

# VCTA NEWSLETTER

## Vanier College Teachers' Association

Vol. 27, No. 2

January 2010

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## February is Black History Month

Danielle Altidor



Dr. Carter G. Woodson  
The Father of Black History Month

To the black men and women of my generation, Black History Month represents a heritage to preserve. Most of all, we have a duty to safeguard the essence of the event according to the vision of Dr. Carter G. Woodson, the father of Black History Month. This vision is captured by the great scholar, Aimé Césaire, who states: *Negritude calls upon us to remember our past and honour our roots.* This is the true meaning of Black History Month.

Dr. Carter G. Woodson first started this event in the school system in 1926 to fight the negative and degrading portrayals of Blacks in the school curriculum—a portrayal which prevented them from being successful. Not only did he aim to add Blacks into history, he also aimed to rewrite what had been written about them.

This milestone allows today's black youth to build their identity on the foundation laid by their ancestors. Black History Month reminds them there were black men and women who stood tall despite the oppression and injustice they faced. Indeed recalling their legacy provides pride, hope and courage.

Rosa Parks kept her bus seat in 1955; Martin Luther King marched in 1963; Barack Obama ran for the highest office in America in 2008—all so that our children can fly: YES WE CAN !  
(continued on pg. 4)

*Danielle Altidor teaches in the French Department.*

# !!! Announcements !!!

## A Change in the VCTA Executive:

Joël Casséus has been named by the VCTA Executive to replace Shirley Pettifer as VCTA Vice-President (Internal/Information). Shirley had to step down for personal and family reasons. The decision to appoint Joël was unanimously supported by Association Council members at their meeting of Dec. 3, 2009.

## The Future of the VCTA Newsletter/ VCTA Internal Communications:

At the Association Council meeting of Dec. 3, 2009, members began a discussion about the future of the **VCTA Newsletter**. The Editor reported that many copies of the last issue appeared to go directly into the recycle bin beside the mail boxes. News Bulletins may be a more needed form of communication during this year of negotiations for a new collective agreement. Members also discussed alternative ways of delivering the **Newsletter**, possibly solely in electronic format. Maggie Kathwaroon and Nick Rudi volunteered to explore VCTA communications issues, including the **Newsletter** and the VCTA web page and to report back to Association Council. The discussion will continue.

As always, your input is welcome. Send your comments to [vcta@vaniercollege.qc.ca](mailto:vcta@vaniercollege.qc.ca)

## Babysitting for General Assemblies

Did you know that to facilitate you attending General Assemblies, the VCTA hires an experienced and reliable babysitter for teachers with small children? This babysitter comes equipped with activities to interest and occupy your children if you bring them to Vanier with you.

Alternately, if bringing your children to Vanier is not feasible, the VCTA will reimburse your home babysitting costs.

**Yes, your attendance at General Assemblies  
is that important!**

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**Shirley Pettifer** is the out-going Editor of this issue.

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Technical Assistance by **Jason Leonard**.

### Coming Soon:

**VCTA  
General Assembly  
in Early February**

**VCTA Office: C101  
Telephone Extensions:  
7053 / 7054**

### VCTA Executive H-2010

President: Fred Andrews  
Vice-President/External: Janice Paquette  
Vice-President/Info: Joël Casséus  
Secretary/Treasurer: Kim Matthews  
VCTA Secretary: Susan Panneton

**Executive Office Hours  
H-2010: TBA**

### Secretary's hours

Susan Panneton Ext. 7411  
Mon.-Thurs. 8:30 am – 4:30 pm  
Fri. 8:30 am – 3:30 pm  
Closed for Lunch from 12 – 1 pm

### To Call VCTA Executive Members

Fred: 7414

Janice: 7413

Kim: 7415

Joël : 7416

**The VCTA Website is online: [www.thevcta.qc.ca](http://www.thevcta.qc.ca)**

# Working for a New Collective Agreement: The VCTA Mobilization Committee

The VCTA Mobilization Committee has met a couple of times to brainstorm ideas for mobilizing our members in the current round of negotiations for a new Collective Agreement. Participants include Joël Casséus, (Sociology), Catherine Greffard (French), Geeta Johal (Mathematics), Alanna Stalker Horner (Communications) and Janice Paquette and Shirley Pettifer from the VCTA Executive. The latter three are not permanent members of the Committee, but will sit in when they can.

Some of the brainstorm ideas include:

- AVCTA banner with the logo Nego 2010: Defend Education— Support your local union; (This idea was enthusiastically supported and Alanna agreed to get her paints to work.)
- A poster contest for students, with prizes and possibly a display of posters in the Carrefour;
- Environmentally friendly shopping bags with negotiation demands figuring prominently—which could possibly provoke discussion in public places wherever and whenever they are used;
- T-Shirts with a negotiation logo for “T-Shirt Day,” a possibility for next semester;
- Merch—an apple stress ball with an appropriate slogan such as “A Reasonable Workload!” for teachers to keep on their desks.
- Fneeq scarves - Better teaching conditions: Everybody wins!

All VCTA member are invited to participate. Join the Committee or just come to a meeting or two. If you can't attend but have some ideas to share, contact Joël Casséus at Ext. 7416 or by email at [casseusj@vaniercollege.qc.ca](mailto:casseusj@vaniercollege.qc.ca). Joël can also tell you when the Mobilization Committee will meet next.



Left to Right: Joël Casséus, Catherine Greffard, Geeta Johal, Janice Paquette, Alanna Stalker Horner.

## Inter-Syndical Action:

Professional, Support Staff and Teacher representatives deliver our respective collective agreement demands to the Vanier College Administration on Oct. 30, 2009. Public Sector unions across the province did the same at their work places to mark the official deposit of our demands with the Employer.



Photo by John Popovitch

Continued from cover page.

## I have a dream...

And so even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream.

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal."

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia, the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.

I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. I have a dream today!

I have a dream that one day, down in Alabama, with its vicious racists, with its governor having his lips dripping with the words of "interposition" and "nullification" -- one day right there in Alabama little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers.

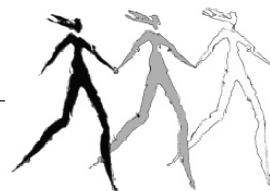
I have a dream today!

I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, and every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight; "and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together."

(Extrait du discours prononcé par Martin Luther King le 28 Août, 1963)

Submitted by **Danielle Altidor** French Department

# Take a Look at Us Now - International Women's Week 2010: March 8-12



## Maureen Jones

International Women's Day is an opportunity to look at the gains and accomplishments of women as well as to explore the challenges that face us today. This opportunity is summed up in the 2010 theme for International Women's Week at Vanier College—Take a Look at Us Now. From March 8-12, the activities and concerns of women will be explored by a variety of panels, speakers, entertainers and films.

