manual called Exit with Success! Fran has published poetry, fiction and articles and has given many workshops and visiting lectures across Canada and in the United States. Becoming Dean of Science and General Studies in the year 2000, Fran has recently retired to continue her many interests at a less frantic pace.

The Most Common Questions about Retirement

by Dave Oram

A few years ago I thought it was about time to start thinking about my retirement. Although not imminent, it was clearly not that far off either. As I started asking questions and looking around I discovered that there was no one source of information or easy way to get the answers. Since then I have spent considerable time educating myself on retirement issues. I have had the privilege of presenting an evening seminar to Vanier teachers on retirement on behalf of the V.C.T.A. It is the intention of the V.C.T.A. Executive to hold such a seminar again this year, probably in late March or early April. Details will be forwarded to you at a later date.

There is a retirement manual that forms the basis of the seminar, available at the V.C.T.A. Office upon request. If you are planning to attend the seminar, it would be a good idea to read the manual beforehand, since there is a lot of information to digest.

Here, I will briefly answer the three most commonly asked questions about retirement.

1. When Can I Retire?

Every year a full time teacher adds another 2% (of the average of their five best years' salary) to their future retirement income. So after thirty years of teaching, you would receive a 60% pension. A 'full pension' is defined as 35 years of service and a 70% pension. You cannot increase your pension beyond this limit.

There is, however, another set of constraints that impact very negatively on taking an 'early' pension. If you are 60 years of age or older or if

you have 35 years of service, you will in fact receive 2% per year of pension income.

However, if you do not satisfy one of these conditions, you will be penalized for taking retirement 'too early'. This penalty, referred to as the 'actuarial reduction' amounts to a 4% reduction in your pension income for each year that you don't satisfy one of the two above criteria. The forfeit of 2% in exchange for retiring one year earlier is not a great financial sacrifice for most, but an additional 4% quickly starts to materialize into a substantially reduced pension.

2. Can I Return to Work After I Retire?

Believe it or not, this is the second most commonly asked question. There are a number of issues to consider:

- If you retire and work for any company or institution that does not fall under the jurisdiction of CARRA (the government body that administers the pensions of public servants in Quebec) you can collect your retirement pension and your working salary at the same time.
- Alternately, if you are between 65 and 69 years of age, you are eligible to participate in the Gradual Retirement Plan. You can retire and draw a pension and continue to teach at Vanier to the extent that your retirement pension and reduced salary (since you are teaching a reduced workload) does not exceed your pre-retirement income. So if you retire with a 70% pension, you can con-

tinue to teach up to 30% of a full workload.

- The most common case is a teacher who does not qualify for the Gradual Retirement Plan and wants to return to teaching at Vanier after retirement. Unfortunately the answer in this situation is not clear cut. Each case is different depending on your age, years of teaching, amount of pension being drawn, which pension plan you are a member of, etc.

In fact you must contact CARRA individually to get an answer to this question. They will run a simulation and inform you of the possibilities in your particular situation. Be very careful. No one will prevent you from continuing to teach: not Vanier—not CARRA, not MEQ—but if you haven't received the okay from CARRA, such a return to work may have negative and dire consequences on your pension payments. Be sure you have confirmed and fully understood your status with CARRA before continuing to teach.

One other point to be aware of is that upon retiring from Vanier, you no longer have any hiring priority or seniority. Your application to return to teaching at Vanier is treated like any first time applicant to the College.

3. What are All the Sources of My Retirement Government Pension?

The three sources of income that are available to all teachers are RREGOP (or TPP), QPP and OAS.

- Your RREGOP pension amounts to 2% (of the average of your five best years' salary) per year minus any actuarial reduction you may suffer as a result of retiring early (as outlined earlier).
- QPP (Quebec Pension Plan) is the Quebec version of the CPP (Canada

Pension Plan). QPP benefits are related to your earnings during the contributory period (i.e., your working career). Most teachers are eligible for the maximum monthly QPP benefit of \$828.75 (in 2005) at age 65. You can choose to receive QPP as early as age 60 but you pay 0.5% per month penalty for doing so. Thus if you take it at 60 years (5 years early) your QPP payments will be reduced by $(.5\%) \times 12 \text{ months} \times 5 \text{ years} = 30\%$ for life. Thus if you are eligible for a maximum QPP pension, you would receive \$580.13 monthly if you started receiving it at 60 years.

This sounds like a rather huge loss and yet all the experts advise teachers to take QPP as early as possible (i.e., at 60 years of age). Why? The reason for this is because of something called 'integration'. If you take QPP at 60 and you have retired, you will receive both your 'full' pension plus QPP payments.

If you are retired and wait until 65 to start drawing QPP benefits, the 'integration' of QPP and RREGOP pension payments kicks in. This means that your 'full' RREGOP pension payments are reduced by roughly the amount of your QPP payments, so your pension income of RREGOP and QPP will be roughly the same the month before you turn 65 and the month after your turn 65, and the rest of your life. In this latter case you do not receive a 'full' RREGOP pension and QPP on top.

Retirement issues are many and are getting more com-

plicated year by year. Do not wait until you want to retire to start researching information. You should venture into the mine field and start investigating the possibilities at least 5 years before retirement.

Once you have made the decision to retire, the first step is to notify Human Resources, at least three months in advance, preferably. This will ensure that all the legalities are dealt with and that pension payments start on the date of your retirement.

While I am not an expert, I would be happy to help you find the answers to your retirement questions. Please feel free to come down to the V.C.T.A. Office C101 to inquire.

David Oram has taught Physics at Vanier College for over 30 years, starting off at the Snowdon Campus. He has served on many bodies for many years and is currently Vice-President of the V.C.T.A. He has also served on the Board of Directors of the Strathcona Credit Union for over 20 years, serving as the President for the last seven. He has assumed the retirement dossier for the V.C.T.A. and puts on an annual seminar for potential retirees.



PERFORMA

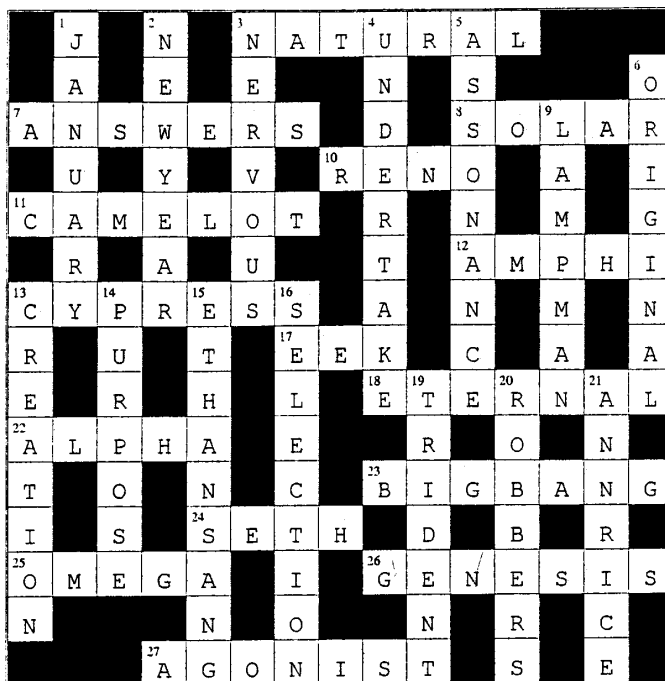
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Solution to *New Beginnings*

(Jan. 2005, Vol.22 No.4)



A Man Against Sexism

By Marc Belanger

Every term, my wife and I encourage our kids to choose an after-school activity. This time, my son chose something called “Circus”. It looked interesting enough, and we never would have imagined that there was any kind of gender connotation in such an activity. However, when we went to register, our son was dismayed when he realized that he was the only boy who had signed up. The night before the activity started, he was unusually quiet, and when I asked him what was on his mind, he said, “I think I might have made a bad choice. I picked a girl’s activity, and I don’t want my friends to know.”

