

# THE VOICE

## MAGAZINE

Vol 19 Iss 34 2011-09-09

## Intriguing New Angles

Small words, big thoughts

## Savings SOS

Extreme couponing

## Info Critic

"I saw it in the news."

*Plus:  
From Where I Sit  
Cruiscin Lan  
and more!*



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***The Voice  
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# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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indicate if we may publish your letter.





## EDITORIAL

Christina M. Frey



## Extreme Savings

Paying full price? So turn-of-the-century. Heck, even an ordinary coupon has lost its charm. Economic woes, unemployment, and the rising costs of living—together with the power of social media and blogging—are creating an unprecedented movement toward frugal living.

Correction. Make that toward saving money.

“Frugality” is the latest buzzword, but it’s really saving money that’s trending right now. Freebie-finding Twitter feeds are cropping up all over, the group buying phenomenon is spreading rapidly, and shows like *Extreme Couponing* are spurring a dying economy’s victims to hope.

We all want to save money. In fact, we think it’s silly to pay full rates for anything if we don’t have to. The lower you can get the price the more admirable you are. Score one against the Big Guy!

But whether the culprit is the economy itself, the media’s capitalizing on the economic slowdown, or the blurred notions of property created by online content and services over the years, one thing is clear: our desire to get stuff for little or nothing is quickly becoming a more than a mere tool. In fact, for some it’s morphed into a sense that we’re entitled to use any reasonable means to save—and that can be dangerous.

Sure, there’s nothing wrong with saving a few bucks wherever we can. As long as we don’t take it too far. Too far might be someone who hoards hundreds of cereal boxes just because they can. Too far might be someone who pockets a candy bar at the supermarket.

But there’s a messy grey area in between using that 30-cent coupon and outright stealing or hoarding. For example, a recent *Globe and Mail* [article](#) discussed the increasing number of students who keep using their student IDs to get sizeable discounts long after they’ve graduated. They rationalize, they make excuses, they shrug off their convictions because, well, everyone else is doing it.

If my kid did that, I’d have a few things to say about honesty and the honour system. Yet recently I congratulated a friend who had saved \$11 a day by using our mutual friend’s corporate discount to get the hotel’s wireless Internet service for free during a vacation. And what about resetting your computer to print a high-value coupon one more time than allowed? Also something I’ve seen applauded.

*Saving money at the cash register—or the online checkout—isn’t a bad thing in and of itself. But there’s a messy grey area in between using that 30-cent coupon and outright stealing or hoarding, and the line’s becoming increasingly blurred.*

Not *bad*, exactly. Not like stealing or something. But also . . . not *good*. Grey. Blurry. Like the student discount thing. Like many other practices we do continuously, justifying them in our haste to save a few more bucks “perfectly legally.” Why are some practices okay, and some not? Where do we draw the line?

The so-called coupon craze, with its emphasis on deal-getting, is problematic. Rather than encouraging us to embrace a more frugal lifestyle, it urges us to develop an expectation of deals.

We want it all, but we don’t want to pay for it. We want the nice hotel with the free breakfast and the free happy hour drinks and the indoor pool and the nice lobby. But Internet? Why should we pay for that?

There’s the quandary.

Ironically, a little too much “working” and “tweaking” the system means profits go down, so the price of goods and services rises. Which spurs us to find new means to save money, and the cycle perpetuates.

But in the end, bending expectations of honesty are going to hurt us all in the long run, and more than just the pocketbooks. Not just because, like when we were kids, dishonesty means we can’t be trusted anymore. And not just because this attitude casts aside quality in favour of cost, a phenomenon that’s already painfully keen in this age of Walmart.

More importantly, when we focus too much on getting something for (close to) nothing, we’re only feeding our greed for things, for possessions, for luxuries that previously we didn’t really need. And constantly pursuing that desire, that hunger, keeps us focused solidly inward, consuming us with the desire to continue to want, buy, and want again. It’s a never-ending cycle of greed.

We don’t want to change to a simpler lifestyle; we want the old lifestyle, for less. By all means, let’s keep couponing. But let’s be mindful. Because if we don’t also keep an eye on our spiritual accounts, our pursuit of savings could cost us our morality.

