

THE VOICE MAGAZINE

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The Yes Men

Fixing the world

Education Eras

Modern Palestine

AU Profiles

Cheryl Braden

*Plus: Sister Aurora,
Dear Barb, From Where I Sit,
and much more ...*



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We love to hear from you! Send your questions and comments to voice@voicemagazine.org, and please indicate if we may publish your letter.



AU Profiles:

AU Profiles: Cheryl Braden

Christina M. Frey



AU student Cheryl Braden has been following an ambitious goal: to earn her degree one class at a time, completing a new course every eight to 10 weeks. For the BPA (Governance, Law and Management) student, who works full-time, careful planning is the key to her success. Here, she shares her strategies for creating a study schedule—and sticking to it. She also discusses the pros and cons of independent learning, and tells why distance study has worked so well for her.

Cheryl is no stranger to part-time education. After receiving a Law Clerk diploma from Niagara College, she began studying public administration through evening classes at Ryerson University in Toronto. However, although she had planned to

finish her degree at Ryerson, she received a work promotion that required her to move to Calgary. “I decided AU was my best bet to finish,” Cheryl says. “In case I moved again, I could finish from anywhere.”

Currently, Cheryl is the director of the Calgary and Regina offices of the Federal Courts Administration Service. Although she hasn’t made a job-related move recently, she appreciates that AU’s continued flexibility has allowed her to study while travelling for work. “I would have a hard time attending regular classes now,” Cheryl says. “I travel . . . frequently enough that it would impact my attendance.”

With full-time work and a new course every eight to 10 weeks, Cheryl has her hands full. “It’s a bit of a juggling act,” she admits. However, strategic planning has helped her keep everything in balance.

She starts with her longer-term goals. “My studies at AU will make me eligible to move into either an executive position . . . or possibly another position at my current level,” Cheryl says. She has her sights set on Convocation 2011, and hopes to finish her coursework by the spring of that year. With those broader goals in place, she’s then able to start planning out her individual courses.

“I set schedules from the start of each course,” Cheryl says. Using the course’s Study Guide, Student Manual, and online resources, she’ll plan out a calendar of goals. “I’ll break it down: first by when I need to get assignments in and exams booked, and then more specifically,” Cheryl explains. She also makes a point of booking her exams ahead of time. “It helps me from getting too far behind,” she says. “The exams are booked, so I have that to motivate me!”

Equally important, however, is including planned downtime. “Be realistic,” Cheryl advises. “Incorporate some time to take a break!”

To minimize distractions and keep on track, Cheryl avoids studying at home. “If I’m away from home, I’m better able to concentrate,” she says. Although she takes her work with her when travelling, she also has found local study venues. “I have used the Calgary public library and sometimes I just go to Starbucks,” she says. Even the office makes a good study spot after hours: “Sometimes I end up . . . staying late at work to study after everyone has gone home and there’s peace and quiet.”

Because she works in government management, Cheryl feels that her studies aren’t in total isolation, as her coursework is often relevant to her professional life. “I do discuss [material] with my staff and my boss,” she says. “The topics are relevant to what we do.”

However, she does miss the interactive aspect of in-classroom learning, particularly the opportunity to “[hear] other people’s questions and perspectives,” she says.

Nonetheless, the benefits of distance learning make it worthwhile. Says Cheryl: “I’ve worked out of hotel rooms, my home, my office, on a plane, [and] on a train . . . the flexibility can’t be beat!”

CLICK OF THE WRIST – Fast Food

Whether it’s a hamburger, fries, or pizza, fast food is more controversial than ever. Some are addicted to it, others wouldn’t touch it with a barge pole, and recent books and movies point out its health and environmental dangers. This week, we take a look at that calorie-laden modern comfort: fast food.

Fast Food Cakes

If you want to have your cake and eat your fast food too, these creations might be just the thing. As this slideshow explains, cake designer Debbie Goard “sculpts cakes and sweet treats to look like fast foods and other savoury snacks.” Her company name? Debbie Does Cakes.

Fast Food Ads Meet Reality

There’s no end of commercials and print ads that make viewers crave the tempting foods on display. But if you’ve ever brought home a pizza stuck to the lid of the box, you’ll know commercials can be better than the real thing. This site offers comparison photos of ads vs. reality for some of the most popular fast foods.

Dirty Dining

This MSNBC *Dateline* report reveals some of the less savoury aspects of fast food, including the unappetizing sight of someone else’s chewing gum embedded in a taco. You can read the report on the site or just click on the video link to watch.

Fast Food Toy Ban

You might fondly remember those little plastic toys in your hamburger combo meal (or have kids that go crazy for them), but not everyone is in favour of them. This ABC video details the efforts of one Santa Clara County lawmaker who will introduce legislation “to stop restaurants from handing out toys with fast food menu items geared toward children.”

EDITORIAL

Sandra Livingston



Making a Mockery

The first mass-produced Daguerreotype ushered in more than a new age in photography. It also helped create an enduring social icon: the family photo album. And whether it's great aunt Josephine dragging out musty albums, or new parents with camcorders capturing Junior's every move, most of us have at least one embarrassing childhood moment that we wish had never been immortalized by Kodak.