New offerings for 2010 will include:

- A talk by Vivian Barbot—member of the Bloc Québécois, former president of the FFO, teacher and activist;
- A panel on Women and Hair—religious and secular women discuss meanings of and common misunderstandings about their locks;
- Mentoring Women in Technology and the Arts—Rae Staseson, Chair of the Communications Dept at Concordia University;
- Youth Mobilization and the World March for Women in 2010—Eve-Marie Lacasse;
- The Activism of the Women of Bhopal after the Carbide Gas Leak—Melanie Hadida;
- The Dieting Industry and the Sexualization of Girls—Carlye Watson and Lilia Goldfarb;
- Gender and Education in Africa—International Education.

Old favorites from past years will return:

- The Native Women's Panel;
  - Feminism in the Eyes of Students—a popular panel organized by the Vanier Social Justice Committee in which female and male Vanier students explore the meaning of feminism for their generation;
  - A panel on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity—sponsored by the Open Door Network;
  - Dance Workshops that explore the importance of embodiment and strength (particularly in often male-dominated dance fields like hop hop);
  - Three powerful and beloved voices of the Raging Grannies.
- As always, there will be a variety of exciting and challenging films and documentaries that address local and global issues relating to women and gender.

I look forward to celebrating International Women's Week at Vanier College with you!

Please note: These events/speakers may be subject to change. The final and complete schedule for IWW will be posted on the Vanier website shortly.

**Maureen Jones** is the Coordinator of Women's Studies. She also teaches Humanities.

# The Paperless Office, The Use of the Dictionary and our Students

Lyne Marie Larocque



This article is a reflection on teaching and on what I have heard through the grapevine. I am old enough to remember when, in the 1970s, there was talk about how society was changing and how we were heading toward a society of recreation—where most people would work only three or four days a week. It was more than a simple trend: universities and colleges started developing

departments of recreation and establishing programs to entertain people and keep them active during the short week and the anticipated early retirements. After all, the baby boomers would have so much time on their hands.

Of course, this crystal ball picture never did become true. The economic system changed, there were different world crises and we ended up working longer and longer hours.

As early as 1975, but mostly in the 1980s and 1990s, it was predicted that we would live in the paperless office. With the rising popularity of the Internet, it seemed so probable. Even the Macintosh computer company started creating computers without external disk drives, a testimony to the idea that most visionaries had at the time.

Of course, since the 1980s and 1990s, the Internet did change the way our offices and our work places function. But the paperless office has remained a myth. And diskettes were replaced by the USB drives that most people now carry around with them. So much for the notion of progress: the technology has been altered, but the way our society functions has remained largely the same. Except that now, we usually get both the paper version of the memo and the email version—which make our work spaces more cluttered, not less.

Since the beginning of the century, in the 2000s, people have continued to make predictions about reading and books. The different gadgets that allow people to read texts directly online or in the form of eBooks have continued to appear on the market, without much success. The latest trend, which is only available in the USA at the moment, is the Kindle reading device. I have met many a business man on flights during my travels who predict the end of the book. Yet, as of today these predictions have not become a reality. More than this, I still see people reading books on the bus, the metro and at airports. Personally, I cannot resist buying a paperback at an airport. Even if I have a couple of books in my carry-on, the urge is strong: I am addicted to buying that paperback.

Where am I going with this? Well, like most teachers, I question myself about the way students read. As I teach study skills, I insist very much on the idea of reading with a pencil,

an eraser and a ruler. You cannot annotate a computer screen and active reading means that the body—via the hand—has to be as involved as the brain. The eyes are not sufficient to fully understand a text.

I put my texts into a course pack rather than submit them to students in digital form. I want students to have a better understanding of reading on paper. Yet, some colleagues keep telling me that this is a waste of time; that our students belong to a different generation; that paper is on the way out and that the Internet is really defining our students' generation. I remain sceptical.

First of all, teachers may perceive the students as computer savvy, but really, they are not. A large proportion of our students do not even know how to format a basic document. They are clueless as to how to use the header to paginate a paper or how to use styles to format their document in an adequate fashion. Forget about changing the margins!

I am not blaming them. One needs either a good teacher that will show these students how to do it, or they really need to have the initiative to figure it out on their own. I belong to the first group. I refuse to let the machine dictate my moves. But that is just me. I see many colleagues who barely know how to type a document and do not feel the need to go any further in the exploration of their computer skills.

I am not judging anyone here—only making observations. But I am questioning the notion that this generation, as a consequence of trends in our society, reads differently.

I did an experiment this semester. In my College Skills course, I have “forced” students to come to class prepared, with a binder containing loose leaf paper and a pencil case containing a detailed list of the basics writing tools (including a packet of tissues—I have had enough of sniffing in class!).

But most of all, I asked them to come to class with a pocket dictionary. If they could afford it and wanted to, they could use an electronic dictionary. But they were not allowed to use their cell phone or internet device. With these directives came the obligation to set up their study/work place. Be prepared is the motto: set up your binder, put your dictionary and pencil case in front of you and review your notes before the class begins.

To my amazement, I did not have to remind them to use the dictionary. As we were reading texts, students would just spontaneously open it, and look up words. Let me remind you that I am talking here about Explorations II students, a group that is rather difficult to motivate. But it seemed that the simple fact that the dictionary was in front of them was reason enough to use it. It was such a success that I am seriously thinking of repeating the experience in all my courses.

My conclusion: working and studying is like going to a restaurant. Go to a local eatery that sets up the table with basic cutlery and you will have a very casual meal. Go to a five-star restaurant with an expanded table setting and you will behave in a different manner.

The same can be said for college studies. Let the students decide how they set up their study/work place and they will be lazy about it—they will come to class without paper and writing instruments. Push them to create a space that encour-

ages studying and you will see their behaviour change. It has nothing to do with the Internet and the students' generation. It has nothing to do with technology. It has more to do with our attitudes about teaching. Maybe being a bit old-fashioned in the classroom is not so bad after all.

**Lyne Marie Larocque** teaches *Sociology and Methodology in the Social Science Program and College Skills in the Explorations Program*. She is currently on H1N1 pregnancy leave and is expecting *Beatrice* in early February.

## On Department Coordinators

A department or program coordinator:

- Coordinates the activities of the department or program;
- Assures that departmental decisions (or those of programs) are carried out and that its recommendations are sent to the appropriate bodies;
- Is not the boss of her/his colleagues and cannot, under any circumstance, put pressure on colleagues as an authority figure;
- Cannot take positions in the name of the department without first consulting in a department meeting.