## DID YOU KNOW?

## Student ID Cards

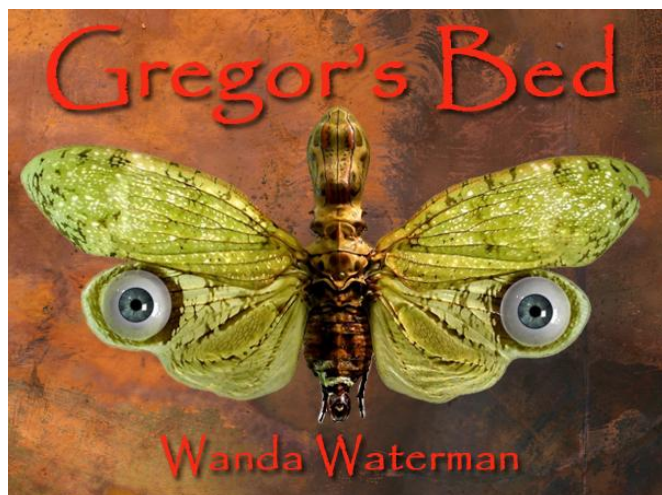


Studying by distance? You can still get student discounts at the movies, bookstore, or train station! According to the [AU Student Calendar](#), every “active Athabasca University student” is eligible to request a photo student identification card.

To apply, you need to complete the required [form](#) and submit a photo. Acceptable photos are “taken by an Athabasca University staff member whenever possible.”

However, if circumstances require it the Registrar’s Office will accept a digital photo together with a copy of your driver’s license, or a passport photo. If not taken by AU staff, photos must be signed by a guarantor, someone “who can attest to your identity.” Further instructions can be found [here](#).

Still have last year’s ID card? Don’t throw it away, as AU students are only eligible for one card during the course of their studies. To keep the card current from year to year, active students may “request a date sticker from the Office of the Registrar, AU Edmonton, or AU Calgary.”



## Recent Discoveries From the Realm of the Experimental and Avant-Garde

### Inside the Strange and Curious Mind of The Two

#### Part I: Mark M

**Music:** *Triangle* (2011), *One Plus One* (2010)

**Book:** *Observations and Thinkings: A Collection of Mark M's Musings* (2001)

*"And God (ironically) sed, 'I am going to send to hell all those people who were stupid enough to think I was going to send (other) people to hell.' Fred 2:23"*

Mark M, in *Observations and Thinkings*

Mark M grew up in a stifling Peanuts-style childhood in Minneapolis. But he made up for it in later life by producing aleatoric music and scribbling down bizarre truths.

The Two has always included Mark M. He did change partners once, but the duo format remains the same. Why? Says M: "A duo is all I've ever done. A buddy likes to jam, hey, why don't we try something? Neither party seems interested in expanding the line-up. I imagine logistics are much simpler in terms of getting together and whatnot than with more than two people."

How does it work, in practice? "Atman plays chords on a guitar, [and] I find notes that fit on whatever instrument is at hand," Mark says. That's "usually another guitar or a lap steel guitar nowadays," he adds, noting that they "sometimes will play keyboards instead. Sometimes drums. Sometimes Atman sings . . . when something is jelling, I hit record and then later we find the better moments to commit to CD."

Together Mark and Atman produce instrumental music that's at times unlistenable, clumsy, repetitive, and devoid of structure. But shining out from within this pile of leaves are jewels of musical raw material that beg to be elaborated on. It sounds like music largely left to chance, but I've long held that chance is an essential element in composition and one to which we should at times feel free to give rein, to our hearts' content.



Musically, *Triangle* is like the attic where the 60s crammed all the odds and ends it thought it might use someday; you hear hints of The Beatles, John Cage, Jefferson Starship, and protest songs. It's all delightful motifs and evocative moods, scraps left over from a spectacular crazy quilt, ready to be made into something new.

And then there's the book.

*Observations and Thinkings* has a mock-formal tone something like McSweeney's, a style which I've come to see as a fixture of our post-postmodern reality; like steampunk, there's an attachment to a past reinterpreted in light of the wounds and scrapes of recent years.