I answered, “I think you will be very good at this. And just because you are a boy doesn’t mean that you can’t do it.”

Suddenly, I was struck by something. What I had just told my son was very similar to what enlightened and proud fathers must have told their daughters who wanted to play hockey or soccer, or who wanted to study engineering. We have come a long way in breaking down many gender stereotypes, yet they still persist in many subtle ways. And it is in these ways that they affect all of us – women and men alike – and impose restrictions and limitations on what we are “allowed” to do.

What we often forget is that there is nothing natural or inevitable about these stereotypes. Living in our 21st century, modern, western, post-industrial society, it is difficult for us to see that our notion of what is “masculine” and what is “feminine” is only one facet of a great range of possibilities. If we cast our gaze back historically, or at other cultures, we see that there is more variety within each of these terms than between them. There is no tangible difference between a kilt and a skirt, except as defined by the societies in which each is worn. If Paul Martin were to wear a sarong, it would be a skirt and his masculinity would be questioned, but not if he were the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka.

So the first task in understanding sexism is to recognize that the terms “masculine” and “feminine” are socially defined, are tied to a particular time and place, and that there has been and still is great diversity in how each of these is defined.

But diversity is not the only issue. If we look at our own culture and the words that we use to describe these two concepts, we see something interesting. Some men

may be strong, rational, and dominant; some women, weak, emotional and submissive. Each of these terms simply defines a possible quality of being. But there is more to it than that. As a society, we attach value to each of these terms, which serves to make some of these qualities more important and desirable than others.

Now we have moved beyond simple diversity into inequality. And this is the second and more insidious aspect of sexism. Gender imposes more than just how people are expected to think and act – it excludes and devalues an entire group of people based on one characteristic. Progress has been made in our society to diminish this aspect of sexism, yet there is much evidence that it still persists, albeit in more subtle ways.

Why would I, as a man, be opposed to sexism? First, I recognize that in social life, there is much diversity. This diversity is fascinating and enriching and should be seen as such. There is a constant tension between the individual and society. Society defines parameters that constrain our behaviour, and only as individuals can we surpass and change these limits. A society that allows for a more diverse and flexible definition of gender gives greater opportunity to individuals to express themselves. Second, I believe that a society is most productive and just when all members of that society are treated equally and given full opportunity to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy that society.

As the father of two children – a boy and a girl – I want both of them to grow up with unconstrained possibilities. Gender can constrain the individual in what they think they want to do – as it did for my son. And no one is going to tell my daughter that she cannot do something *because she is a girl*. No way.

In his short time at Vanier, Marc Belanger has taught several Sociology courses, the Explorations courses Work-Future-and-Yourself and Skills for the 21st Century as well as all the Methodology courses. He has rewritten course descriptions for the Sociology Web Site and is generally the first to volunteer when a department task comes up. During International Women’s Week, he joins a colleague and students on the Men Against Sexism Panel: Exploring Masculinity, Wed. Mar. 9, 1:30- to 2:45 in the Auditorium, A103.



Refugee Women in Canada

By Jenny Jeanes

Two important dates are fast approaching: International Women's Day on March 8th, and Refugee Rights Day on April 4th. What better way to celebrate these two days than by spending some time looking at the experiences of refugee women in Canada?

A refugee, by definition, is a person who is outside of their country of origin, and who cannot return to that country because of a well-founded fear of persecution. This definition comes from the Geneva Convention, an international agreement that binds countries, like Canada, to protect refugees.

Does this mean that a refugee is someone who flees from persecution to seek asylum in another country? Yes and no. It starts to get complicated once a person asks for protection, at which point she becomes a refugee claimant who must navigate the maze that is Canada's refugee determination system and ultimately prove that she is indeed a refugee. To do so, a claimant must seek legal representation, testify, present concrete evidence and be questioned by a Commissioner.

Although considered a right, the hearing is also an enormously stressful time for a refugee claimant – if it does not go well, she may be returned to face persecution (or worse) in her country of origin.

For some women refugees, seeking protection may be extremely difficult, especially if their claim is based on



Julie Bédard-Mathieu

gender itself. Common examples of gender-based persecution include systematic rape, domestic violence or forced female circumcision. Though gender is not named directly in the internationally accepted definition of a refugee, such persecution has been recognized in Canada.

In 1993, Canada became the first country to systematize its recognition of and sensitivity to gender-based refugee claims. By introducing Gender Guidelines, the Canadian Government called upon its Commissioners to be alert and sensitive to the experiences of women making claims based on gender.

Being a refugee claimant is not just about proving one's status through a hearing, however. It usually involves arriving in an unfamiliar country without resources or support.



Refuge Juan Moreno, east-end Montreal

In Montreal there is a shelter for newly arrived refugee claimants that houses women, their children, and unaccompanied female minors. Here, the particular needs of female refugee claimants are addressed and they will find help in taking the first difficult steps upon their arrival in Canada.

Refuge Juan Moreno, founded in 1993, can provide shelter to 16 women and children in a spacious, welcoming house in east-end Montreal. Beyond material support, workers at the house provide information about the complex process, advocate on behalf of the residents, accompany them to appointments and hearings, and help them find resources in the community once they move out.

I asked Julie Bédard-Mathieu, Refugee Protection Worker at the Refuge, to tell me more about the experiences of the women they shelter. She pointed out that their residents include some of the most vulnerable refugee claimants. Some of the women come from traditional cultures in which they are denied a voice. When they arrive in Canada and have to defend their refugee claim, they may have trouble speaking for themselves.

Workers at the refuge try to empower these women

to advocate on their own behalf. At the same time, the multiple appointments with Immigration agents cause immense anxiety. Accompaniments are thus an essential part of the support provided by the Refuge.

Some of the other vulnerable cases Julie has seen include pregnant women, women with young children, those who have been trafficked into prostitution, or those who have been traumatized by multiple rapes. The welcoming, secure environment at the shelter is meant to avoid re-traumatizing such women.

Julie has seen a lot of cases involving gender-based persecution. Asked whether Canada's Gender Guidelines have helped, Julie had a mixed response. Official recognition of gender persecution has helped address a very real problem. However, Commissioners may not be sensitive enough to emotional trauma, and how it affects a woman's testimony.

The workers at Refuge Juan Moreno try to help women through this difficult process. With all the services they provide to both current and past residents, they form an

essential part of refugee protection efforts in Montreal.

Interested in supporting the work of Refuge Juan Moreno? They will happily accept donations of clothing, or basic household necessities (sheets, dishes etc.) that they provide for women as they make the transition to their own homes. Offers of furniture can only be accepted along with an offer of transportation! For more information call Julie or Anne-Marie at (514) 525-5423.