In brief, a coordinator is a peer who is elected by department members to represent them and to coordinate decisions taken by them.

*\* Written by Patrice Roy; excerpted and translated from La Réplique (Cegep Lionel Groulx teachers' newsletter), Sept, 1, 2009, p. 4.*

Note to members: See also, Collective Agreement 2005-2010 (English Version), p. 21-25, Articles 4-1.00 to 4-1.17.

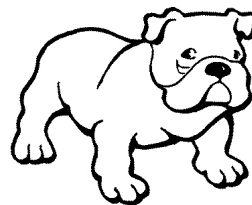
### Book Corner:

## What the best college teachers do

By Ken Bain

"Reading this book is a joy. Ken Bain has conducted years of careful research on a variety of campuses and the result is an inspirational summary of what teachers do that truly makes a difference in students' lives, and what any teacher can do to improve. As a teacher myself, I found I couldn't put this book down." Richard Light, author of *Making the Most of College: Students Speak Their Minds*.

2004, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press



## If a dog was the teacher, you would learn things like:

- Delight in the simple joy of a long walk.
- Avoid biting when a simple growl will do.
- Be loyal.
- Take naps.
- Never pretend to be something you're not.
- If what you want lies buried, dig until you find it.
- When someone is having a bad day, be silent, sit close by, and nuzzle them gently.

From: <http://www.wow4u.com/dog-teacher/index.html>

# Integrating M[I]crosof[T] into Your Teaching and Learning

Kevin Bushell



There have been a lot of changes in Information Technology (IT) at Vanier recently, most notably the “upgrade” of email services. But the biggest change has been the change of attitude from the top following the retirement of Cheryl Holmes. Gone are the days of consultation, consideration, and cooperation—the three C’s of good labour relations.

The decision to switch to a Microsoft Exchange server and force us all to use Outlook Web Access (OWA) is a case in point. There certainly wasn’t any consultation with the bulk of those who will be using the new server, namely faculty and staff, not unless you consider an announcement at Joints or completing a survey “consultation.” For most teachers, the horror of what “upgrade” means became known a week before classes began when our old and faithful favourite email clients no longer connected to the Vanier server. Not only were we left scrambling to learn a new program, but in many respects arguably an inferior one, with a clunky, web-based interface.

Want to send an email to multiple recipients? Addressing is a slow, tedious, non-intuitive process involving the address book, contact lists, groups, global lists, rooms, search boxes, checkmark boxes, and the eventual Done button. Want to send an attachment? No drag and drop here; instead, click the Attachments icon to bring up a separate window in which you have to click no less than three different buttons (Choose File, Attach, then Done) to attach your file. Then wait. Viewing a message from someone and want to send a new message to someone else? You won’t find a New Message option in that window. Rather, you have to navigate back to your Inbox first before you’ll be allowed to start a new message. And let’s not talk about address books. Some of us lost address books containing hundreds of contacts accumulated over many years.

But Macintosh users face a further problem. To receive all the features of Outlook Web Access, you have to use Internet Explorer. This is the same kind of practice that got Microsoft into trouble years ago with the Competition Bureau in The States, when Microsoft tied IE into its operating system, making it the browser “of choice” for Windows users. Now it’s doing it again with OWA. The only problem is IE was discontinued for the Mac in 2004, five years ago. Again, a little consultation would have pointed

this out to the powers that be. The solution suggested by IT? You guessed it: buy Microsoft Office 2008 and use Entourage.

The idea that one size will fit all is something not new to IT management. Last year we were told that Vanier would no longer support WordPerfect and we’d all have to use Microsoft Word. Willing to buy it yourself? Don’t bother: WordPerfect won’t even load on your office computer, even if you or your department were willing to pay. People are fiercely loyal to their word-processor of choice, and for good reason. They are large, complex applications that require years of use to master. And teachers who do a lot of writing, like English teachers, practically live in their word processors, so much so that learning a different program is worse than learning the first time—you have to unlearn what is now hard-wired into your brain. Like rewiring an old house, it’s double the work than building from scratch. And for many people, WordPerfect simply meets their needs better than Microsoft Word.

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Is there a coherent long-term vision for IT at Vanier, or are they making it up year-to-year as they go along?

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So the English Department asked IT several times to reconsider this decision. I think we even passed a motion asking that WordPerfect be reinstated from the Black List. But each time we were given an unequivocal No. So the writing was on the wall, so to speak, last year about a change in relations between IT and the Vanier community. Like Microsoft Word, IT believes it knows what you want and automatically makes the changes for you, whether you like them or not. When Microsoft lost its court case with the Competition Bureau, Bill Gates just thumbed his nose in the direction of the US Government and went on doing exactly what he was doing before. Now it seems IT management are looking upon the expressed needs of Vanier teachers with similar derision.

One has to wonder where we are headed, and if I’m reading between the lines of recent emails correctly, it’s in the direction of more control and less choice. Now IT will be visiting your office to install and configure something that will enable them to monitor your computing from a remote location. Better think twice the next time you log in to Facebook at the office (despite the fact that many people use Facebook for professional as well as personal networking.) Think twice before forwarding a joke to your colleagues; it may be seen as chain mail. Want to play a little Solitaire while you eat your lunch at your desk? Not “Ac-

ceptable Use” of IT resources, according to the policy we’ve all just been reminded of and asked to read. Will Big Brother be reading my email as well as fixing it from some remote location? This is not paranoia; we already know that some employers are monitoring their employees’ computing during company time. In this case, because they can, probably means they will. The fact is that even the ability to monitor is an invasion of our privacy.

The irony of all this is that teachers are being pressured more today than ever to “integrate IT into teaching and learning”—the mantra of education today—as if IT is the magic bullet that is going to make my students write coherent sentences. These days a Ped Day schedule is not complete without a host of How To workshops on the latest software flavours pushed down our throats. Yet while we are asked to use more IT, we are being given less choice of how. This control literally extends into my classroom as well as my office; having taken the time to learn and incorporate new IT such as Moodle into my pedagogy, I find out that the decision has been made, again without consultation or warning, that Moodle is being phased out at Vanier. Is there a coherent long-term vision for IT at Vanier, or are they making it up year-to-year as they go along?

The vision this year seems to be corporate, that is, extending as far as the Boardroom. Microsoft Exchange is a popular choice for many companies in the corporate world. The change in attitude at IT reflects a new corporate mentality and managerial practice, but it’s not right for education, and certainly not at Vanier, which has always prided itself on its sense of community, consultation, and mutual respect. Perhaps the most telling sign of this change in relations is that the IT Committee, a committee with wide representation from all areas of the college, has not met since the departure of Cheryl Holmes. Apparently there hasn’t been the need.