The book's format is divine: one canny maxim per page, each snippet big enough to fill the page, in significance if not in verbosity. It's true: beautiful things shine brightest when surrounded by empty space. Here, it's genius.

But don't take my word for it. A few examples from the book (it was really hard to pick):

*"Every four years, America gets involved in a big, giant voting accident."*

*"Go tell it on the mountain; I don't want to listen to it here."*

*"If you can't read, take heart, you can probably watch television pretty good."*



*"Give me some liberty, or give me a big owie."*

*"Gender equality: No one should be allowed in the military."*

*"Mixed messages are merely the long road to no."*

What kind of brain generates such earthly delights? What kind of spiritual stance enlightens and informs it? Mark M claims to have been inspired by Jane Roberts' "Seth" books. He also describes himself as a follower of "panentheism," which he describes as "souped-up pantheism . . . God is everything yet transcends everything, gestalt-style." His beliefs "include other realities and universes into the mix."

To push my admiration over the top, in reply to my oft-posed question about the conditions required for creativity, Mark M gave me the best answer I've received from a creative type so far: "A reprieve from neuroticism."

### How Do You Like Your Voice?

It's no secret that the patterns of media consumption have changed drastically over the past couple of years—and that they're going to keep evolving with new technological breakthroughs. We at *The Voice* want to ensure that we're continuing to meet your needs, and we need your help.

How would you prefer to read *The Voice Magazine*? Do you like downloading the PDF, or does reading articles online suit your browsing needs better? Do you prefer flipping through articles on a smart phone, e-reader, or other mobile device? Let us know; we're listening!





## From Where I Sit

Hazel Anaka

### Do the Numbers Add Up?

September on the farm is not corn roasts and crunchy leaves. It's not the last hurrah of summer, complete with a Labour Day weekend getaway. It's not fairs or festivals.

Any farmers worth their salt don't need a calendar; they know in their bones what time of year it is. There is uneasiness, a tingling. That feeling of *Okay already, let's get on with it* that precedes the start of harvest. And the not-so-silent prayer that the aging machinery hangs in another year and the weather co-operates. Simply put, that means no fog or heavy dews, just sweet sunshine and a good drying wind.

Every farmer knows Mother Nature can't be rushed, despite our best efforts. But we try. Big farmers with lots of seeded acres use desiccation. Spraying an almost ripe crop with Roundup effectively kills the grain and hastens the ripening by evening out the greener bits. Desiccation is done with a high clearance sprayer, a big-tired self-propelled machine with folding spray booms that's worth between \$130,000 and \$275,000. That extra field operation costs about \$5 per acre for the chemical—not counting the cost of borrowing or the fuel or manpower needed to run the machine.

Even small guys like us, with only 615 acres to harvest, rely on grain dryers or aeration bins to speed up the process. Every type of grain has a moisture level assigned to it. Farmers live and die based on those numbers. And they are a moving target; a moisture reading at 1 pm won't be the same at 6 pm or at 10:30 that same night. Wheat is dry at 14.5; canola at 10; barley at 14.8. More than that is "tough" grain. More yet is "damp."

If you choose to take off grain that isn't dry, you had better have a backup plan. If grain is tough, then running large fans (in specially equipped aeration bins) with or without propane heat can effectively continue the drying process and save the day. But it's not cheap or quiet. How many days it takes to dry a couple thousand bushels of grain this way is dependent on the ambient air temperature and how humid it is. Alternatively, sometimes grain companies will allow farmers to haul in tough grain and "mix it out" with thousands of bushels of dry grain.

If grain is damp, the entire bin is at risk. Through a process I don't understand, moist grain creates its own heat. Heated grain stinks to high heaven and cakes together in ashy grey clumps. If a grain buyer even agrees to take it, the price will be drastically cut.

So, on September 5 with not an acre yet cut, I'm getting a little crazy. We're adding an extra 13,850 bushel capacity this year thanks to the purchase of four more bins and a hopper modification to an old one. Total cost so far is \$28,340 and counting. To make this work we need the numbers to add up: moisture levels, temperature, and grain price, from where I sit.