Interested in a more personal involvement? Refuge Juan Moreno works with Action Réfugiés Montréal in a Twinning program that matches volunteers with newly arrived refugees. For information call Action Réfugiés Montréal at (514) 935-7799.

Jenny Jeanes is a Master's student in Social Work at McGill University. She is currently doing a field placement at the Committee to Aid Refugees, an organization committed to the defence of refugee rights. This is her second year working with refugees in Montreal, which has given her a passion for this area of human rights.

Open Door Network is Launched!



To sign up for a workshop, contact
Evangeline Caldwell, Maureen Jones, Nancy Leclerc or Lisa Jorgensen.

DECIDING ABOUT SRAM:

Delay to Spring 2006 is Best Option

By Hode Erdogan and Shirley Pettifer

Many members of the Vanier community have raised serious concerns about SRAM—the student application system currently under consideration at Vanier. It is a big change from our current system and its implementation seems to be barreling ahead in a rather worrisome way. There are a number of concerns in dire need of address.

First there is the potential loss of students: 1000 French-side applicants and 500 Dawson “2nd choice” transfers: 1500 students. If we could expect a mere quarter of these students to actually register, we could be facing a loss of 375 students—the equivalent of about 25 full time teaching positions.

SRAM uses different averages and different courses for their acceptance criteria than we use at Vanier. The majority of the application files must be verified manually. The concern is that if we admit weak students without giving them proper support, we will set them up to fail: an injustice to the students and a blot on our student success rates.

Applications to some special programs—Explorations, Science Access, Modified Science, Liberal Arts, for example—will have to continue to be done manually. This involves an estimated 500 students. Add those to the 500 Dawson “2nd choice” transfers: 1000 applications requiring manual processing.

Most agree that SRAM works well in the French Cegeps because it is a good system for high school applicants to regular programs. It seems less useful for Vanier where about 60% of our applicants are from high schools while 40% are not. In addition, a large

number of applicants who do not come directly from Quebec high schools must be reviewed individually.

The Autumn 2005 trial of SRAM at Vanier will not give us the answers to these crucial questions and concerns. During this trial period, students are still applying through CAS and not SRAM. Furthermore, registration will not be completed until the end of August.

In the meantime, the College has been given the name of a top expert in the field, a person with awesome credentials: a Vanier Science Program graduate, a graduate of Waterloo’s Coop in Electrical Engineering/ Software Engineering with about 20 years of expertise. He is available, FREE OF CHARGE, for a consultation regarding Vanier’s in-house admissions system:

- to make it compatible with the MEQ data base;
- to make it compatible with SRIC (Société du Réseau Informatique des Collèges);
- to make it compatible with the database currently used by the Vanier College Registrar;
- to ensure the possibility of online application;
- to have better KPIs for Vanier (Key Performance Indicators—generally refers to data about institutional and student performance).

Given the worrisome concerns outlined above, it would seem wise to avail ourselves of this expertise before we commit over \$100,000 to SRAM. Yes, that is the financial commitment required just for the trial run.

It is a hefty expenditure—one that must be approved by the Board of

Directors. But as yet, neither Academic Council nor the Board of Directors have been consulted about implementing SRAM at Vanier.

And we still don’t know what it would take to develop a top-notch in-house application system—despite the availability of free expertise in this area.

In the carefully researched *Report to the Joint Coordinators Committee on the Proposed Implementation of the SRAM Admissions System at Vanier College (Nov. 15, 2004)*, Silke Lach, Nadia Turbide and Jacqui Paull made an important recommendation regarding the need to get a realistic estimate of the cost of developing our own Admissions system. This was slightly reworded and passed as a motion at a Joint Coordinators meeting (Jan. 19, 2005):

For purposes of comparison, we recommend that the College get a realistic estimate of the cost of developing our own in-house, web-based system, by the March 30, 2005 meeting (of Joint Coordinators).

Without a thorough follow-up to this key recommendation and without answers to the pressing concerns raised above, the best course of action is to delay any decision about switching to SRAM until the Spring of 2006, rather than June 2005 as suggested by the Academic Administration.

Hode Erdogan has served many terms on the VCTA Executive, currently sits on the CRT, Association Council and the Board of Directors. He is also the Coordinator of the Physics Dept. and the SA/MS Program. Shirley Pettifer, a former member of the VCTA Executive, has coordinated the Dept. of Social and Cultural Sciences, the Explorations Program, Women’s Studies and the Honours Program for Social Science and Commerce students. Currently, she sits on Association Council, teaches Sociology and edits the VCTA Newsletter.

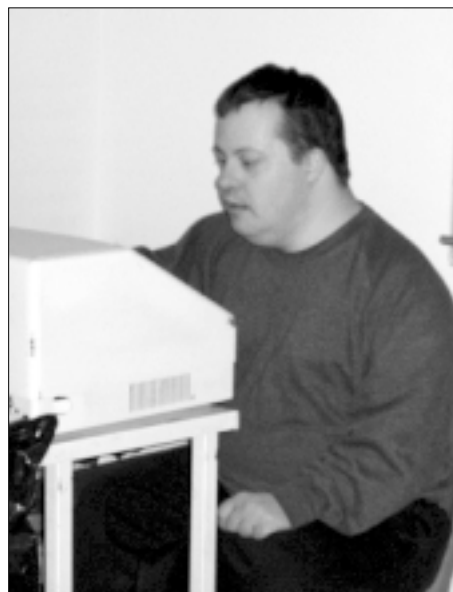
West Montreal Readaptation Center: 15 Years Already!

By Kerry Hall

The W.M.R.C. is an organization that places adults who are intellectually disabled into the workforce. We offer many different types of placement depending on their strengths and needs. We offer them the necessary support to attain autonomy and the best quality of life possible. Some of the services offered are Day Programs, Workshops, Workstations, Church Programs, and External Services.

Vanier is what we call an "On Campus Program". This kind of program differs from the others in that it is more community and social-based rather than focusing on production.

In November 1989, Vanier College became the first post-secondary educational establishment in North America to partake in an effort to socially integrate adults



François on the shredder

with severe intellectual disabilities. Opening its doors to what was then called W.I.R.C., Vanier was the stage for a pilot project that utilized the student population as a support network allowing members from the initial group to participate in social, educational, and

vocational experiences. Students trained by W.I.R.C. staff became active members of a team supporting individuals through a variety of experiences and challenges geared to address their specific strengths and needs.

Fifteen years later it is with pride that we can count over 900 volunteers as contributors to the success of the program. Coming from all walks of life and ranging in age from 17 to 62, the campus population has given to and received from the "On-Campus" program at Vanier. Many of the volunteers have gone on to rewarding ca-

reers in education, social services, and related fields. If emulation is the greatest form of flattery then Vanier should blush because we are aware of similar programs existing at John Abbott College, McGill University, Concordia University and C.E.G.E.P. St-Laurent.

At Vanier we have 16 adults ranging from high to low functioning who work with us. Each person has some specific goals set out for him or her and participates in the different activities that enable them to reach these goals. You may have seen them doing recycling bins, working at the cafeteria or the bookstore, learning in the computer labs, or attending the various social activities offered by the college community.

From the beginning Vanier was a vision, a dream, an experiment, that has become reality. As we go forward, we intend to continue to go beyond our own expectations.

March 13-19, is the week of the Intellectually Disabled in Quebec, and at this time we would like to invite anyone interested in attending our "Open-house" **on March 16, from 10am to 2pm** to share in the spirit of friendship and good time and to find out more about this special group of people who work alongside you, each and everyday. **The local is N301**; refreshments will be served.