For the over-20 crowd, those awkward photos and videos had mercifully limited exposure, mostly reserved for good-natured teasing at family gatherings. But today's kids aren't as lucky.

It's part of an interesting dichotomy that's evolved. On the one hand, thousands of parents eagerly post the embarrassing antics of their kids on the Internet. A notable example is a young boy named David, whose father uploaded a YouTube video of David groggy and disoriented after a dental visit. It not only went viral and has been widely parodied, but the father has since posted a follow-up video explaining that he took the clip to show David's mom (hardly an explanation for why he posted it online for the world to see).

In a more recent clip, a young boy begins to sing along in the family car. When his father makes a thoughtless comment, the boy dissolves in tears. Another example is a boy of about six or seven, dancing and lip-synching to Britney Spears in his room. His mother captured it on video and it's now available for mass consumption.

Yet at the same time, schools and parent groups are alarmed at the rising cases of cyberbullying—the use of social networking sites and other electronic forums, like email, to spread embarrassing and hateful messages. In January, 15-year-old Phoebe Prince hanged herself after vicious bullying by kids at her school, much of it online. In 2006, 13-year-old Megan Meier killed herself after an incredibly cruel online hoax by a schoolmate's mother, [Lori Drew](#).

Obviously, bullying has been around since long before the world went digital. And vicious classmates will find any excuse to single out a target. But why would parents deliberately expose their children to the mockery of millions?

It's doubtful that the average parent posts photos and videos with that intention. For most, it's a desire to share personal moments with family and friends. But for some strange reason people still have difficulty with the concept that, unless it's a password-protected site, they're exposing those personal moments to the entire world. And not just today, but for years to come.

What happens when your cutely awkward six-year-old starts high school and that once-amusing viral video comes back to haunt her? Or your teenage son is subject to taunts because his classmates come across that YouTube clip of him imitating Britney Spears?

In a society where mockery seems to have become a national pastime, when it's the norm for reality-show audiences to gleefully ridicule contestants, it's one thing for an adult to jump into the fray. It's quite another to send kids the message that their private, possibly embarrassing, moments are fair game too.

IN CONVERSATION WITH . . .

Wanda Waterman St. Louis



that are as entertaining as they are socially redemptive. Notable events include posing as Dow Chemical executives to announce a compensation package to survivors of the Bhopal pesticide plant disaster and later impersonating government representatives promising to reopen closed public housing for survivors of Katrina. Their second film, *The Yes Men Fix the World*, is reviewed here. (The DVD was released, quite appropriately, on April 1.) This week Andy Bichlbaum took the time to talk with Wanda Waterman St. Louis about false hopes, thinking outside the box, and staying in character.

Getting Away With It

We have a getaway car, of course. But the only way to get away with what we're doing is to enjoy it a lot. At the beginning we had two or three legal advisors but they were just friends, or friends of friends.

We'd say, "Oh—you're a lawyer? Here's a question—can we do this?" some of them would say, "Yes, do it, by all means! You're protected. Here's why. Do whatever you want. Go wild." Others would say, "Well, you probably shouldn't do it at all, or if you do it you should be really careful and do this . . ." We ignored those.

We eventually stopped asking. We figured it out and became legal experts. If they're going to look ridiculous attacking you and you can drag them through the mud then they're not going to attack you. And they can attack you no matter what you

The Yes Men

"Resistance to oppression is often based on a love that leads us to value ourselves, and leads us to hope for more than the established cultural system is willing to grant . . . Love for others leads us to accept accountability (in contrast to feeling guilt) and motivates our search for ways to end our complicity with structures of oppression."

Sharon Welch

Yes Men Andy Bichlbaum and Mike Bonanno are partners in crime in a series of ingenious hoaxes



do, even if what you do is completely and thoroughly legal. They do that all the time. You just have to be prepared to drag them through the mud.

Grateful Recipients of False Hope

[The mainstream media has accused The Yes Men of raising false hopes among disaster victims.]

We agonized over raising false hopes. We knew by the time we went to India that they loved us; we wouldn't have gone if we'd actually feared they'd strangle us (that was all staged). But we didn't know for



a month after doing the hoax and when we were in Switzerland we actually happened to meet a Bhopal activist, Rachna Dhingra. We were talking about Bhopal and somebody said, "There's a Bhopal activist in the audience," and she stood up and said, "We loved what you did!"

That was the first time we'd heard that. All we'd heard from the press was that we'd raised false hopes. At first we thought they might have actually done their research, being journalists and all. In the New Orleans case the media reported that we'd raised false hopes even though the victims hadn't had one second to believe our hoax. There was no moment when any of the victims believed that the thing was actually happening; that was just pure fiction from the media.

How Did We Get Here?

It was 1999 when the protests against the WTO in Seattle were about to happen. We couldn't make it to the protests so we set up a fake WTO website. It was a lark, a way to have fun and to use our talents as web designers to see what we could do. It was kind of a shock when the WTO reacted by exclaiming that our website was deplorable and that it undermined WTO transparency.

