

THE VOICE

MAGAZINE

Vol 20 Iss 14 2012-04-13

Minimalist

Nothing is everything

Prison Break

Crime, race, and class

Real Fiction

Guidestones

*Plus:
Course Exam
From Where I Sit
and much more!*



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www.voicemagazine.org

500 Energy Square
10109 – 106 ST NW
Edmonton AB
T5J 3L7

800.788.9041 ext. 2905

Email
voice@voicemagazine.org

Publisher
AU Students' Union

Editor-In-Chief
Tamra Ross

Managing Editor
Christina M. Frey

Regular Contributors
Hazel Anaka
Katie D'Souza
S.D. Livingston
Wanda Waterman

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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.



Correction

Re: "Gregor's Bed: Ensemble Polaris, *Uncharted Waters*" by Wanda Waterman, v20i11 (2012-03-16)

Recently *The Voice Magazine* published a review of the new Ensemble Polaris album, *Uncharted Waters*. We apologize to guest percussionist Jeff Wilson for not including his name among the musicians in Ensemble Polaris. His contributions to *Uncharted Waters* were clearly invaluable.

BROAD MINDS THINK SMALL

Max Birkner



Part I: Cluttered to the Bone

The Jeep had been stolen, Reno finally admitted. Natalie and I were halfway across America by that point. We had been thumbing our way across the continent, our last hurrah as reckless teenagers. Reno and Penny had picked us up in Fox Creek, Arizona—a modern-day Bonnie and Clyde, but with less sex appeal.

On day four with our new desperado friends, we drove into Forrest City, Arkansas. Natalie and I left our duffle bag in the car to go into a Wal-Mart to use the washroom. Reno and Penny were going to a gas station to ask directions. When we came out, the car was gone.

It was a chilly December night. The snow had begun to fall. We stood on the concrete, Natalie and I, the flakes coming down around us, the empty white lines of the parking lot stretching out like a field. We were 3,500 kilometres from home. In our pockets we had our wallets with ID, but no money. We had one cotton sweater between us.

It was one of the greatest moments of my life.

Have you ever lost everything you thought you needed? Have you ever cleaned up your desk and found it easier to think? Have you ever gone on vacation and only used three out of the ten t-shirts you packed? When I was little, I used to wonder about the cartoon characters who set off on their adventures with nothing but a bundle tied to a stick. Where was the rest of their stuff?

Hello. My name is Max. I'm a 24-year-old student. My favorite color is green. And I am a minimalist.

A minimalist is someone who wants as few objects as possible. If this is you, you are the opposite of a hoarder. You will never be one of those TV types who lives alone with 27 felines in a massive house full of furniture left behind by three dead spouses. As I write this, I sit in the bedroom of my tiny basement suite. In the room there is a desk and a mattress. On the desk sits my laptop. There are two duffel bags full of clothing and essentials, like my passport. There is a closet that holds a few shoes and my tent. In a corner there is a pile of beat-up wooden furniture that is about to make its way to the alley. It took me an hour to move into this place (it was furnished). The move was completed when my girlfriend brought over a knife and fork from her place. She insisted, although I do fairly well with a metal camping spoon and my Leatherman pocketknife. Every day I commute on the Canada Line, the same line that goes past my regular stop and on to Vancouver International. In an instant I could be gone. In an hour, I could be on a flight to anywhere.

How do you become a minimalist? Like everything worthwhile, it takes time (except in those instances when you're suddenly stranded in Arkansas without a toothbrush). You don't have to throw a Molotov cocktail into your house and call it a day. Minimizing, keeping output high and intake low, is a lifestyle—something you do every day. And it's very rewarding.

As a student, especially at a place like AU where the nature of the institution attracts flexible, DIY types, minimizing is a ticket to good grades. Less clutter is guaranteed to boost your concentration. It's also a money saver: fewer payments on fewer big toys means more liquid assets, which means tons of flexibility. Honduras on a whim, here you go.