## THE MINDFUL BARD

Wanda Waterman



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

**Film:** *Rubber* (Realitism Films 2010)

**Writer/Director:** Quentin Dupieux

**Cast:** Stephen Spinella, Jack Plotnick, Wings Hauser, Roxane Mesquida, Ethan Cohn, Charley Koontz

**Genre:** Drama

### We Go 'Round and 'Round and 'Round in the Tire Game

Robert the abandoned tire awakens to his own unique reality: he's alone in a gravelly desert somewhere in the American southwest. It ain't pretty, so he starts rolling.

When he falls he rises again. When confronted with an obstacle, he rolls around it and just keeps going. When he sees something new he stops to scrutinize it. Soon he starts quivering with rage at the sight of the bottles and cans that litter his path. He crushes them beneath his unwieldy girth. If the name "Robert" is an allusion to Robert the Bruce, it's certainly apt.

But squishing things isn't enough; Robert's fury grows, and soon he's concentrating the full weight of his existential tire-anxiety against the littered objects, causing them to explode with a wish.

There's a motley group of spectators observing him (one of whom is Ethan Cohn, playing himself). The group is camped on a hill. They argue about the film. They try to eat and sleep. They make testy remarks. They try to give direction. They're there to observe the tire's shenanigans, just as we are, but they're part of the film and we're not—and that's significant.

For one thing they're dispensable, as you'll see. Apparently if a tire falls in the desert and no focus group is there to hear it, the tire still makes a noise.

I passed by this film countless times, and I think you can guess why (hint: it's a film about a tire rolling through the desert). Once I bit the bullet, though, I couldn't believe how engaging it was. The camera sucks you into the most prosaic of scenes (the tire's tread, for example, or the movement of falling sand and gravel) and keeps you fixated in spite of yourself.

At the start of this film, a cop delivers a lovely little soliloquy on why some things happen for no reason. But I don't care what such surrealists say; there really is no way to avoid the guise of meaning in works of this artistic calibre. Why? Maybe for the same reason that many free love proponents back in the '60s somehow ended up in monogamous relationships: to some extent it's just human



nature. Or maybe because the absurd, the surreal, the senseless, or whatever you want to call it is in itself a form of meaning.

As much as you might try to apply the absurdity gospel while watching *Rubber*, though, a significant message creeps through.

Robert emerges from lowly tirehood a postmodern hero. Yes, he's a criminal, but as a metaphor; he's only a criminal according to the rules of a dying order.

*Rubber* fulfills six 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 is about attainment of the true self; 5) it makes me want to be a better artist; and 6) it makes me appreciate that life is a complex and rare phenomenon, making living a unique opportunity.

## CLICK OF THE WRIST

## Whistle for a Breeze

With Irene causing flooding and knocking down trees last month and Lee putting a wet end to Labour Day plans last weekend, one thing is clear: we're in the middle of hurricane season. In fact, although the season runs from June to November, September is one of the more active months for tropical storm activity. This year has reminded us that Canada's not immune from hurricane damage—and even remnants from storms long since dissipated can create heavy rains and flooding concerns further north.

### Track

During hurricane season, the [Canadian Hurricane Centre](#) posts radar, warnings, and forecasts on Environment Canada's Weatheroffice page. If you're curious about projected paths and the risk to your area, keep an eye on the site for updates.

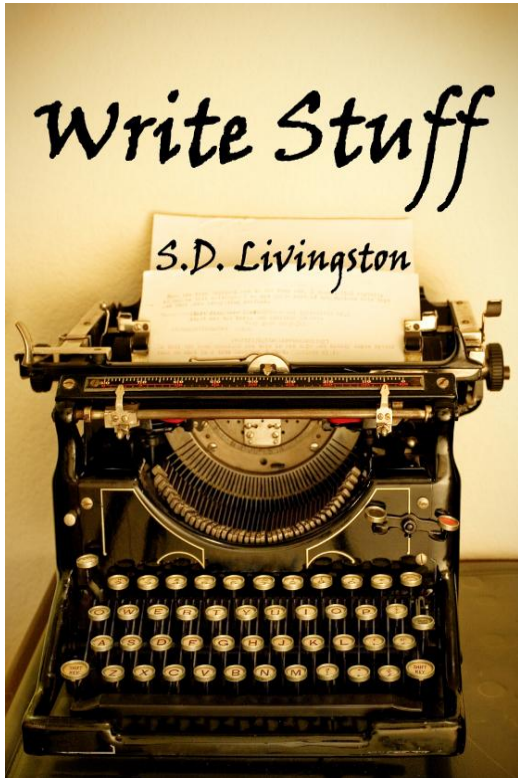
### Plan of Attack

What's your area's hurricane risk? What should you do if you're under a hurricane watch or warning? How should you prepare for a storm—or for any emergency threat? Canada's Get Prepared program provides tips, checklists, and facts to help you create emergency kits and put together plans. It's always better to be prepared!