We are also hosting a **Wine and cheese, 5 to 7 pm on March 16**, to thank the college for all its hospitality over the years, where people, from past and present, will be sharing their experiences with regard to our program. If you are interested in participating, please confirm with Kerry or Helene at ext: 7536 before March 10th.

Kerry Hall, a Vanier graduate and former volunteer at the Centre, has worked for West Montreal Readaptation Center for 12 years. She has now come full circle to become Agent D'Intégration (a job her husband formerly held) at the Vanier worksite. She works alongside her colleague, Helene Monlong, (Educator) to socially integrate the group into the Vanier community, as well as into the city of St-Laurent in general.



“Empower Women, Save Lives”

By Nancy Wargny

Over two million people, including nearly half a million children, died of HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa in 2004. In terms of human suffering and deaths per year, this is an on-going disaster of incomprehensible magnitude.

It's also a situation which illustrates how gender inequality can exacerbate the consequences of catastrophes and how desperately poor people, often women who are elderly or ill themselves, manage to help others.

HIV/AIDS is a very different experience in sub-Saharan Africa from what we experience in North America. The dominant mode of transmission in Africa is heterosexual sex. African women are now being infected at greater rates and at earlier ages than men. Among those aged 15 to 24 years, women are three times more likely to be infected than young men of the same age. This is partly because their sexual partners are more often older men who can provide important economic benefits to them and their families.

Because of androcentric attitudes and restricted access to education, employment and wealth, women in sub-Saharan Africa frequently lack the power to negotiate condom use by their older partners or husbands. Thus, they are at risk of early HIV infection. Increased access to schooling, employment and economic independence would go a long way to empowering sub-Saharan African women to conduct their sex lives with greater safety for themselves and their children.

The greater vulnerability of young sub-Saharan African women to HIV exposure and infection leads directly to another problem. The United Nations estimates that nearly all of the half million children newly infected with HIV/AIDS in 2004 live in sub-Saharan Africa. Children are usually infected during pregnancy, at birth or via breastfeeding. Empowering women to negotiate safe sex and increasing their access, and that of their partners, to testing and medication are crucial to reducing over-all infection and death rates.

In Canada, virtually everyone who needs them has access to HIV medications. In sub-Saharan Africa, only 150,000 of the 25 million HIV-positive children and adults were estimated to be under treatment as of June 2004.

Can you imagine what it must be like to suspect or know that you and your loved ones are HIV-positive and to have no hope that you could obtain the medication necessary to control the disease?

Despite their limited resources, African women of all ages provide a disproportionate share of care for sick family members and orphans. It is believed that there are at least 12 million AIDS orphans in Africa and that the number may go to 20 million by 2010. Families usually break-up when the mother dies. If the children are taken-in by others, it is often into a female-headed, poor household where the lack of access to education, employment and socio-economic power is perpetuated. In Botswana, for example, grandmothers are estimated to care for half the AIDS orphans.

Because of the role of gender inequality in the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the United Nations has launched a Global Coalition on Women and AIDS. One of their activities, an “Empower Women, Save Lives” tour, will culminate in Washington, DC, on International Women’s Day.

Most of the information for this article came from the United Nations. Their web site <http://www.unaids.org/en/default.asp/> is a fascinating resource.

Those interested in making donations might consider The Stephen Lewis Foundation which can be found at <http://www.stephenlewisfoundation.org/>

Nancy Wargny is the Faculty Dean of Social Science, Commerce, Arts and Letters. Recipient of the Teaching Excellence Award, she taught psychology at Vanier for 32 years and has, for several years, given a lecture on “Gender and the African AIDS Epidemic” each semester in our Alternatives for Women course. Her long list of contributions to the Vanier community include teaching courses in the Explorations Program, Coordination of the Psychology Dept., Chair of Joint Coordinators and Vice-Chair of Academic Council.



Music Corner: Pete's Picks

By Peter Rasmussen

Billie Holiday died on July 17, 1959 at age forty-four in her hospital bed with the room guarded by private nurses and hospital police round the clock. If she had survived she would have had to deal with criminal charges for heroin possession. There are differing stories as to whether she did or did not use the drug while in the hospital, but she died as she had lived with different accounts as to her excesses with alcohol, drugs and problems with men.

She remains the most popular female jazz vocalist, more so than jazz greats Ella Fitzgerald and Sarah Vaughn or blues singers Dinah Washington and Nina Simone. Her entire discography, plus numerous compilations and bootleg recordings, has been



reissued on compact disc to the point where it confuses me – who has some knowledge of her recording career. She was an influence on those who followed: Carmen McRae, Ruth Brown, Abbie Lincoln, Ranee Lee and contemporary singers such as Madeleine Peyroux, Toni Price and the late Eva Cassidy.

Her talents were God-given and self-taught but her addictions eventually ruined her voice. So why is she the legend—perhaps icon—that she is? I

couldn't begin to answer that question and I'll leave it to the historians and musicologists to evaluate her legacy.

Before I get to the recordings on compact disc, I'll finish with the biographical details. She was born Elinore Harris to the unwed teen aged Sara on April 7, 1915 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania but would later be known as Eleanora. She was conceived one summer night in 1914 when her mother was seduced by the young Clarence Holiday. Clarence's support for his daughter was negligible or non-existent but Eleanora would later take his family name for performing purposes.

Around 1929 Eleanora left Baltimore, Maryland for New Jersey and eventually Harlem where her mother paid for her to board in an apartment house owned by one of New York's better known madams. Eleanora soon found a new way to supplement her modest income which thankfully didn't last too long. In her own words, «I had decided I was through turning tricks as a call girl. But I had also decided I wasn't going to be anybody's damn maid.» So rather than wait on tables she began singing at tables in various New York hot spots.

While singing in the different clubs she developed a following and one of her fans was the legendary John Hammond who arranged for a contract for her, as well as Benny Goodman, with the British division of Columbia Records. Her first recording in the fall of 1933 was as the vocalist on a Benny Goodman release but she would go on to record with Columbia as a solo artist until 1942. Columbia has released all of her recordings on a nine volume collection called *The Quintessential Billie Holiday* and, despite the lack of audio quality, music critics and musicolo-

gists consider these to be her best recordings.

Volume 1 is of particular historical interest as it includes her very first recordings including the Goodman release, *Your Mother's Son-In-Law*, and her own recordings featuring Teddy Wilson and his Orchestra. Volume 9 includes her recorded output from her last sixteen months with Columbia and features some of her bigger hits, *All of Me*, *God Bless the Child*, *I Cover the Waterfront* and *Gloomy Sunday*. As this is not a boxed set and the volumes can be purchased individually perhaps the best place to start is with Volume 5 as recommended by the critics. Despite the fact that it contains only one of her best known songs, *My Man*, fourteen of the eighteen tracks feature tenor saxophonist Lester Young and trumpeter Buck Clayton playing as members of her orchestra or Teddy Wilson's. Sony Music, which has acquired the Columbia catalogue, has reissued Volumes 1 to 3 as a CD box set.

In 1939 she had her first major hit record, *Strange Fruit*, which is not included in the Columbia compilations as it was released on Commodore Records. Columbia Records had refused to record this controversial song, which dealt with the lynching of Negroes, and radio stations refused to give it airtime when it was released by Commodore. Nevertheless it went on to become a big seller and one of her best known songs. It and fifteen other recordings for Commodore are available on the CD, *The Complete Master Takes*.