At the very least, the decision to push Microsoft products so heavily upon us is simply counterproductive, as teachers spend valuable prep time on learning to use second-rate software instead of preparing classes and helping our students. The next time I’m asked to “integrate IT into [my] teaching and learning,” I know what my answer will be: an unequivocal No.

**Kevin Bushell** has been teaching in the English Department since 1996. He is a former member of the VCTA Executive and was Assistant Coordinator of English in 2004/2005 and Coordinator 2005 - 2007. Since returning to full-time teaching, he has completed a manuscript of poetry examining early aeronautics, portions of which have been published in *The Fiddlehead*, *The Antigonish Review*, and *Exile Quarterly*.

## Schoolsville

Billy Collins

Glancing over my shoulder at the past,  
I realize the number of students I have taught  
is enough to populate a small town.

I can see it nestled in a paper landscape,  
chalk dust flurrying down in winter,  
nights dark as a blackboard.

The population ages but never graduates.  
On hot afternoons they sweat the final in the park  
and when it’s cold they shiver around stoves  
reading disorganized essays out loud.  
A bell rings on the hour and everybody zigzags  
into the streets with their books.

I forgot all their last names first and their  
first names last in alphabetical order.  
But the boy who always had his hand up  
is an alderman and owns the haberdashery.  
The girl who signed her papers in lipstick  
leans against the drugstore, smoking,  
brushing her hair like a machine.

Their grades are sewn into their clothes  
like references to Hawthorne.  
The A’s stroll along with other A’s.  
The D’s honk whenever they pass another D.

All the creative-writing students recline  
on the courthouse lawn and play the lute.  
Wherever they go, they form a big circle.

Needless to say, I am the mayor.  
I live in the white colonial at Maple and Main.  
I rarely leave the house. The car deflates  
in the driveway. Vines twirl around the porch swing.

Once in a while a student knocks on the door  
with a term paper fifteen years late  
or a question about Yeats or double-spacing.  
And sometimes one will appear in a windowpane  
to watch me lecturing the wallpaper,  
quizzing the chandelier, reprimanding the air.

*Billy Collins, from Sailing Alone Around the Room*

*Billy Collins is the author of six collections of poetry, including Sailing Around the Room; Questions About Angels; The Art of Drowning; and Picnic, Lightning, and is editor of Poetry 180: A Turning Back to Poetry. He is a Distinguished Professor of English at Lehman College of the City University of New York. He was appointed Poet Laureate of the United States for 2001-2003.*

**Thank you to Kevin Bushell, English Department, for this submission.**



# Two Minutes for Roughing, but What About Misconduct?

Mariopi Spanos



In hockey, when a player commits an infraction, he is assessed a penalty. If the infraction is minor, it garners a minor penalty; if the infraction is major, it receives a major penalty. If the infraction crosses the line of what is acceptable, a tape is sent to the head of the league's Hockey Operations, and he then determines what to do with the player at that point, whether it's a fine, a suspension, or a ban. The process seems quite logical and efficient.

It has come to the attention of many teachers here at Vanier, including myself, that our process for dealing with student misconduct is falling apart. We do not have a central office to deal with the serious issues that teachers face day in and day out. We do not have a proper team of experts to support us with the students who have very serious learning disabilities, ranging from dyslexia to autism spectrum disorders. We do not have a central office to deal with the students who are suffering from severe psycho-social problems/disorders. In an institution that has 6500 students, we do not even have an Ombudsman. How can this be?

What we do have is many ad hoc processes and some overburdened individuals in various branches of the college (like TLC—The Learning Centre—and Student Services) that may or may not be able to help teachers deal with student misconduct. This is neither sufficient nor is it acceptable. The process always begins with the individual teacher dealing with the situation, as it should. However, there are cases where a well-trained and experienced teacher will have to deal with students who continually disrupt the class in spite of the teacher's repeated efforts to handle the situation informally with the students. In such instances, administrative intervention is crucial in order to re-establish a positive and constructive classroom environment for the rest of the students.

In addition to this, some situations can become very volatile, or the student is dealing with a crisis with which the teacher is not qualified to deal. There have been instances of teachers having to negotiate with students who have serious psychological conditions like paranoid schizophrenia, obsessive-compulsive disorder, or Asperger's syndrome just to name a few. Teachers do their best to deal with these situations, but realistically, they are beyond, in most cases, any given teacher's area of expertise.

There have been attempts, in recent years, by Student Services, to deal with difficult or out of control situations involving student misconduct. These attempts and efforts have led to some continuity and support, which really helps teachers. But, it would appear that this support is no longer available to

teachers. It has been reported by a number of different teachers from different faculties that they have been turned away by SS when requesting assistance this semester. If this is true, it is most alarming.

We are currently being directed to refer to a Student Misconduct Policy from 1996, which was supposed to be revised in 2000, and which states that issues of misconduct (after the individual teacher has attempted to deal with the student) first be directed to the department coordinator. This is problematic since department coordinators are overburdened with departmental responsibilities and they too are teachers. At the end of the day, they do not have the administrative authority to intervene and make final decisions in such cases.

The next step in this policy directs teachers to their faculty deans. While this may be a short-term or situation-specific solution, it is not good enough because faculty deans, like department coordinators, are extremely busy; they too come and go, and thus, continuity is lost. And, in many cases, deans are at just as much of a loss as their teachers are about how to deal with certain types of misconduct.

As someone who has had to deal with some exceptional situations regarding student behaviour and misconduct, both with and without any kind of support in my time here at Vanier, I am extremely concerned about the current lack of a support system or an organised set of channels through which to work. We can report harassment (to Marilyn More, the Human Rights Officer who also works in Academic Advising—yet another overburdened individual), but what happens to the student afterward? We do not have any clear protocol and there never seems to be any real follow-up. There exist a few documents/policies that deal with student misconduct, but they often conflict with each other in terms of protocol, not to mention they are out-dated.

It is a fact that SS, as recently as last semester, was working on revising the 1996 Student Misconduct Policy, but at the moment, the revisions have been reported as being lost and there is no assurance/guarantee that the policy will be revised. Lost?! And so, the various levels of administration have been directing teachers to consult this outdated misconduct policy from 1996. Again, in an institution of Vanier's calibre and size, how can this be?

Things must change. A clear policy regarding misconduct must be drafted. A permanent team of experts, comprised of professionals qualified to deal with learning disabilities and psycho-social disorders, must be formed. There must be a separate, permanent office that deals solely with matters involving misconduct and appropriate support for both the students and the teachers. What we have now is not enough. Our teachers

need to know that they have support when they need it. We should never be made to feel that we have nowhere to go and that the onus is only on us.