For a starter guide to minimizing, look below. It's not an extensive list (that wouldn't be very minimalistic of me). But it's a sampling, and downsizing is easy and fun to figure out once you get started.

1. Get rid of something every day. This does not have to be wasteful. Give things to charity or thrift stores, or sell them at consignment shops and in classified advertisements. Kijiji will be your friend.

2. Digitalize your life. Banking and bill paying can all be done online. School notes, homework, and music can all be kept exclusively on a laptop. Only print out the essentials.

3. Spend money on experiences. Go bungee jumping instead of shopping. Attend an event or get involved with a community group. It doesn't have to be a book club: join a rock-climbing gym or take a carpentry class. You might even learn something—a rich alternative to owning another pair of blue suede shoes.

4. Move to a new place. This is a good way to start out fresh. Look for a furnished apartment so you don't have to go through borrowing a friend's truck every time you move.

5. Ditch the TV. This could go in with Step 1, but it's such a big item that it deserves its own number. All our clocks are ticking. Every time we sit down in front of the boob tube, we're inadvertently watching other people have adventurous, enriching, glamorous lives, while cheating ourselves out of the same experience. If you knew ahead of time that tomorrow afternoon a shoddy plywood construction tunnel would leave you crushed under a fallen pile of bricks, would you really be thinking about another *House* rerun or would you be doing things that mattered? Spend your time—and your money—on your dreams.

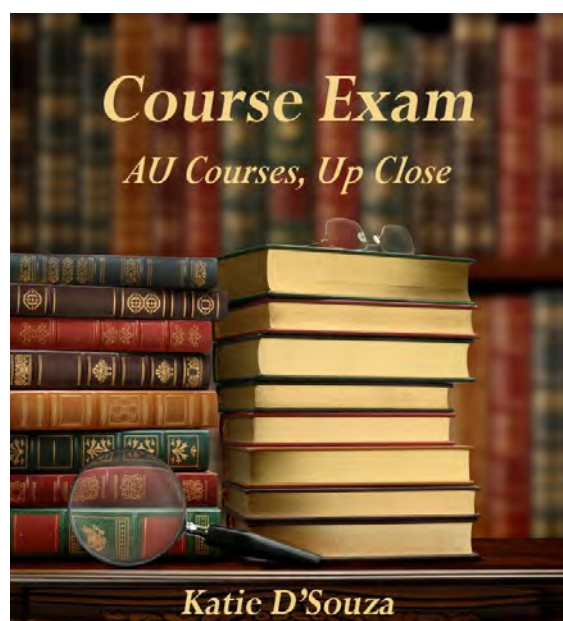
Standing in the parking lot with Natalie, I felt something lift from my shoulders. It was a mystifying sensation: a revelation. We had nothing. But we were still okay. I stood there frozen in my spot, not from



the wind but from the freedom. Natalie was swearing a blue streak. Late-night shoppers looked at us. I swore and said something to make her feel better, pretending to be upset. But I was trying to stop myself from smiling. What we would do now, where we would go, I had no idea. But there was nothing tying me down, either. By the wrenching away of everything I had, my life had suddenly started.

(To be continued.)

"Every time we sit down in front of the boob tube, we're inadvertently watching other people have adventurous, enriching, glamorous lives, while cheating ourselves out of the same experience."



CRJS 495: Sex Crimes

Athabasca University's newest criminal justice offering, CRJS 495: Sex Crimes, delves into the study of possibly the most damaging criminology: sexual crimes. A three-credit course in the social sciences, the course "provides both a theoretical and behavioural analysis of common sexual crimes," says course professor Dr. Mark Nesca. Dr. Nesca feels that CRJS 495 "will appeal to students interested in law enforcement or careers that bring them into direct contact with sexual offenders." The course is offered through independent study online.

CRJS 495 consists of seven units. Unit 1 provides background, discussing sexual behaviours, crimes, and the various theories behind why some of these crimes exist. The second unit

continues this trend, examining changing perceptions of sexual crimes, behaviours, and attitudes throughout history.