When Columbia failed to renew her contract she signed with Decca Records in 1944 and more money was spent on songs and hiring big bands and orchestras with strings. The resulting recordings, *Lover Man*, *Tain't Nobody's Business If I Do*, *Them There Eyes* and *Crazy He Calls Me*, became her most commercially successful.

The Decca recordings have been reissued on CD in two different packages. There is the two CD box set *The Complete Decca Recordings*, including alternate versions, which for

some reason is only available as a US import and kind of pricey. The less expensive way to obtain the recordings is with Lady's Decca Days, Volumes 1 & 2 which can be purchased individually at a reasonable price. Volume 2 includes more of the popular recordings and each CD has a duet with Louis Armstrong who was also with Decca at the time and, along with Bessie Smith, one of the early influences on her music.

In 1952 she began recording with Norman Granz and the legendary jazz artists who worked with him. Some music critics are not too crazy about the resulting recordings as her voice had by now seriously deteriorated from years of cigarette and alcohol abuse. However, she was back with small groups of sympathetic jazz musicians and her voice had a mature authority, she sounds like she's in

her sixties and not her forties. That and the tragic sadness and depth of emotion she brings to the songs make these my favourite recordings. If you have \$150.00 and can't find some other way to spend it, then The Complete Billie Holiday on Verve is for you. This Grammy winning CD reissue includes original studio and live recordings as well as alternate versions and false starts.

If that's too rich for you then a more practical option is the two CD compilation All or Nothing at All which is a reissue of three of her Verve LP's, All or Nothing at All, Body and Soul and Songs for Distingue Lovers. With wonderful interpretations of I Wished on the Moon, Moonlight in Vermont, Just One of Those Things, Comes Love, Day In - Day Out and the superb accompaniment of Harry «Sweets» Edison, Ben Webster,

Barney Kessel and Jimmy Rowles, this is the place to start if you want to sample her Verve recordings. This compilation only has the original six tracks from the vinyl release of Songs for Distingue Lovers but the CD reissue of the recording also includes six previously unreleased songs from the same recording sessions. As well, Body and Soul was re-mastered and reissued as a gold CD by Mobile Fidelity Sound Labs but the original MFSL closed its doors in 2000 and this item is only



Billie with Louis Armstrong at Decca Records

available used or through eBay and is considered a collector's item.

The Verve CD reissue of Stay With Me is a particular favourite of the critics. The songs come from two recording sessions that took place in 1954 and 1955 and at the first session it would seem that Norman Granz was absent and everyone got pretty drunk. The four tracks recorded in 1955 feature accompaniment by the Oscar Petersen Trio with Charlie Shavers on trumpet. And if you like Irving Berlin then this one is for you as it includes four of his compositions, Say It Isn't So, I've Got My Love to Keep Me Warm, Always and How Deep Is the Ocean.

A later recording that became one of her most popular was Lady In Satin with arrangements by Ray Ellis. She loved his recording, Ellis in Wonderland, and when she signed with

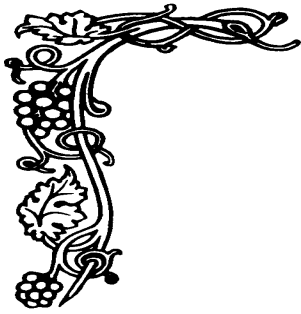
Columbia in 1957 she was able to work with him. However, she does not seem comfortable with the arrangements and the overall effect is that the singer and the arranger did not collaborate on the project and that the vocals were carelessly overdubbed.

Billie followed Ray Ellis to MGM Records and he once again did the arrangements for what would be her last studio recording. Originally released in 1959 as Billie Holiday it has since been reissued as Last Recording on the Verve label, a marketing decision on the part of Polygram Records which had acquired both the MGM and Verve catalogues in addition to several other record companies.

Over the years this one has become a personal favourite but the critics are almost unanimous in dismissing it as one of her worst, mostly because of the effects of the drugs and alcohol on her voice. However, Ray Ellis got the arrangements right the second time around and the stripped-down accompaniments work well with her vocals. From the songs of Tin Pan Alley to Broadway show tunes, her singing is sometimes haunting and sometimes sublime and her interpretation of Sammy Cahn and Jimmy Van Heusen's All The Way, by itself, is worth the price of the disc. But be forewarned, as a Vanier teacher once said to me in the course of a conversation about music, «Your wife has taste.»

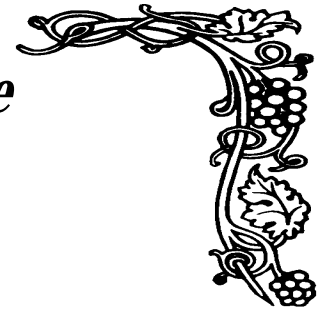
Except for the last release, all of the above recordings are recommended by music critics as the best from her discography from a too-short period of twenty-five years. They should be easy to obtain from most major retailers although some might require a special order. However, if something is not available in Canada, an Internet order from a retailer in the USA will solve the problem.

Peter Rasmussen has worked at Vanier since 1977 in a number of departments. Currently in Accounting, Peter shares his love for music with his wife Pat, who works in the Bookstore.



Meetings with Remarkable People

Faculty Praising Staff



**By Anonymous*

There is a great northern spirit—it's been at Vanier for a while,
It comes stylishly dressed with a warm, ready smile—

A godsend for deans, teachers, students and staff,
She'll share a wee story and make you laugh.

While the classical music plays soft and low
And the calls for her help come to and fro—

A CI calculation, a student excuse or invention—
She handles it all with care and attention.

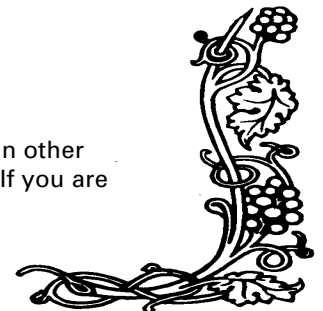


There's no lack of volunteers for Explorations Review Board—
Her homemade jam and scones are famous and adored!

She'll ask about your work, your health, your mum
And if you seek advice, she might give you some.

To have Kay Spooner at Vanier—what a stroke of luck!
She graces our halls with professionalism and pluck.

* The intention of this column is for faculty to 'sing' praises for our colleagues in other fields. It is by Anonymous so that any faculty member can take up the cause. If you are inspired to commit your praises to print, send your submission to Shirley at pettifes@vaniercollege.qc.ca



Teaching Practices: Group Discussion Triggers

Awareness of complexity and enhanced understanding results when learners discuss the meaning of events with each other. But to be successful, groups need a common experience to draw them into participation, establish a personal connection with the content, and provide a shared referent from which to exemplify their ideas. There are many kinds of triggers but all are designed to precede group discussion. Participants, therefore, become connected with both a concrete example of the content and each other.

- Short Readings. Brief assignments to read in class—especially effective are contrasting viewpoints;
- First Person Experience. Works written in a personal voice, autobiographies, biographies, oral histories, diaries, and memoirs; when used as counterpoints to abstract texts, these bridge the gap between students'

lives and the content under study. Students more readily take part in discussions when they can personally relate to the material.