### Look Back

1954's Hurricane Hazel is one of the most famous hurricanes to hit Canada, and possibly one of the most surprising. It caused flooding and devastation across southern Ontario, including Toronto, and revealed the need for better flood management and ecological practices. This site was created to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Hazel's landfall; check it out for some fascinating facts and an understanding of what can happen when disaster strikes an unprepared metropolitan area.





## I Am My Brother's Gatekeeper

Have you heard the news about the latest Elvis sighting? Seen the headline about the alien invasion? Those are extreme examples, but they remind us that, not so long ago, the difference between legitimate news and tabloid trash was easy to spot. Today, as traditional media models contract and alternative “news” sources flourish, readers must increasingly turn reporter, sifting fact from fiction in the new information landscape.

That’s not to say traditional news outlets exist in a Norman Rockwell glow. Journalists and media owners have a long history of spinning the “facts.” As *Britannica Online* reminds us, “the earliest newspapers and journals were generally violently partisan in politics.” In the early days especially, balanced reporting often meant smearing the opposition and promoting the chosen party’s agenda.

Still, most professional journalists work hard to remain impartial, to investigate the facts and inform the public. Developing that critical thinking and healthy skepticism takes years of training and front line experience. So how can the average reader hope to wade through the overwhelming flow of half-facts and hidden agendas of the information age?

Authors Tim Rosenstiel and Bill Kovach have some answers in their new book, *Blur: How to Know What’s True in the Age of Information Overload*. In a recent [interview](#) with NPR, Rosenstiel notes that when it comes to separating fact from bias, “the audience is essentially left to often judge for itself.”

And when we’re bombarded by a relentless stream of information, it means constantly evaluating the merit of everything: from Twitter posts to blogs to RSS feeds of major news sites and citizen journalists alike. Rosenstiel suggests that the first question critical readers should ask themselves is “Where am I? Am I listening to a propagandist? Is this a news show? Is it an opinion show?”

Besides our individual need to stay informed, there’s an even broader issue at stake. The Internet has provided a platform for billions of voices, freeing readers and writers alike from the constraints of traditional gatekeepers. Yet eliminating those filters hasn’t done away with the need for them, for the ability to find, and support, reputable sources. If audiences themselves don’t collectively take on that role, if they simply drive traffic and readership to the most sensational though unverified sites, then we’re not much better off than the days when we had no choice at all.

It might seem like a daunting task if you’re used to skimming headlines and absorbing information without questioning it. But the alternative is to form opinions about world events—from local politics to revolutions halfway around the world—in a strange sort of vacuum. One that’s full of information, yet at the same time completely empty of meaning.

**AUSU UPDATE: SEPTEMBER 2011****Bethany Tynes, President****Update on AUSU awards program**

AUSU has long had a student awards program to recognize outstanding students and assist those in need. Over the course of the last couple years, though, we've sought to revamp and revise our awards portfolio to improve existing awards and add new ones! We now have a wide array of bursaries to support students in need (including our popular computer and travel bursaries), scholarships to recognize students' outstanding academic achievements, and merit-based awards to recognize students' exceptional abilities and extra-curricular activities. Some awards are open to application at any time of year, while many have semi-annual deadlines. Our next major awards deadline is November 1<sup>st</sup>, so make sure you check our site for more information and get your application in by then!

**AUSU newsletter hitting mailboxes near you . . .**

Every four to six months, AUSU publishes a printed newsletter full of helpful information for students and updates on what the Union is working on. The newsletter is drafted by AUSU's Executive Director with assistance from the AUSU Media Committee. Our most recent newsletter has been mailed out, and if it hasn't reached you yet, keep an eye on your mailbox, because it should arrive soon. If you just can't wait to see it, though, you can also e-mail our office for a PDF copy.