The main body of the course begins with the next unit. Unit 3 examines incest and pedophilia, while Unit 4 covers pornography. These units, and indeed the whole course, focus not only on the crime but also on "types of offenders and the ways in which their behaviours can be modified."

Additionally, CRJS 495 attempts to stay current, drawing in relevant aspects of modern society. Unit 5 particularly reflects this, discussing sex crimes and potential sex crimes that are linked to the widespread use of the Internet and social media.

Unit 6 covers homicides, focussing specifically on murders related to sexuality. This unit also covers the topic of sexual assault, and students will debate the merits of the various theories of its occurrence. CRJS 495's final unit ties it all together, with a particular focus on offenders: how justice is applied, and the controversy over whether rehabilitation is a viable option for sex offenders.

Student evaluation in CRJS 495 includes seven unit quizzes, each worth five per cent of the final grade. There is also a research paper (worth 25 per cent), which is open topic: students can choose anything that "is course relevant and has the approval of their tutor," says Dr. Nesca. The course concludes with a multiple-choice final exam (worth 40 per cent of the final grade).

Dr. Mark Nesca has a Master's degree in social psychology and a Ph.D. in clinical psychology, and is highly respected in the field of forensic psychology. He is considered a forensic expert throughout the Court of Alberta and has worked alongside the Calgary and Edmonton police units.

For more information on CRJS 495, visit the course [website](#).

IN CONVERSATION WITH . . .

Wanda Waterman



Paul Leighton, Part I

Paul Leighton is a Diversity Fellow and a Technology Fellow in the Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Criminology at the University of Eastern Michigan. He has co-authored a number of important books on crime and violence, including Class, Race, Gender and Crime. He's often quoted by major media outlets in the United States and beyond. On March 12, as part of the Saul O Sidore Lectures Series at Plymouth State University, he spoke on the subject discussed

in his book The Rich Get Richer and the Poor Get Prison: Inequality, Corporate Power and Crime (co-authored with Jeffrey Reiman), arguing that the kind of extreme economic inequality that exists in the United States today increases the incidence and severity of crime at both ends of the class spectrum. Recently he took the time to discuss his research with Wanda Waterman.

"Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great! . . . The kings of the earth committed adultery with her, and the merchants of the earth grew rich from her excessive luxuries."

Revelation 18: 2-3 (NIV)

The (Dire) Social Repercussions of Inequality

Do you believe that the present generation is properly equipped to tackle the problem of crime in America?

Let's be clear that the crime problem in America is 1) violent crime and 2) white-collar and corporate crime. There is enough research that we can feel comfortable in recommending a wide range of evidence-based policies. So we have solutions. The problem is being able to influence Congress in order to implement solutions. For violent crime this involves longer-term policies, many of which do not benefit the interests of the criminal justice-industrial complex. For white-collar crime this involves campaign finance reform and overturning the *Citizens United* decision that allows corporations to contribute unlimited money to elections.

Anyone interested in solutions to violent crime should read Elliott Currie's book, *Crime and Punishment in America*. His critique of tough-on-crime is dated, but correct. He has an accessible review of the literature and suggests that "four priorities seem especially critical: preventing child abuse and neglect, enhancing children's intellectual and social development, providing support and guidance to vulnerable adolescents, and working intensively with juvenile offenders."

Solutions to white-collar and corporate crime also have been well developed. There are literally hundreds

of solutions that range from requiring corporations [to] publicize their crimes (and undermine their PR efforts) to having an annual white-collar and corporate crime report to the nation. Establishing a division within the Department of Justice to deal with corporate crime seems obvious, as does further expansion of whistle-blower laws.

Why do you not equate prisons with justice?

I see prison as being justified for a range of violent and white-collar offenders because of the harm they do. But prison as we currently use it has a number of problems.

First, it is overused, and the US has the highest incarceration rate in the world. This has meant incarceration for many people—disproportionately minority—who have committed petty or drug offenses. It has also created a criminal justice-industrial complex that feeds off the billions of dollars we spend; it promotes its own good and profits above public safety. We even have private prisons that run prisons for a profit and have shares traded on Wall Street.