In the mean time, we will make sure to don our helmets and elbow pads and hope we don't get body checked too hard in the hallways or the classroom. After all, it seems that a hard hit

is usually perceived as being "just part of the game."

**Mariopi Spanos** teaches in the English Department. A past Curriculum Coordinator, she is currently a mentor in her Department's mentoring system where she also serves on the Curriculum Committee and the Hiring Committee. Despite the busy schedule, she still manages to make some time to watch her beloved Habs whenever she can!

### Editor's Note:

## REGARDING SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS AND WORKLOAD

Concerns regarding the integration of special needs students have made their way into our demands for a new collective agreement. This excerpt is from the Fneeq CSN 2010 Negotiations: Proposed Sectoral Demands which were deposited with the Government on Oct. 30, 2009.

"With regard to preparation and supporting students, the integration of a growing number of students with special needs (physical, psychological and learning disabilities, etc.) adds pressure to the workload of those teachers who are required to teach them. The means and the resources must be provided to take this overload into account (1.12).

1.12 Find a solution to the problems posed by special needs students (e.g. those with physical or psychological disabilities."



# Where did the FAC unions go in their affiliation votes?

Fneeq now has 17,000 cegep teachers—84 % of cegep teachers in 46 local unions.

In their affiliation votes, 82% of the former FAC local unions—11 of the 17—went to Fneeq, Fédération nationale des enseignantes et enseignants du Québec, which is affiliated with the CSN, Confédération des syndicats nationaux, a union central which represents many workers in education, health and social services and many workers in the private sector.

Former FAC unions that chose to affiliate with Fneeq are the following:

- Abitibi-Temiscamingue (entente de service)
- André-Laurendeau
- Baie des Chaleurs
- Charlevoix (last year)
- Dawson (last year)
- Heritage
- Jonquière
- Lionel Groulx (earlier)
- Rosemont
- Valleyfield (earlier)
- Vanier

Six of the 17 former FAC local unions went to FEC, Fédération des enseignantes et enseignants de Cégep, which is affiliated with the CSQ, Centrale des syndicats du Québec, a union central which represents workers in education, health, social services and home daycare. The VCPA (professionals) and the AVCSP (support staff) at Vanier College are affiliated with the CSQ.

Former FAC unions who chose to affiliate with FEC are the following:

- Gaspésie
- Institut maritime du Québec
- Les Îles de la Madeleine
- Rimouski
- Rivière-du-Loup
- Sorel-Tracey

Thanks to **Janice Paquette**, VCTA Vice-President External, for compiling this list.

# UNION 101: The Association Council

By Charles F. Levine

On a day-to-day basis, the VCTA Executive runs the union. The Association Council is rather like a board of directors setting policy between General Assemblies. It is the place where members representing all areas of the faculty meet to advise the VCTA Executive, talk about issues, make decisions and recommend policies to the General Assembly.

Widespread membership on the Association Council guarantees that all areas of the faculty will have a voice in matters concerning the life of the union: two teachers from each of the Faculties, two at-large representatives and two members appointed by the VCTA.

The Association Council meets at least once a month (on Thursday afternoon) to consider all the matters that have arisen in the previous weeks and to hammer out the agenda of the next General Assembly.



Normally, when the Council recommends something to the General Assembly unanimously, the Assembly passes that item. This is largely because the representative nature of the Council fairly well assures that all sides of any argument will have been heard. Since the Council is so much smaller than the General Assembly, debates can often be

clarified more readily and decisions arrived at in a timely manner.

For anyone who would like to dip a toe into the work of the VCTA, the Association Council would be an excellent place to start. (Meeting times are, of course, blocked out on schedules for elected members.)

*This is the first of a "Union 101" series that appeared in Vol. 22 of the VCTA Newsletter. At the time, the author, Charles F. Levine, described himself as "a dinosaur who spent many years on the CRT, the VCTA Executive, and the Executive of FAC..." He also taught Political Science. Charles, now retired, has recently become a very proud grandfather.*



**Association Council Members**

Front Row, L. to R.: Kim Matthews, Catherine Greffard, Judy Ingerman, Geeta Johal, Joël Casséus, Stephanie Felkai  
Back Row, L. to R.: Karl Laroche, Ricardo Herrera, Fred Andrews, Marc Belanger, Mark Prentice, Joe Twardowski  
Members Missing from Photo: Maggie Kathwaroon, Diane Nyisztor, Janice Paquette

# TURNITIN.COM:

## What is it, why use it, and what are the common concerns about the system?

Ron Curtis, English Department, and  
Marleigh Greaney, IT Pedagogical Advisor



Many faculty, staff and students at Vanier are aware that the College has acquired a license for the Turnitin.com system. This license will continue for faculty use through the 2010-11 academic year.

Turnitin is likely the most widely used online plagiarism detection service currently available to academic institutions.

### 1. What is Turnitin.com and how does it work?

Turnitin is an online plagiarism detection service which is widely used in high school, college and university settings to both deter and detect student plagiarism. It is designed particularly to detect plagiarism which comes from web based sources and databases, as well as from student papers previously submitted to the system.

Turnitin works by having students or instructors submit written assignments electronically to its service. Each submission is compared with billions of content pages located on the Internet and with Turnitin's specially encoded databases of previously submitted papers.

The results of each submission are compiled into an originality report which contains a similarity index. The instructor then reviews and analyzes the originality report to determine if any similarities between the student's paper and the Turnitin databases and Internet sources are legitimate or plagiarized.

### 2. The benefits of using Turnitin:

The first and most obvious benefit of using the Turnitin system is that it helps protect the work of honest students who are submitting their own original written assignments. Thus, the majority of students who are not cheating are protected from having their work, time and effort undermined by the small number of students attempting to cheat by submitting plagiarized written assignments.

For example, a student who spends 10 hours researching and writing a paper and who receives a grade of 85% on that paper is, in fact, cheated out of those hours of hard work, and the true value of that grade, if another student has plagiarized his or her research paper from an online source in fifteen minutes and then also receives a grade of 85% when the plagiarism remains undetected.

Thus, perhaps the most significant benefit of the Turnitin system is that it helps deter plagiarism and promotes academic

integrity and honesty. Any student doing his or her own work should feel reassured in knowing that other students are not easily able to cheat and get away with it.