Nobody noticed their press release, so we helped them by blasting it out to thousands of journalists who had a good laugh at the WTO's expense. This meant our site got into search engines and people started accidentally stumbling on it when searching online for the WTO.

Then we got invited to a conference intended for the WTO. At first we didn't think, *Hey, this is a great thing to do*. We thought, *Uh-oh—we got an invitation, what do we do?* We sat on it for three months before it finally got through our thick skulls that we could just accept the invitation.

"It's a high-stress situation; you're full of adrenaline, you're posing as somebody you're not, and you know there are stakes involved."

Going Undercover

When you're in that situation you just get into character. It's a high-stress situation; you're full of adrenaline, you're posing as somebody you're not, and you know there are stakes involved. So when audience members take it seriously and say these strange things the immediate reaction is exhilaration.

You go into it knowing that although these are all really nice, good people they just let themselves be part of a system that's really gross so you don't really expect anything different. So when they actually let loose with something like, "Oh this is a great idea!" or "This is refreshingly honest!" you think, *Oh I can't believe they just said that, that's so wonderful! It's really going to translate this whole thing for everybody*.

AUSU ELECTION RESULTS, UPCOMING AGM – APRIL 6



Following the excitement of the recent AUSU election, council is now busy planning their Annual General Meeting, scheduled for April 6. The meeting takes place at 5:00 pm MST and, as always, all members are "invited to attend and be heard." You can call the office to book a line, and the AGM includes an open discussion period—a great chance to chat with councillors, ask questions, and hear what's on the minds of other AU students! All the details and contact info can be found on the [AUSU home page](#).

And in election news, the results are in. Nine candidates stood for election and "eight were duly elected by receiving more yes votes than no votes." For the 2010-2012 council term, the eight councillors are: Ashley Seely, Barbara Rielly, Bethany Tynes, Joel Benitez, John Palmer, Kim Newsome, Sarah Kertcher, and Toni Fox. Congratulations to all new (and returning) councillors!

To find out more about council activities, find specific policies, take the latest online survey, and more, bookmark the AUSU site and check in often.



Palestinian Education Post-1948: Moving Toward a Postmodern Nationality

In my last article I described how Israeli settlers overcame the dichotomy of school smart/life smart by forming communal farms known as kibbutzim. In the lands of Palestine, which are currently occupied to varying extents by the state of Israel, education has taken a different turn. Perhaps nowhere else can postmodern social theory be better applied than here. Postmodern theory is based on a presumption that a distinct ending in time and space has occurred; an ending of modernist narratives of certainty

encompassing identities and truths and nations. "A radical implosion has happened and we have survived 'beyond the end,' beyond a situation that could be grasped by our earlier categories of rational or dialectical thought."

For the Palestinian people just such a cataclysmic break occurred in 1948 with the creation of the modern state of Israel. Palestine then developed a school curriculum that differed from those found in Canada or in other countries. Palestinian children found themselves reading textbooks from other countries rather than their own. When textbooks finally were written, students did not learn of their country from modern maps. Instead, a blurry pan-Islamic identity was taught and bolstered by map references to ancient cities that no longer exist.

Even today, rather than hard, firm, and stolid lines normally used to demarcate modern nation-states, broken lines symbolic of ephemerality and impermanence are the norm in today's Palestinian textbooks. The provisional and fluid nature of Palestinian education practices has been seen very differently by Israel and many Western commentators. In line with traditional modernist thinking, textbooks that tend to elide (leave out) references to Israel are denounced as incitements to anti-Semitism and attacks on Israel.

The history of education in Palestine is irrevocably and ironically tied to the creation of the state of Israel in 1948. Parts of Palestine, the West Bank, and Gaza were controlled by Jordan and Egypt at this stage. Students in West Bank and Gaza areas received textbooks from the controlling countries. Twenty years later, in the War of 1967, Israel "occupied both areas and maintained the existing curricula" as well as "censoring material that it found objectionable."

Attempts by Israel to introduce new textbooks were unsuccessful. Another important development took place in 1994, when a new Palestinian National Authority (PNA) was given control of education in West Bank and Gaza. The PNA subsequently began working on new textbooks, which were introduced during the first years of the 21st century. Palestinians, then, experience their identity as members of a conquered and colonized land; it is against this backdrop of resistance to occupation that schools in present-day Palestine exist.

Controversially, "virtually every discussion in English on Palestinian education repeats the charge that Palestinian textbooks incite students against Jews and Israel." The reality is much more complex, however, and is in part explainable by the postmodern theorist Jean Baudrillard's description of how "the worst error, the one committed by all our revolutionary strategists, is to think they can put an end to the system on the real plane: that is . . . the imaginary which the system itself imposes on them, a system that lives and

survives only by getting those who attack it to fight on the terrain of reality, a ground that is always its own."

Instead of rhetorically attacking Israel as critics maintain, and perhaps as many Palestinians would prefer, Palestinian textbooks "go to some lengths to avoid saying anything about Israel at all." To ignore a people or nation from perceptual reality is certainly a form of attack, though perhaps an act more at the level of implication than provocation. In a sense, the Palestinian textbooks seem to, in the famous Christian sense, be "turning the other cheek."