- Individual Task Review. Problems that apply to the concepts are presented. Students complete a worksheet or other task and compare the results with their neighbours before the whole class discusses the answers.
- Self-assessment Questionnaires: Short surveys of learner attitudes, values, learning strategies or reactions to a segment of course content.

Adapted from: Drummond, Tom. (2004). A Brief Summary of the Best Practices in Teaching. Available online at <http://northonline.seed.ctc.edu/eceprog/bestprac.htm>

I am a Lucky Star

By Laura Pao

*Montreal, February 8, 2005,
New Year's Eve.*

Mom, you are a lucky star.
Am I? Well, I guess I am; after all
these years.

Born in the year of the snake
on a Halloween night,
a scorpion
a second daughter in a family of
seven,

I have fond memories of my
childhood,
my school years, my lovers,
my motherhood, and now my
middle years.

How I managed to be one of my
father's favourite
children remains a mystery to me
till this day.

I was the first girl to leave home
before marriage
and had the privilege to study
overseas
at a great expense
especially when my father
the sole breadwinner
had ten mouths to feed.

I arrived in this cosmopolitan city,
Montreal,
with a one-way ticket,
a suitcase
a radio
and an elegantly tailored winter
coat
prepared for the severe winter
cold.
I found warm hospitality
from simple kind fellow Chinese
countrymen.

There seemed to always be a home
that could afford to add another
pair of
chopsticks for me to share a
heart-felt meal.

As a foreign-born, I surprised myself.

It didn't take long for me to be self-
sufficient,
employed,
cleaning houses in nice
neighbourhoods,
changing beds and vacuum
cleaning carpets at the Sheraton,
packing sweaters in factories,
keeping the cash at a depanneur,
and scraping dishes in a hospital
cafeteria.

I was a happy merry placid
conscientious hard working school
girl
who could always do with another
glass of scotch and share a puff of
Gitane.

Today, I hold no grudges against people
who demanded a lot from my service
with my little salary.

They contributed much to my life
made it possible for me to learn
English
complete my graduate studies
raise two beautiful children
and brought out the better side of
me.

Yes, I am a lucky star with many
passions,
writing, dancing, movie watching,
practicing calligraphy, and
besting my opponents in a good
game of "Go".

I feel lucky to have a job I like,
teaching sociology.

Be my guest.

See you next class, or at the next Happy
Hour.

I am a model visible minority, made in
China.

Happy Chinese New Year

By Laura Pao

Written in Montreal, Feb. 4, 2005.

So far but yet so close,
with many unspoken words
wrapped in penchant;

My best wishes for you and your family
in this old tradition
the Chinese New Year:
The zest of an inquisitive new born
child;

A colossal of good tidings
like a little forgotten waterfall
hidden in the never-never land

Where pristine drops flow to the rivers
and poor local children
find refuge
from their personal troubles;

Appreciated,
never relinquished
in their soul,
Recounted to their future great grand
children,

The joy of living;
creating
Being complacent!

There are higher states of being,
dignity,
and pride.

Happy Chinese New Year to all.
Let's welcome the year of the Rooster.

Laura Pao joined Vanier College in 1992 and teaches Sociology, Methodology and in the distant past, Study Skills in the Explorations Program. Her latest quest is to return to university for PhD studies. She would like to acknowledge Shirley, Ioannis and Beverly for their encouragement, comments and corrections.

Phenomenal Woman

By Maya Angelou

Pretty women wonder where my
secret lies.
I'm not cute or built to suit a fashion
model's size

But when I start to tell them,
They think I'm telling lies.

I say,
It's in the reach of my arms
The span of my hips,
The stride of my step,
The curl of my lips.

I'm a woman
Phenomenally.
Phenomenal woman,
That's me.

I walk into a room
Just as cool as you please,
And to a man,
The fellows stand or
Fall down on their knees.
Then they swarm around me,
A hive of honey bees.

I say,
It's the fire in my eyes,
And the flash of my teeth,
The swing in my waist,
And the joy in my feet.
I'm a woman
Phenomenally.
Phenomenal woman,
That's me.

Men themselves have wondered
What they see in me.
They try so much
But they can't touch
My inner mystery.
When I try to show them
They say they still can't see.
I say,
It's in the arch of my back,
The sun of my smile,
The ride of my breasts,
The grace of my style.
I'm a woman

Phenomenally.
Phenomenal woman,
That's me.

Now you understand
Just why my head's not bowed.
I don't shout or jump about
Or have to talk real loud.
When you see me passing
It ought to make you proud.
I say,
It's in the click of my heels,
The bend of my hair,
the palm of my hand,
The need of my care,
'Cause I'm a woman
Phenomenally.
Phenomenal woman,
That's me.

Dr. Maya Angelou is a remarkable Renaissance woman who is hailed as one of the great voices of contemporary literature. As a poet, educator, historian, best-selling author, actress, playwright, civil-rights activist, producer and director, she continues to travel the world, spreading her legendary wisdom. Within the rhythm of her poetry and elegance of her prose lies Angelou's unique power to help readers of every orientation span the lines of race and Angelou captivates audiences through the vigor and sheer beauty of her words and lyrics.

Dr. Maya Angelou,
The Official Website, © 2003

Thanks to Mark Prentice for both poetry submissions.

Wise 3

By Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones)

Son singin
fount some
words. Son
singin
in that other

language
talking bout "bay
bee, why you
leave me
here," talking bout
"up under the sun
cotton in my hand." Son
singin, think he bad
cause he
can speak
they language, talking bout
"dark was the night
the ocean deep
white eyes cut through me
made me weep."

Son singing
fount some words. Think
he bad. Speak
they
language.
'sawright
I say
'sawright
wit me

look like
yeh, we gon be here
a taste.

In *Transbluesency: The Selected Poems of Amiri Baraka / LeRoi Jones*. 1995. Marsilio Publishers.

In 1934 Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones) was born in the industrial city of Newark, New Jersey. After attending Howard University in Washington, D. C., he served in the United States Air Force. In the late fifties he settled in New York's Greenwich Village where he was a central figure of that bohemian scene. He became nationally prominent in 1964, with the New York production of his Obie Award-winning play, *Dutchman*. After the death of Malcolm X he became a Black Nationalist, moving first to Harlem and then back home to Newark. In the mid-1970s, abandoning Cultural Nationalist, he became a Third World Marxist-Leninist.

Adapted from the biography in *The LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka Reader*. Copyright © 1991 by William J. Harris

WOMEN AND ETHNICITY

Continued from page 9

woman her freedom?

This woman also knows that the other woman you may have painted—you know, the one looking all exotic, passive and sexy in her sequined sari, may have been an “Indira Gandhi,” the Prime Minister of India; or perhaps even Benazir Bhutto, the head of Pakistan, an Islamic Republic.

And since we’re moving in this direction, this woman will ask you: how many elected women heads of state can you name from the twentieth century? Having trouble? Well, there’s Sirimavo Bandaranaike, elected three times as Sri Lanka’s President; there’s Khaleda Zia, former President, and Sheikh Hasina Wajid, the current Prime Minister, of Bangladesh (another Muslim country); there’s Maria da Lourdes Pintasilgo of Portugal; there’s Tançu Ciller of Turkey; there are the those two—count them, “two”—Filipina Presidents, Corazon Aquino and Gloria Arroyo, and the list goes on (Johnson 2001).