Turnitin's plagiarism detection system also can and should be used as a pedagogical tool to assist students in understanding how not to plagiarize. This is an equally significant benefit to the use of this service. The vast majority of incoming Vanier students need to learn the basics of using resource information correctly in their own assignments. The complexities of accurate and correct academic citation and documentation of sources, as well as how to paraphrase, summarize, and quote from source texts, are difficult for many students to comprehend. The demands for correct student documentation of sources at Vanier are also often very different from the expectations students have dealt with in high school.

By using the Turnitin system, teachers can help students better understand what is considered plagiarized work at the college level and how correct quotation and citation of source language and information is needed to avoid plagiarism. This also makes it very clear to students that if they use language, concepts or information from resource texts without correct documentation, then they may be perceived as attempting to plagiarize.

The system can be set up so that students can see their individual originality reports if the instructor chooses to allow this option. We strongly recommend that any teacher using Turnitin include at least one practice short assignment which permits students to submit their written work to Turnitin in order to see how the system evaluates the similarities in their assignment. This should be done before a major assignment is given which will be submitted to Turnitin.

Thus, Turnitin can be a major boon to Vanier teachers and students in the often very difficult task of teaching correct use of sources and documentation.

It is also important to note that no teacher is required to use Turnitin and it is up to the individual teacher to determine which assignments will be submitted to the system. The system also provides numerous options for each assignment, including the option not to have the submissions kept in the Turnitin repository.

Finally, Turnitin can help significantly reduce the amount of time and effort teachers need to put into finding plagiarized assignments. Many teachers report spending hours searching the Internet for suspected sources of plagiarized assignments. While no online detection system can ever be 100% perfect, users report that the originality reporting service makes dealing with correcting and verifying student written assignments a far less onerous task.

### 3. Problems and concerns regarding the Turnitin service:

The most frequently cited concerns regarding use of Turnitin revolve around student copyright and privacy. Due to a highly publicized case at McGill in 2004 and other challenges, iParadigms, LLC, the company that owns and operates Turnitin, has taken extensive measures to ensure that the system does not contravene copyright regulations and protects student privacy (see the links below for the documents Turnitin Canadian Legal Document and Copyright and Privacy datasheet).

It is particularly important to note that it is not the Turnitin system but the instructor who determines if plagiarism has taken place and what action to take in cases of suspected plagiarism. The system simply provides information in a speedy and efficient manner to assist the teacher.

Another issue is that of the repository of student papers which Turnitin uses to compare new submissions to previously submitted papers.

First, it is important to understand that Turnitin does not in fact hold true copies of the original papers but rather digitally converted fingerprints of papers which are created by use of an algorithm. These are not texts which can be read by human beings but are used solely by the system as part of the similarity checking process.

Second, when a similarity is found with a paper in the repository, the instructor does not see the paper but rather is told that a certain percentage of similarity was detected with a paper at another institution. Only the original paper's code number is provided and it is up to the teacher to decide if contacting the originating institution and teacher is required to verify that plagiarism has in fact occurred. This contact would only be warranted if a significant amount of similarity was detected.

The repository, however, is also a particular strength of the Turnitin system which sets it apart from other online detection services. It enables similarity verification with not only outside institutions, but also with submissions from current and previous sections of courses being taught by the teacher and other teachers at Vanier also using the system.

Finally, no online plagiarism detection system will catch all types of plagiarism. A student who has a paper written for them by another person or a paid service will not have this assignment detected as plagiarized (unless of course the person writing the paper for the student plagiarizes from the Internet). Also, it is possible that an adept student may be able to paraphrase and alter the language of an Internet source or other student paper sufficiently that the system does not detect the source.

However, most cases of plagiarism today tend to be cut and paste from web sites or downloaded off of cheat sites on the Internet, often with little change of language from the original, which is exactly the type of plagiarism that the Turnitin will most often quickly and effectively detect.

Thus, we believe that Vanier students and teachers will benefit immensely from the appropriate and conscientious use of the Turnitin system.

## The Sixty-Percent Lament

(Sung to the tune of Ain't Misbehavin')

Eli Spiegelman

I don't come to class late  
I sit on my own  
I don't chat with classmates  
And I turn off my cell phone

Ain't misbehavin'  
I'm savin' my r-score

I do all my homework  
I don't cheat on tests  
I hand in my own work  
And my handwriting's the best

Ain't misbehavin'  
I'm savin' my r-score!

What do you bet  
I'll be your pet  
Though my mind's blunt  
I sit in front  
Your lectures are worth listening to

Just pa-a-ss me!

I answer your questions  
I laugh at your jokes  
I never miss sessions  
And I go for real quick smokes

Ain't misbehavin'  
I'm savin' my r-score!

*Aside from penning a occasional poem for fun, Eli Spiegelman teaches Economics at Vanier College.*

### LINKS FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

Turnitin.com Copyright and Privacy Document:  
[http://www.turnitin.com/static/pdf/datasheet\\_ip.pdf](http://www.turnitin.com/static/pdf/datasheet_ip.pdf)

Turnitin.com Canadian Legal Document:  
[http://www.turnitin.com/static/pdf/canadian\\_legal.pdf](http://www.turnitin.com/static/pdf/canadian_legal.pdf)

Turnitin.com Other Information:  
<http://www.turnitin.com/static/company.html>

University of Toronto Turnitin Information Pages:  
<http://www.utoronto.ca/ota/turnitin/>

University of British Columbia Turnitin Information Pages:  
<http://www.vpacademic.ubc.ca/integrity/turnitin/faculty.htm>

University of Western Ontario Turnitin Information Pages:  
<http://turnitin.uwo.ca/>

# Beyond Commemoration: Respecting the Dignity of all Humans

Jacky Vallée



November 20th is the annual Transgender Day of Remembrance (TDoR). People take time to remember innocent people who were killed because of transphobia, or the hatred and fear of trans\* people. Check out [www.transgenderdor.org](http://www.transgenderdor.org). You will probably be surprised by the number of trans people, or people read as trans, who are killed every year. Of course, if only one person died of transphobia or any other form of hatred every year, that would be too many.

What makes me take time to underline TDoR is the fact that trans people, living or dead, mostly remain invisible in the mainstream media. When they are discussed in the news, they are usually misgendered by reporters and journalists who use the incorrect pronoun or who write the person's chosen name in quotation marks, as though it were some role playing game. Another common way that reporters misgender a murdered trans person is when they refer to a trans woman\*\* as "really a man" because she has not had surgery to remove her penis. When misgendering happens in the reporting of a murder, it is like the ultimate dishonour – even in the person's death, their identity is invalidated.