It is not only in regard to relations to Israel that Palestinian textbooks differ from the Western cultural norm and embrace a somewhat surreal or imaginative version of truth. For instance, "in explaining the concept of species, one of the new books explains that animals that are not alike cannot "'marry' and have children." This anthropomorphizing view seems akin to our culture's Aesop's Fairy Tales or Mother Goose Nursery Rhymes than to what we would regard as a school textbook.

Another text describes a family taking a drive to the city of Jaffa and "smelling lemons and oranges along the way." The extra-temporal nature of this trip is made clear: whereas the road to pre-modern Jaffa did indeed meander amongst orchards, "current Palestinian driver entering the city will pass through densely populated suburbs and traffic and are more likely to smell diesel fumes than oranges." This sense of Palestine as a nation that surpasses the boundaries of the real is less a desire for a return to an idealized past as it is a creation of an alternative reality in the present. One is reminded of the way children in our schools become engrossed in books such as *Harry Potter*. In Palestine, the stark and dangerous conditions of daily life perhaps lead to more earthbound, though no less fantastical, alternative realms.

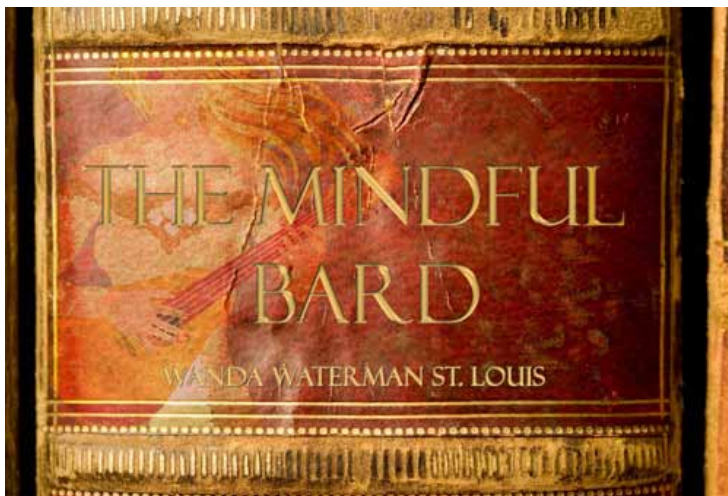
Another aspect of late 20th-century Palestine is that, because state institutions are only recently being formed, educational methods themselves are being formed and tested out. Rather than ask "What body [of] knowledge should students be taught?" curriculum planners are asking "What kind of citizen do we want?"

Recognizing that "we have been conditioned to be passive participants in the teaching process" leads educationists to create "institutions friendly to innovation and reform." In 1989 "the Tamer Institute was founded in Ramallah; in 1991 Al-Mawrid Teacher Development Centre was established in the same city." Both of these teacher-training schools set as their goal the teaching of democracy "not through abstract political instruction but through the case method, focusing on contexts the students could find immediately applicable to their own lives."

A Palestinian theorist named Abu Lughod is credited with introducing the term "empowerment (*tamkin*) into Arabic." Also important for new teaching methods in Palestine are the concepts of "critical" and "creative" thought as compared to "memorization" and "treating students as 'empty vessels.'" Underlying the new focus of progressive education in Palestine is the very postmodern notion of decentralizing authority from a singular, absolutist centre, head, or "tree," to a context that is grassroots, spreading, or "rhizomatic." In the classroom this means power moves from instructor to pupil. "The shift from teacher's authority to student's individuality, from absolute to relative truth, from receiving knowledge to discovering it, from uniformity to pluralism, from constituting a dutiful member of society to fostering an active and freethinking citizen" all combine into a goal of educating young Palestinians to be responsible and freethinking members of the global human community.

Rather than spread a "culture of violence," the hope is that Palestinians will spread the love and compassion endemic to the beliefs of their religion and nation.

Another aspect of late 20th-century Palestine is that, because state institutions are only recently being formed, educational methods themselves are being formed and tested out.