This woman may point out to you that for every European woman leader (the U.S and Canada don’t even enter the picture here for they can make no such claim ... well, does Kim Campbell’s 1993 default appointment really count?), there are most likely five women heads of state from those countries that we like to categorically dismiss as the biggest violators of women’s rights.

Which leads this woman to ask, once again: why is it that even though womanhood, ethnicity and leadership have historically meshed, time and time again, to create some of the world’s most powerful heads of state, do we tend to envision women as wearing Armani skirts, being native English speakers and sprouting from Western metropolises? And why is it that we rarely question why, in countries that are symbols of women’s rights and feminism, we have never had women leaders?

Maybe Hilary Clinton is on her way to changing this. However, the last time our formidable neighbours down south

were polled, they generally deemed Laura Bush (over dear Hilary and John Kerry’s “far too outspoken” wife)—Laura, the woman who obediently “stands by her man”—to be the better role model for North American women because, in fact, she would never dream of running for President!

Is this why we still tend to think of women leaders as an intrepid dream of tomorrow rather than a living, breathing reality of today?

And don’t get this woman wrong: she is well aware that these other countries where women have come to power are hardly innocent of the crimes against women, crimes against humanity, that they are accused of committing. Nor are the women leaders themselves always elected for their own particular merits or contributions, but, like all leaders, they often rise above the fray given their own class privilege, familial ties, personal ambitions, corporate holdings, and their oh-so human proclivity to self-aggrandizement and greed.

Which leads this woman to another set of questions: Does a powerful woman necessarily signify an egalitarian? Does womanhood automatically make one more sensitive to or predisposed to championing women’s rights? Are women leaders (everywhere) not susceptible to the same ills as male leaders? What does (or ideally should) it take, then, to implement women’s rights, starting with the right to vote and the right to self-representation? Does it take a woman? (Apparently, it doesn’t take imported models of western feminism!) Does it take hard-won political clout or unwitting descent from a long line of aristocrats or autocrats or technocrats? Or does it take a collective consciousness that is driven by the force of conviction for human rights across gender, class, race and religion?

This woman also knows that that other woman you painted: you know the one wearing a *chador*, a *hijab*, a *burkha*, covered from ear to ear, or head to foot: well, she’s wondering what is her say in all this?

Let’s, for the sake of granting a few stereotypes their due, say she’s from Iran. (Iran: the country singled out as part of the tri-stellar axis of nothing less than evil). The last time I checked, Iran is a country where, according to a U.S. scholar from Brown University, “women in the Islamic Republic are better off today than they were under the Pahlavi regime.” How can they be better off, you wonder? Well, this very American scholar tells us that the Islamic Republic has ensured “women’s equality in education, employment, and politics as a matter of national pride”; that “there are more women in the current parliament than ever served under the Pahlavi regime”; that “Education for women is obligatory and universal”; that “literacy for both men and women is well over 90% even in rural areas. University enrolment is nearly equal for men and women. As women’s education has increased, Iran’s birthrate has fallen steadily”; that “a class of female religious leaders has even emerged. They have attended religious training schools and have the title ‘mujtahedah’ the female form of the word ‘mujtahed,’ or ‘religious judge’” (Beeman 2001).

Now, this begs another series of questions: while France just passed a law to deny Muslim girls the right to wear *bijab* in public schools, these Irani women in *bijab*, in *chadors*, in *burkhas*, are leaders in political, social, intellectual, cultural, professional and even religious spheres. Now this woman is neither romanticizing the veil as one would Spiderman’s mask or Batman’s headgear (in other words, she hardly considers the veil as bearing Super-Hero or, should I say, Super-Heroine properties), nor is she idealizing Iran, one among a global village’s worth of creatively flawed nations. She is merely providing a few facts that are too often concealed by other kinds of veils (the veil of propaganda, the veil of the western media, the veil of that most contemporary of oxymorons: fundamentalist secularism).

She is merely suggesting that as strong participants and educated voices in their community, surely Irani women

are in the process of defining their futures as proud, productive, professional citizens. Surely, it is they who are fully capable of actualizing a future in which women's liberation, human rights, culture, tradition and sacred religious beliefs coalesce in a dialogue of mutually self-affirming rights, policies and laws. Surely, to interrupt this process is to deny these women the right to self-determination, not only as women but as Muslims and as citizens of both nation and world.

So, now that the picture is getting a bit larger, the lens a bit wider, the view not so much more global as more cross-referential, cross-cultural and comparative, this woman would tell you that the opposite of "victim" is a woman who knows that she lives in a world of shades of grey, of complexities, of nuance, of a hundred billion ways of imaging what terms like "women's emancipation" or "women's liberation" or a "woman's world" or "women's rights" or "gender equality" means as it is articulated through her particular love for her family, her culture, her history, her civilization, her individual sense of identity, integrity, autonomy, desire.

She will also look you in the eye and tell you, without batting an eyelid, that women are as much responsible for perpetuating and participating in systems of exclusion, exploitation and injustice as the men who may or may not dominate them.

She will tell you that women are as likely to feel superior to other human beings based on the superficial trappings of the car they drive; the jewelry they keep locked up in their private safes; the house they live in; the gadgets they own; the designer shoes and matching handbags they don; or, for that matter, the clothes they choose not to wear in the illusion that calling attention to themselves as sexual objects is somehow the greater expression of free will and choice!

She will tell you that women are as likely to indulge in racist name-calls

or even cheat or begrudge their own daughters out of a better future if that is what they have grown up to believe is normal or right.

In other words, she will tell you that sadly it is often we women who perpetuate and maintain the systems that exclude, oppress and victimize us. And thus, change has to begin not in a law, not in a banner with a catchy slogan, not in a tirade nor an outrage, but in a woman's own consciousness: a consciousness that aims, first and foremost, for "human" equality: the right to see a world without hunger, without class discrimination, without child labour, without forms of apartheid, without caste divisions, without a corroding ozone layer or a polluted sea.

And while looking at this kaleidoscopic picture, she will tell you that when she is made to feel like an outsider in her own world—be it as a Canadian of Irish or British or German or Jewish or Muslim or Buddhist or Haitian or Greek or Mohawk or any other name, shade or origin—it is this world that needs liberating, not she.

For it is this world that has closed itself off to the wealth of experience that she brings to make this world not a more tolerant place—because "tolerance" is merely a euphemism for racism with a politely accommodating face—but a more humane place, one that has not been created "in spite of" its diversity, nor because it has "politely accommodated" this diversity, but with and through the intricate and indispensable fabric of its diversity: its diversity of opinion, diversity of dissent, diversity of influence, diversity of living, seeing, knowing, speaking, listening, being.

This is the portrait that this woman would paint of herself.

A portrait of our shared humanity.

Works Cited

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Mariam Pirbhai has been teaching English at Vanier since the New Millennium, specializing in Post-Colonial Literature and Theory. Born in Pakistan, Mariam's family eventually settled in Canada in 1987 after a circuitous detour across England, the United Arab Emirates and the Philippines. With a sigh of relief so profound that it could be heard across the three continents that she has inhabited, Mariam obtained her Ph.D. in English Literature at the University of Montreal, where she was also awarded the Governor General's Gold Medal for Academic Excellence. Mariam has published numerous articles in academic journals, which reflect her interest in the history, cultures and literatures of the South Asian, Caribbean and African Diasporas. Since she also dabbles in creative writing, however, she often finds the academic and poetic voice vying, in her culturally schizophrenic head, for verbal supremacy!