This invisibility of trans people in the media is echoed in the realities of many living trans folk. Even though awareness of LGBTI (lesbian/ gay/bisexual/trans/intersex) issues as a whole is increasing, discussions often gloss over any actual discussion of trans issues, or the existence of bisexuals and intersexed folk for that matter. This silence is a both a result and cause of ignorance and fear. People are afraid to talk about it because it seems so complicated and freaky but it only seems complicated and freaky because of the silence. It is a vicious circle. The silence and fear surrounding trans realities removes the humanity of trans folk. It locates them as a kind of creepy "subgenre" that exists in dark alleys and seedy hotel rooms and is inappropriate for polite discussion. It does not acknowledge trans folk as full citizens. But they are. Trans people work in all fields and at all levels, from education to medicine to sex work to journalism.

The general lack of understanding stemming from, and causing, silence allows for the plethora of attacks on the dignity and humanity of trans folk. An attack happens every time someone feels entitled to asking about the state of a trans person's genitals; every time someone uses the incorrect pronoun and gets angry at the trans person for correcting them or laughs it off as though it were just a game; every time someone says that the world isn't ready for trans because they're too complicated, even though trans people have probably existed for as long as there has been a solid conception of gender among humans; every time a receptionist refuses to use the appropriate gendered title and name to call a trans person into an office; every time someone blames trans people for their own fear and lack of understanding. Most trans people are forced to wear emotional battle armour on a daily basis if they want to

survive these incessant attacks, especially since many of them come from well-intentioned but uninformed friends. Can you imagine how draining that is?

Among our students, we have trans people and we have future nurses, doctors, patients, employers, managers, colleagues, teachers or parents of trans people. Our students will become the people involved in propagating attacks to human dignity unless we contribute to changing their thinking. If you could save a child that will only exist in 20 years from a life of self-hatred by taking 2 minutes to sensitize that child's parent-to-be, would you? If you could save a trans person who will be in a car accident in 10 years from medical neglect by taking 2 minutes to sensitize the person that will be their paramedic in attendance, would you? If you could save a current student from an assault on their dignity and humanity by taking 2 minutes to signal the existence of the TDoR on November 20th, would you? Think about it – it only takes 2 minutes and you don't even have to be an expert on trans issues. You don't even have to like the fact that trans people exist to acknowledge that they are as deserving of dignity and respect as anyone else.

*\*Trans: Short hand for transgender, which is an umbrella term for all people who do not identify with the gender ascribed at their birth. This includes transsexuals, who physically modify their sexual characteristics through hormones or surgery to match their perceived gender.*

*\*\*A trans woman is a woman who was born in a male body. A trans man is a man who was born in a woman's body.*

**Jacky Vallée** teaches Anthropology at Vanier. He is currently on PD leave to work on his PhD. Summer of 2010-2011 will find him in Eeyou Istchee where he will do field research on the life experience of Aboriginal people who drink.

## Professional Development Funds

The current maximum amount available to individual teachers is \$800. Teachers with less than a full time workload receive proportional funds, i.e. a half workload = a maximum of \$400.

Tenured teachers may request to combine 2 years of PD funds to attend a conference within the first or second year of the request as long as they make a request to combine in advance. The PD funds are to be used exclusively to underwrite this one event; there will then be zero funding allowed for other activities during this two year period.

Information, application forms and expense report forms are available at the VCTA Office: C101 and on the VCTA Website: [www.thevcta.qc.ca](http://www.thevcta.qc.ca) All applications must be made at least 2 weeks in advance. No payment for retroactive applications can be made.

You do not need to submit an application for Employee Fitness activities or CPR renewal courses, but you do need a receipt to claim the expenses.

# Launching of Neil Caplan's Book: The Israel-Palestine Conflict: Contested Histories

Stephen Block



I recently had the honour of introducing Neil Caplan's new book, *The Israel-Palestine Conflict: Contested Histories*, (Wiley-Blackwell, 330 pp. \$41.95) at the book launch jointly sponsored by the College and the Humanities Department. I was particularly happy to do so. Here is the gist of my commentary:

First our congratulations to our colleague Neil whose work on the Palestine-Israel issue has been long in coming but worth the wait. Neil has undertaken an unenviable task: that of reviewing competing narratives and often less than useful analogies and polemics. Indeed this was a most difficult subject on a number of grounds, certainly not the least of which was the challenge it posed for the scholar.

In the end, Neil seems to have found the only way out for the scholar and that is scholarship. Though this may seem trivially true, it is not at all a trivial matter. What Neil's approach demonstrates, in every conceivable manner, is the importance of disinterested investigation. In fact quite uniquely, he expends a considerable amount of time and effort—in painstaking detail—demonstrating why such an approach is necessary and advantageous.

In an era where scholarship often intersects with, or is intercepted by ideology, or special pleading advocacy, Neil cautions against this and pleads for us to return to scholarship of the good old fashioned kind. In this he is a man of his word. And, speaking for myself—someone who teaches a course in propaganda—specifically on how to avoid it, as much as is humanly possible, through judicious inquiry and a disinterested frame of mind—this book is a great lesson and a grand effort in what otherwise appears to be a dying tradition.

In the aftermath of Neil's talk on the subject of his book, he fielded questions as to whether he was too dismissive of critical theory and as to the exact role of the historian. Neil's approach certainly will be attacked for being too centrist. And indeed it is a legitimate subject of debate—whether, for example, analyses from a “critical” theoretical point of view have unique validity. But I would argue for Neil's approach on these simple pragmatic grounds: in order for criticism to have efficacy, it must be perceived to be fair and ultimately non-ideological—certainly by outside disinterested observers, even if not always by parties to a conflict.

The efficacy of this approach has been borne out in light of two recent publications: the first, Judge Goldstone's report for the UN's Human Rights Council on the Gaza War, which criticized both Hamas and Israel, its most pointed criticism being of Israel's military action which the report said was often not justifiable and was disproportionate, even by the standards of war.

Both Hamas and Israel were unhappy with the judge's findings, each party complaining the criticism was too harsh. But the efficacy of the Judge's criticism, and both the merit and ultimate success of the report lies in the Judge's refusing to condemn only one party; the report's effect, would not have been greater if it were perceived to be less even-handed.

Here you see a judicious frame of mind, which Neil promotes and illustrates in his book—an approach that we may question for the very nature of its judicious attempt at neutrality. Of course Neil rightly points out that utter neutrality is beyond the capacity of mere mortals. But making the attempt, I would argue, puts us down the right path.

The publication of Neil's book also nearly coincided with the release of a statement by Israel's founding union federation, Histadrut. Readers of this Newsletter will have noticed that the last issue contained an article wherein the Histadrut expressed support for Palestinians' basic human rights and for their rights as workers.