Books, Music, and Film to Wake Up Your Muse and Help You Change the World

DVD: *The Yes Men Fix the World*

Theatrical release October 2009, DVD release April 1, 2010

Directors: Andy Bichlbaum, Mike Bonanno

Screenwriters: Andy Bichlbaum, Mike Bonanno

What the World Needs Now is Gildas, Reggies, and SurvivaBalls

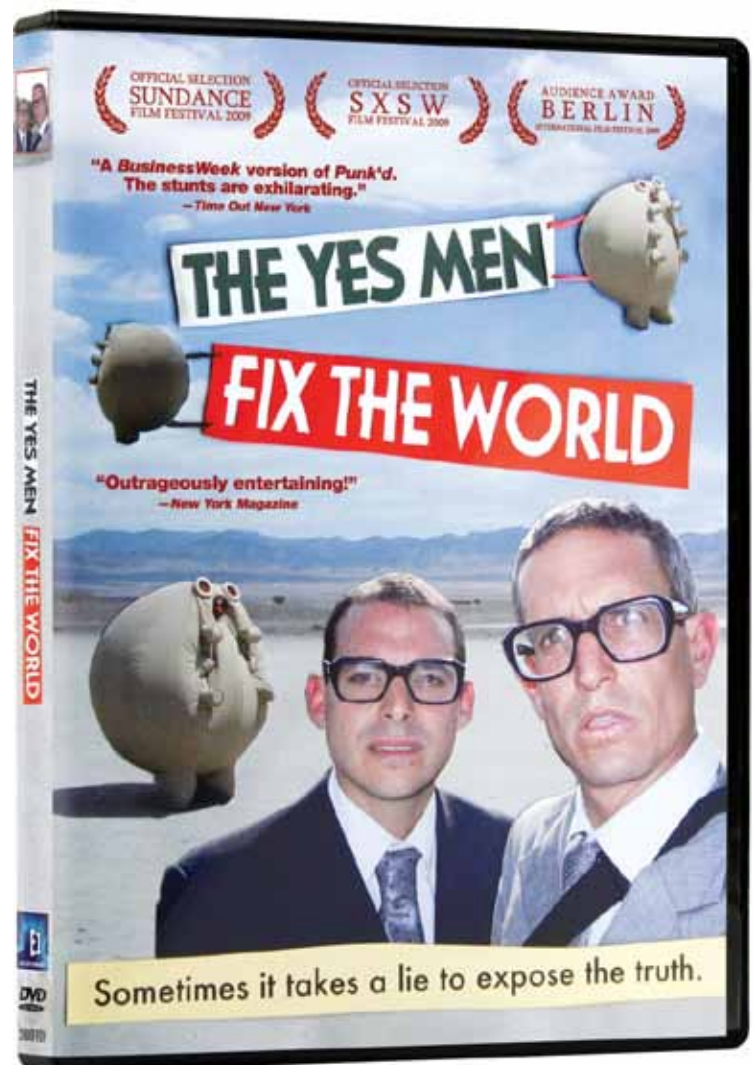
"This American system of ours, call it Americanism, call it capitalism, call it what you will, gives each and every one of us a great opportunity if we only seize it with both hands and make the most of it."

Al Capone

Two men in inflated grey suits that make them look like cartoon elephants walking on their hind legs squeeze down a railed boardwalk, waddle along a sandy beach, and saunter past graffitied walls. An animated film short extols the virtues of the suit, calling it a "SurvivaBall," revealing its capacity to drain "power" from an animal in an emergency and even to join with other SurvivaBalls to form a massive human female form that dances slowly down apocalyptic streets, its occupants safer than houses.

The SurvivaBall is the alleged brainchild of Halliburton, an oil-rich corporation infamous for profiting from catastrophe. But the SurvivaBall is in fact just one in a series of brilliant hoaxes masterminded by Mike Bonanno and Andy Bichlbaum for the purpose of drawing attention to abuses of power perpetrated by government and big business.

Even more ridiculous than this rotund parody of a space suit is the response of some audience members at the conference of insurance brokers at which it is being presented. Some are smirking, sure, recognizing that on some level this really *must* be a joke, but most don't so much as bat an eye when their impostor speaker praises the financial opportunities that were afforded by the Black Death and the Old Testament flood and points out that much money is to be made by exploiting disasters.



One sombre gent actually foresees advantages to marketing the SurvivaBall as a protection against terrorist threats. He points out that for those who feel they need such protection money would probably not be an object. Audience responses to other Yes Men gimmicks are just as appalling; one man laughs affably at the shameless pronouncement that the probability of human death and illness is an acceptable risk if projected profits are huge enough.

On the other hand, when the Yes Men give out effigy candles in the shape of deceased Exxon “janitor” Reggie Watts at a Canadian oil conference they were less than politely ordered to git. Apparently a candle that smelled of burning flesh and was made in the image of a toxic waste victim didn’t exactly bring on the warm fuzzies.

Warm feelings *did* ensue when Andy Bichlbaum, posing as a Dow executive, announced that the company would be compensating survivors of the 1984 Bhopal pesticide plant leak to the tune of 12 billion dollars and would also be cleaning up the toxic site left behind.

Shareholders, proving once again that the market does not reward corporate integrity, quickly dumped enough shares to cost Dow Chemical 20 billion dollars within the next 23 hours.

Perhaps we have met the enemy and he is us. Or is he? When the Yes Men put out a fictitious *New York Times* paper dated six months down the road, full of headlines announcing the end of everything bad from global warming to the Iraq war to passing the buck, even jaded New Yorkers perked up. These fictitious articles, proclaim their authors, can actually come true if enough people resist the message fed them by a handful of government and industry elites.