Black History Month

continues in the

SOCIOLOGY DISPLAY

4th floor, A-Wing

Across from the elevator.

LOOKING AHEAD TO WARMER WEATHER

By Valerie Broege

I did not receive any solutions of my last crossword puzzle. Do I take this to mean that I have stumped all of Vanier's masterminds out there? Are you going to let me get away with this? The offer of a free lunch still stands to the first person to submit to me the correct solution of this puzzle. Happy cogitating!

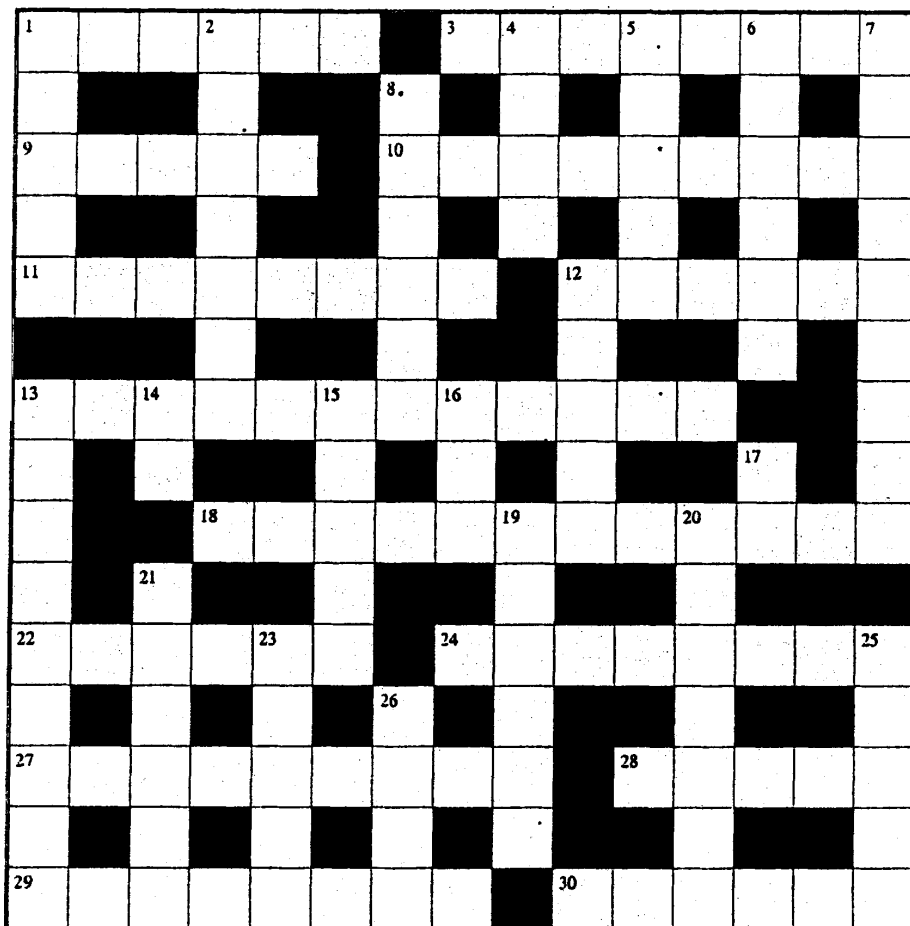
ACROSS

1. Writer starts spring with cold snaps. (6)
3. Tree, animal, editor join forces to produce this plant. (8)
9. Flowers belonging to women. (5)
10. Fashionable? An Indian says "Yes" to a Midwesterner. (9)
11. I back up this kind of herb but to do so can produce resentment. (8)
12. Relative of Dionysus can cause melee in no time! (6)
13. Can these flowers prevent 24 ACROSS? (6-2-4)
18. Look at Bob dodder. No horn blaring can induce him to walk more quickly towards this flower. (12)
22. The jambalaya upon your plate should be accompanied by a tea made of holly. (6)
24. See 13 ACROSS. (8)
27. Bring her a windblown daffodil as spring's precursor. (9)
28. The appropriate pants to wear on this island? (5)
29. Flower I sketch looks like a star. (8)
30. Names of men, women, and birds. (6)

DOWN

1. Farm in nice country is closed, according to the French. (5)
2. Taking time out while making tea results in dripping. (7)
4. Can part of the eye flower? (4)
5. Fill him with joy even if you come late to his garden party. (5)
6. Penelope shuns Odysseus and runs away secretly. (6)
7. Cowardly flower, made more so by the animal of Oz at its end? (9)
8. The state concerning a broadcasting system results in something that provokes mirth. (6)
12. China is not the subject of Pindar's first six Pythian odes. (5)
13. This ray of dazzling hope for spring is yellow in color. (9)

14. One deity a gardener appreciates. (2)
15. Man between the two women in 9 ACROSS. (5)
16. Removing the top of a type of lily produces enhancement of one's self-esteem. (3)
17. Hesitation about watching a popular TV show. (2)
19. What no one wants this coming spring and summer to be! (6)
20. Dull-colored animal is a good match with a numb lad (3, 4)
21. Military apparatus for use on land, in the air, or at sea sounds like the name of a syndrome. (6)
23. Willow has a rosier complexion than Alice. (5)
25. The first sign of spring? (5)
26. Wise men losing their heads down through these. (4).





Women Crossing Boundaries

International Women's Week • March 7 - 11, 2005

MONDAY, MARCH 7

10:00-11:15

Women's Imprisonment
Presentation by Gail Levesque,
a nurse at Joliette Prison for
Women
Auditorium A103

2:30 – 3:45

*Women Crossing Boundaries:
Peace Building in the
Middle East*
Lea Roback Memorial Lecture:
Three visiting Fellows from
Palestine, Israel, Jordan in the
McGill Middle East Program in
Civil Society & Peace Building
Auditorium A103

4:00

Movie:
Girlfight
Room A313



TUESDAY, MARCH 8

8:00

Women's Champagne
Breakfast
Theatre Room B323

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 9

12:00 – 1:30 UB

Celebrate *International Women's
Week* with Musical Collective
Kalmunity
Hip-Hop/Fusion,
Reggae roots inspired music
Auditorium A103

1:30 – 2:45

*Men Against Sexism Panel:
Exploring
Masculinity*
Moderator:
Fran Davis
Marc



Belanger, Teacher, Sociology
Eric Lamoureux, Teacher, History
Grant Robinson, Vanier Student
Paul Vadan, Vanier Student
Auditorium A103

3:30

Movie: Monsoon Wedding
Sponsored by the VCSA
Auditorium A103

THURSDAY, MARCH 10

10:00 - 11:15

Gender in Advertising
Presentation by
James Pettit, Marianopolis
Teacher, and
Maureen Jones, Vanier Teacher
Auditorium A103

11:30-1:30

Health Resources & Counselling
Present:
A Focus on Women's Health.
Counsellors, Nurses and
Nutritionist will be present
Carrefour

11:30 – 12:45

Panel on
Women's Sexual Diversity
by The Open Door Network
Auditorium A103

4:00

Movie: Monsoon Wedding
Sponsored by the VCSA
Auditorium A103

FRIDAY, MARCH 11

12:00 – 1:15

Welcoming back...
The Raging Grannies
Amphitheatre B223