I recommended that article, as in the course of my research on Hannah Arendt last year, to my astonishment I found a reference to Histadrut's earlier policy, during the founding of the State of Israel, which effectively excluded Arab workers from the collective bargaining process. Ironically, Histadrut took this position because as socialist Zionists, they were concerned that Israeli capitalists would exploit cheaper Palestinian Arab labour. Histadrut thereby organized against the use of Palestinian labour to protect the value of its own labour.

Indeed, as Arendt implied, Histadrut's policy reinforced what became a situation of racial/ethnic division within Israel with the resulting loss of equality of treatment for Palestinians. So in that respect, Histadrut's condemnation of Israeli policies in 2009 was also a criticism of its previous policies as a labour federation. This to me was historic, regardless of how tepid some observers otherwise considered the statement to be.

The case of Israel-Palestine is a particularly uncomfortable one for our union because we have colleagues who are invested on both sides. But this is where an approach such as Neil's has so much value. The temptation is always to wave flags of various nationalistic colours, or to condemn one side, usually “the other,” for conspicuous human rights violations. Yet in the end this may not be the proper role of the union, particularly ours.

Our union, in my view, needs to avoid the taking of one side too stridently. For example, last year I opposed the language of the FAC resolutions which condemned Israeli colonization of Palestine and referred to there being a 60-year occupation of Palestine. Nearly all observers refer to Israel's 40-year occupation of Palestinian territories. The implication of the resolution was that the founding of the state of Israel was itself illegitimate. That may be a position some take, and may be the legitimate subject of debate, but it should not have been in a resolution

endorsed by a Quebec union federation, as it reflected a particularly ideological viewpoint.

Indeed Neil and his colleague Stephen Scheinberg indirectly referred to such an approach in a recent commentary in the National Post, which presumes that Israel-Palestine should become a unitary state, the so-called one-state solution. As much as it was the dream of progressive Zionists 60 plus years ago, it is now a code phrase for pronouncing the state of Israel to be illegitimate at its founding core. As such Caplan and Scheinberg called it provocative in the contemporary state of affairs. And as much as it may be my personal desire to still see a bi-national state arise, I accept the less optimistic point of view that certainly for now that is not a dream which has any chance of fulfillment in the short-run, certainly not without all-out war.

To be fair to the FAC delegates, it is quite unlikely that more than a handful of them understood the significance of this aspect of the resolutions, which came out of their Solidarity Committee, or why Anglo colleges are more sensitive regarding the issue. FAC, as with most other federations in Quebec, as one delegate put it last year, represent a “monoculture” which is Quebec. There are very few faces of colour at union federation meetings, virtually none outside of those representing Anglo colleges. This is just a fact. In such a case it is up to Vanier’s representatives to point out when and why a proposition is unacceptable to us because it does not speak to our culturally diverse make-up. In addition, drawing a lesson from Neil, it could be argued that the propositions, being too ideologically charged, are not just less effective, they are less useful and less constructive in moving us towards the end of genuine solidarity.

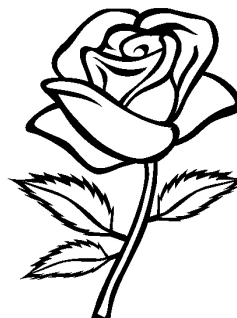
Now being neutral should never be a means for blunting criticism of human rights abuse. But as Neil’s book and Judge Goldstone’s judgment demonstrate, perhaps the best way to protect human rights, ultimately, is by being factual and judicious to a fault. That may, in the short run, not allow for blood to boil as hot as some would like, but in the end it serves the purposes of the larger community and leaves open the prospect for respectful dialogue among our colleagues when such issues arise.

And in the end the goal of unions should never be—as much as is humanly possible—too far out of line with the goals of those who seek justice in a fair-minded and judicious manner. Hyperbole and rhetorical excess, as much as they are appreciated in literature, and as valuable as they can be in depicting the true horrors of war and human rights abuse, can often be counter-productive in the fields of law, human rights policy and union matters—especially when, in the end we all have to live and work together. The union, in some respects, must remain above the fray, appealing to as many people of diverse backgrounds and perspectives as possible. The position our unions take should never become a barrier to our having the warmest feelings towards our colleagues, regardless of the ethnic backgrounds we happen—by sheer chance—to be born into.

Neil needs to be congratulated in this respect as well: for showing us a way out of—indeed, for permitting us to remain at some distance from—a very troubling conflict and a difficult set of conflicting feelings and perspectives. As unionists we all fight for universal human rights, for the rights of all workers to organize and to enjoy the benefits of union membership and

collective bargaining. We must offer some hope in the face of what often appears to be situations of conflict, despair and pessimism. This his book accomplishes while it admits that the present conditions seem to offer little reason for optimism.

*Dr. Stephen Block is a Humanities teacher whose background and interests happen to include labour law, human rights and Middle East peace. He teaches a course in disinterestedness as a worldview, while attempting to pursue dialogue with the many souls of various nationalities who continue their good faith struggles for peace in what for them are very bleak times.*



### **Dec. 6th: A Day for Remembrance... a Day for Unity... A Day for Hope.**

This year marked the twentieth anniversary of the events at the Polytechnique\*. In 1991, the Canadian Parliament named Dec. 6th a day of remembrance and a day of action against violence against women. Dec. 6th is a day to recognize the existence of gender-based violence, speak out against it and to act in order to create a better society for women and girls to live in. It is a moment for all of us, regardless of age, community and/or gender, to be united in this common cause. On the days leading up to Dec. 6th, Canadians wear purple and white ribbons (respectively symbolizing the women’s and men’s movements against violence against women). On Dec. 6th, many join a vigil while others take a brief moment to reflect on the society we live in and to hope for a better world.

Dec. 6th Activities and Events at Vanier College:

- Women’s Studies students made purple and white ribbons available at public counters at Vanier College. Donations went to the Montreal Assault Prevention Centre.
- A display of Commemoration and Hope was set up in the Carrefour, Nov. 30th-Dec. 6th.
- On Dec. 4th, the Vanier Social Justice Committee held a candle-lit ceremony in Jake’s Mall. In honour of the 20th anniversary, the Women’s Studies Program invited the Music Department to join this event. Erica Phare directed 11 members of the Women’s Choir during the ceremony, Robert F. Jones accompanied on keyboard and Katherine Black sang a solo. Please contact [socialjustice@vaniercollege.qc.ca](mailto:socialjustice@vaniercollege.qc.ca) if you would like further information.

**Maureen Jones**  
**Humanities teacher and Coordinator of Women’s Studies**

\*On Dec. 6, 1989 Marc Lépine entered the École Polytechnique and declared that he was “fighting feminism.” He shot and killed 14 female students.