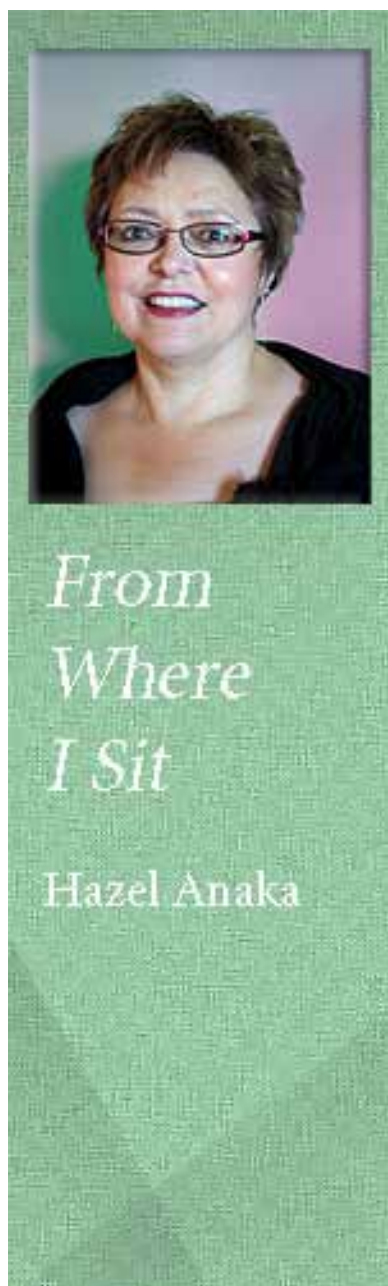
The mainstream media makes Herculean efforts to heap shame on The Yes Men for raising false hopes among disaster victims with their hoaxes, first among survivors of the Bhopal pesticide plant disaster and then among long-time residents of New Orleans public housing projects who returned after Katrina to find that the government would not allow them back into their homes, now boarded up and earmarked for demolition.

The Yes Men actually went to these victims to gauge the level of this supposed false hope and found instead of bitterness a hearty approval and a deep gratitude to The Yes Men for bringing their struggles into the public eye. Just seeing that the injustice against them is being acknowledged and brought to light can sometimes give victims the strength to remove the barricades to their autonomy, freedom, and well-being. Sometimes all we need is for someone to walk by and cluck, “Yup, you’ve definitely been shafted!”

The Yes Men have done far more than cluck. They’ve raised social activism to an art form and tossed in a healthy dose of good fun. May their deliciously dastardly antics never meet with retribution.

The Yes Men Fix the World meets seven of The Mindful Bard’s criteria for films well worth seeing: 1) it is authentic, original, and delightful; 2) it poses and admirably responds to questions that have a direct bearing on my view of existence; 3) it stimulates my mind; 4) it harmoniously unites art with social action, saving me from both seclusion in an ivory tower and slavery to someone else’s political agenda; 5) it displays an engagement with and compassionate response to suffering; 6) it gives me tools enabling me to respond with compassion and efficacy to the suffering around me; and 7) it renews my enthusiasm for positive social action.

The Yes Men actually went to these victims to gauge the level of this supposed false hope and found instead of bitterness a hearty approval and a deep gratitude to The Yes Men for bringing their struggles into the public eye.



Revel in the Chant

For the last few days the *Chant* CD has been playing on my laptop. This compilation from 1994 includes original recordings from 1973 and the early 1980s. It features the Benedictine Monks of Santo Domingo de Silos of Spain.

The sacred sounds fill my space and my heart. Though I understand not a single word of the Latin text, it is reverential, awe-inspiring, and holy.

So naturally I wanted to share this with you, dear reader, especially during the holiest week for Christians. There are just a few, slight problems with my good intentions.

First, I'm not Catholic so much of the history and significance of monasteries, monks, and cloisters is beyond me. David Foil tells us on the CD liner these are hymns of praise from the Divine Liturgy. "Seven times a day, every day of the year, as their brothers in faith have for over 1,500 years, the monks of Santo Domingo de Silos sing the sublime music of an assured and serene spirit—Gregorian chant."

Is this still true in 2010? At least one website I checked for more up-to-date information says ". . . to say the quality of the singing at the Saturday morning mass we attended was ordinary, would be flattering. Maybe the A choir was touring—there was certainly no evidence of them here." I don't know about you but I hate having illusions dashed. I could have done without hearing that. Much of the centuries-old monastery and cloister are unavailable for public viewing. Web photos are the nearest most of us may ever get to seeing the breathtaking work of sculptors on the cloister columns.

Second, I can't sing to save my life. In fact, my singing could probably get me killed. I can enjoy and appreciate music—at a more superficial level than a connoisseur obviously—but I don't remotely understand the "how" of its creation. The CD liner describes the music itself as "made of a single melodic line, sung in unison and free of rhythm." Huh? I understand the

concept of a cappella singing (because of The Nylons), but this? Digging deeper into the web to find something even I could understand was hopeless.

Then finally it hit me. I don't need to travel to Spain to see the monastery with my own eyes and hear the (maybe disappointing) chanting of the monks. I don't need to spend days or years researching the history of the Catholic Church and monastic life. I don't need to learn about modes or metre or neumes (notes sung on a single syllable). How about simply hitting play and letting the soaring sounds fill my soul? Countless times a day you and I use and exploit things we don't understand. My favourite example is a fax machine. Don't have a clue how it works; nor do I care. The same applies to the Internet, radio and TV waves, electricity, how they get the filling in a Caramilk bar, and millions more such quandaries.

Leave the "how" to the scientists and just revel in the "what" is my best advice, from where I sit.