**Watch for a new AUSU website coming soon!**

Our website has served us long and well, but it is starting to show its age in some areas, so we're preparing to give our site a full facelift! We are currently just in the planning stages, but we're hopeful that within the next couple of months, we'll be able to announce a grand unveiling of our new site. We'll be making sure that our new and improved site is easier to navigate, with slick new menus and a contemporary look and feel. We want our site to provide dynamic content and updates so that it's a place that you, as an AU student, WANT to visit regularly! If you have suggestions on content you'd like to see on our website, please get in touch with us to share your ideas.

**Have you heard . . .**

Have you heard that we still have some of our awesome 2011 AUSU Handbook/Planners available? Some of the information in these little books is priceless when it comes to helping AU students navigate the University and our services—but they're free for you, just for being an AUSU member! We even mail them right to your door. All you have to do is ask!



And have you heard about our SmartDraw program? We've been arranging for a license for our students to use this software for the last few years. It lets you create detailed charts and insert them into your assignments (even ones you submit as Word or PDF documents). The company has warned us, though, that there will be a massive price increase next year, so we want to know if our students feel that the software is a help to them, or if they'd rather have us look into other options. Get your copy today, and let us know what you think.

### Get in touch with us

Have comments or questions about AUSU or anything in this column? Feel free to get in touch with AUSU President Bethany Tynes at [president@ausu.org](mailto:president@ausu.org). You can also e-mail our office at [ausu@ausu.org](mailto:ausu@ausu.org) or call 1-800-788-9041 ext. 3413. We'd love to hear from you!

*This column is provided by AUSU to facilitate communication with its members. The Voice does not write or edit this section; all content has been exclusively and directly provided by AUSU, and any questions or comments about the material should be directed to [ausu@ausu.org](mailto:ausu@ausu.org).*

## CHRONICLES OF CRUISCIN LAN

Wanda Waterman



## INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK



### At Home: Flexible Care

Parents who work or attend school need child care options, but more often than not, working out the scheduling feels like a full-time job of its own. And for those who have irregular hours, the traditional daycare models really don't fit the bill. However, the need for flexibility is being recognized by schools and workplaces—and now child care centres are catching on.

As *The Globe and Mail* [reports](#), “new, flexible daycare[s]” like Budding Children’s Garden and Daycare in Vancouver, B.C., provide an exciting model for the future.

Budding, which will open this fall, “works like a car co-op, but . . . it’s care-share.” Parents can pre-purchase blocks of monthly care, and can use their purchased time as their schedule dictates, space permitting. To make scheduling easier, parents “can book the hours online, and reservations and cancellations can be made as late as an hour in advance.”

Other than its unique scheduling approach, Budding will be like many other daycares, with “art activities, books, toys and circle time.”

### Around the World: The Invisible Man

It’s not limited to classic horror films: science and art have long been intrigued with the concept of rendering ourselves invisible. Now, new scientific research from Japan has uncovered a substance that may someday get us a little closer to that reality. The real surprise, though, is the breakthroughs it could mean for the medical world.

As *National Geographic’s* Daily News Site [reports](#) the new substance, Sca/e, “turns brain tissue totally transparent.”

Although experimentation has so far only occurred with mice, scientists are confident that “applications are neither limited to mice nor to the brain,” one of the scientists involved told reporters.

In fact, the researchers hope to someday use the substance to allow a deeper examination of human patients. Because Sca/e “makes body tissue so crystal clear,” scientists can see the “fluorescent markers” that are used in brain research and treatment, for example. Up until now, clarifying compounds have the tendency to “wash away the signals of fluorescent proteins,” something that’s not an issue with Sca/e.

Currently, Sca/e is not safe for living body tissue. However, scientists not affiliated with the development of Sca/e are cautious but optimistic: as one neurologist told reporters, “[Seeing] something like this really had a wow factor.”

# CLASSIFIEDS

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Classifieds are free for AU students! Contact [voice@voicemagazine.org](mailto:voice@voicemagazine.org) for more information.

## THE VOICE

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