Sister Aurora

There's a rainbow dancing in the sky tonight, and I think I'm gonna go outside . . .

#34

A second ago you were begging me to take him off your hands!

But you don't want my "sloppy seconds"!

You're too good to accept a GIFT from me but you've got no problem...

...STEALING from me!

We BELONG together! I'm a McCain! He's a Molson!

BERT, don't you think you should be mad at Shane instead of Jodi?



Dear
Barb

Barbara Godin

Compatibility Matters More Than Age

Dear Barb:

I'm in my mid-thirties and have been divorced for quite a while. I share custody of my two children with my ex. I would like to have a partner to share my life with, but I'm finding it very difficult to meet men with whom I have anything in common. I'm a successful woman and find a lot of men my age are intimidated by my success, or they compete with me.

A couple of months ago I met a man who is 12 years older than me. We have a great time together for the most part. Unfortunately, as time goes by I'm finding a lot of differences between us that my friends are saying are because of our age difference. For example, he is not very demonstrative, which leaves me wondering where I stand with him. Also, he's talking about retirement, while I feel my career is just beginning. He has a son in college while my children are eight and 10 years old. When he's around my children for long periods of time I can see him becoming agitated. I just don't know what to do. I enjoy his company, but I don't know if we have a future together.

Christine

Hi, Christine. Thanks for your great question. Age can be a factor in many relationships and often people are able to adjust and work through these issues. Twelve years is not a tremendous amount of time. Remember Anna Nicole Smith, who was in her twenties when she married J. Howard Marshall, who was 89 and just happened to be a millionaire. That's an extreme situation to say the least.

If you have found someone with whom you get along and have a good time I would suggest you don't give up just because of age. As far as him not being demonstrative, men and women in their twenties can be that way too; it is a personality trait and not really related to age. All relationships require some adjusting, more so as we become older and set in our ways.

Since you share custody of your children with their father, your partner will not have to be with them 24/7, so that shouldn't be a problem. As for him talking about retirement and you being in a different phase of your life that could become a problem, but it doesn't have to. If he wants a companion to travel with and you are not able to, you will have to work out a compromise. Really these are issues that are quite a way down the road. A lot of things may change by then.

Why don't you just enjoy the relationship and see where it takes you? If two people love each other enough they can overcome almost anything. Hope I was helpful, Christine.

Email your questions to voice@voicemagazine.org. Some submissions may be edited for length or to protect confidentiality; your real name and location will never be printed. This column is for entertainment only. The author is not a professional counsellor and this column is not intended to take the place of professional advice.

AUSU UPDATE



Annual General Meeting – Your Say about Our Way

AUSU will be holding it's annual general meeting on Tuesday, April 6th, at 5:00pm MST by teleconference, free to you from around the globe. There is one planned change to the bylaws as well as the presentation of the annual report that tells you where AUSU is and some of the things that may be in store for the future. The AGM is where AUSU can change its Bylaws, and last year several changes to the Bylaws were brought from the floor. Since our Bylaws define, among other things, who is a member and how much money the *Voice* receives, these are things that definitely concern you. We hope to see you there!

AUSU Election!

As you've probably already seen on our front page, the AUSU Election became an AUSU Acclamation, because only nine eligible members ran for seats. Out of those nine, only eight were accepted by the membership to sit on Council. Those eight are:

- Ashley Seely
- Barb Rielly
- Bethany Tynes
- Joel Benitez
- John Palmer
- Kim Newsome
- Sarah Kertcher
- Toni Fox

They will be taking office officially as of April 14th, so wish them luck and let them know what issues are important to you!

New 2010 AUSU Handbook/Planners – Arrived!

Finally! People have already started receiving the new planners in the mail, and we're currently shipping them out as fast as the orders come in. Full of useful information about AUSU, writing styles, course grading, great finds online for your studies that you may not have known about, as well as having places to write down your phone numbers, keep track of your assignments, and, oh yeah, a year's worth of calendar to plan out your schedule too. We'll give one free to each AUSU member just for the asking.

Remember, though, we only print a limited number of these each year, so when they're gone, they're gone.

Let 'em Know who Represents for You!

AUSU logo mugs, hoodies, USB keys, and much more are all available for sale from our office. Also, used locks can be purchased at half price! Check out our merchandise catalog on our front page. You should check out our hoodies in particular—made in Canada and 100% bamboo, we're offering them for just barely over our cost, and they're both durable and comfortable.

And if you have new little ones in your family, or know somebody who does, check out our baby onesies. Made by American Apparel, these onesies are high quality and let folks know your kids are growing up to great things as a "Future Graduate of Athabasca U"

AUSU Scheduling Meeting with Tutors' Union – Not really an Update

Some things resist change. We're still waiting for a response from the Tutor's Union as to when we might be able to meet with them to discuss ways that AUSU and the Tutor's Union can work together to ensure that students are getting the contact they need. Unfortunately, they haven't yet replied, so we're stepping up our campaign to get in touch with them. If you want to help, the next time you're talking to your tutor, ask them if they know when the Tutor's Union will meet with AUSU so that the groups can work together on common issues.

Our statistics we've been collecting from the forums and your calls show that issues with tutors – specifically the amount of time taken for marking assignments and exams are your number one concern. Help us help you.

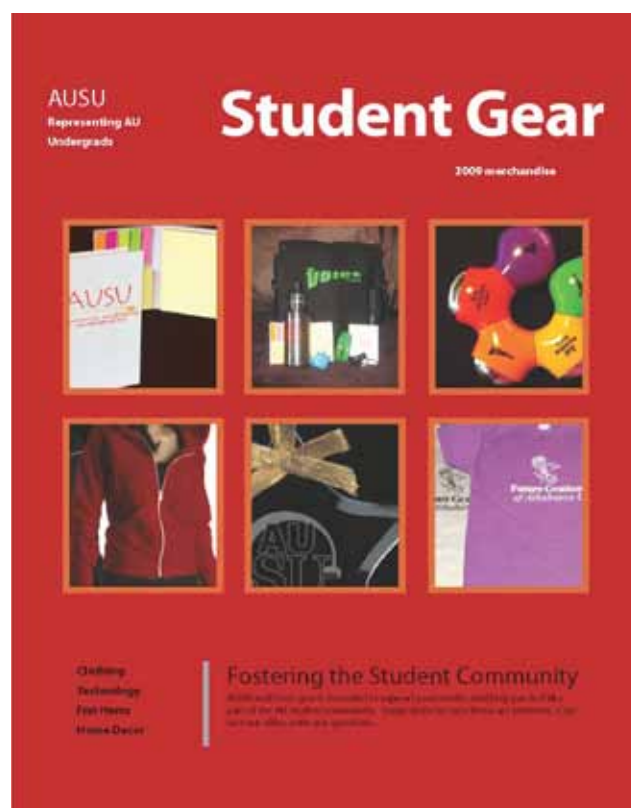
SmartDraw Program Renewal

Some of you who took advantage of our program to provide SmartDraw software to members have been getting notifications that your software license will soon be expiring. Fortunately, AUSU will be continuing this program, so if you haven't already, go to the AUSU home page to download the newest version.

SmartDraw allows you to create a wide range of graphics for your assignments and submit them electronically in a Word file. You can also place your graphics in Excel or PowerPoint files, or export them as TIF, GIF, or JPEG files to make a web graphic or even a logo. Just a few of the graphics you can make include Venn diagrams, genetics charts, graphs, organizational and flow charts, and Gantt charts.

For any course that requires charts that cannot be easily created in Word or Excel, this should be a real time saver and make it easier to submit all portions of an assignment by email.

Remember, though, that you should always check with your tutor to find out if there is a specific format he or she prefers. Your tutor does not have to have SmartDraw to view these graphics, however. Installations under this program are good for one year. The package includes both the Standard and Health Care editions of SmartDraw.



INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK



At Home: Ottawa to set up city autism registry

Ottawa has announced a new city registry to “help first-responders locate and assist autistic children and adults,” becoming the second Canadian city to do so.

As the [CBC](#) reports, the registry was set to launch on World Autism Awareness Day, April 2. The country’s first autism registry was launched late last year in Miramichi, NB.

According to the World Autism Awareness Day website, autism is a “pervasive disorder that affects tens of millions” of people around the world. And in routine interactions with police, first-responders, or other officials, the actions of those with the disorder can easily be misinterpreted. As the CBC notes, those with autism may “exhibit unusual patterns of behaviour, activities and interests.”

The registry will allow parents of autistic children to enter their child’s photo, name and address as well as “any other information that would be useful for fire, police and medical personnel.” It’s believed that the registry will also include info on autistic people of

all ages.

The website will be run by Ottawa Police Services, with assistance from local school boards and Autism Ontario. [Autism Ontario](#) estimates there are some “70,000 individuals with ASD” (Autism Spectrum Disorder) in the province.

In Foreign News: Teachers in Ireland working longer hours

The [Irish Times](#) reports that although second-level teachers are paid for 22 hours of work per week, they now put in “an average of 46 hours a week.” That data comes from a recent survey commissioned by the Teachers’ Union of Ireland (TUI).

The survey, known as the Behaviour and Attitudes study, found that teachers are spending an average of “24 hours per week working outside timetabled teaching hours.” A majority of teachers who took part in the survey reported an increase in “discipline and conflict issues” was taking time away from their core teaching duties.

Among the survey’s main findings are that teachers are working an average of “between 43 and 46 hours a week during term time”; more than 80 per cent indicated “discipline problems now take up considerable time”; and 87 per cent of those surveyed reported their administrative duties had increased over the past five years.

The general secretary of the TUI, Peter MacMenamin, told reporters that the survey results were no surprise and that teaching had become a “demoralised profession in 2010. 1,200 teachers have lost their jobs at second level alone as a result of the education cutbacks.” He also noted that when a pension levy, pay cut, and the non-payment of an “agreed increase” were added in, pay has “been reduced by up to 20 per cent.”

CLASSIFIEDS

Classifieds are free for AU students! Contact voice@voicemagazine.org for more information.

THE VOICE

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