Second, it has a number of criminogenic, or crime-producing, effects. If prisons are schools for crime, building prisons and locking people up is not a good solution. We know prisons do not rehabilitate and that inmates adapt to prison in ways that do not make them more empathetic or compassionate to others. Excessive use of prison also causes community disorganization by pulling people out of the community and returning them worse for their stay in prison. This creates additional problems, and the children of inmates also tend to have problems.

Third, prison is expensive. It can be \$25,000 to \$50,000 a year depending on security level and location. That's about \$60 billion a year we spend on prisons, and some of that money . . . could be better spent in other ways.

"We can either have democracy in this country or we can have great wealth concentrated in the hands of a few, but we can't have both."

*Supreme Court Justice
Louis Brandeis*



So we pay a lot of money for prisons, money that ends up reducing public safety and causing other social problems. We need to do a better job considering economic, racial, and community impacts in deciding on the level of imprisonment. We need to think more about releasing offenders who have not been harmed by the prison system (punished, yes; made worse, no). And we need to readjust the balance of minor street offenders in prison and wealthy executives not in prison.

How does the media enable corporate crime in America?

They reinforce the association of "crime" with "street crime" rather than acts done by corporations that harm workers, consumers, communities, and the environment. People thus see the biggest threat to them as coming from the poor rather than from the rich. Tough-on-crime policies are then directed at the poor rather than at

corporations. The portrayal of street criminals also tends to locate their crimes in individual pathology or bad choices, so our unequal society is not examined or held up as something we need to change.

The other big concern is corporate ownership of media—GE’s ownership of NBC Universal, for example, which gives it control over NBC News, MSNBC, CNBC, USA Network, and others. So we get endless *CSI* (*Crime Scene Investigation*) programs, but no *Mortgage Fraud Investigation* programs. We get USA’s *White Collar* series that almost never features wrongdoing by corporations or government.

(To be continued.)

CLICK OF THE WRIST

Get Rid of It

Decluttering? Downsizing? Filling up a giant dumpster with stuff we don’t need is a great feeling, but it’s not very planet-friendly. There are countless organizations and companies to which you can bring or mail your unneeded items and make a few dollars or enrich the lives of people who aren’t as fortunate. Here’s a small sampling:

Eyeglasses

The Lions Club International has an eyeglass recycling program that accepts donations and distributes them via “humanitarian distribution teams.” Either drop them off in your local community or mail them to the main recycling centre in Calgary. Your unwanted glasses could bring someone the gift of sight!

Textbooks

You’re so finished with that math textbook, but no local used bookstores seem interested. However, online book buyback site Books Into Cash may take it—along with other texts and even school-appropriate classic novels. If you’re based in Canada, be sure to check their FAQs for information on how to apply for a credit for some of your shipping fees.

Books for Kids

If your kids have outgrown their gently used books, consider donating them to the Children’s Book Bank. The Toronto-based program helps provide reading material to disadvantaged kids.

Bigger Stuff

Excess Access is a unique program that matches donors and non-profit organizations. Donors post items they have available—usually larger items like furniture, appliances, larger toys, and office supplies, although many smaller things are listed—and non-profits post their wish lists. Excess Access matches donors and non-profits within a certain postal code radius. Typically the non-profits are responsible for pick-up arrangements, although donors may handle the drop-off themselves.



WRITE STUFF

S.D. Livingston



Guidestones: Trevor (David Fox) and Sandy (Supinder Wraich) approach the Guidestones monument.

Guidestones

A mysterious monument. Whispers of a conspiracy. Grisly murders and a search for clues. It's the stuff of darkened theatres, the type of thing we love to sit back and enjoy. But what if you could join the search—and never be quite sure how much is real and how much is pure invention? *Guidestones*, an interactive web thriller, lets you do exactly that.

When I first saw the series' website, I assumed the Guidestones were simply a cool piece of fiction. A mysterious granite monolith, engraved with instructions for surviving the apocalypse, keeps solitary watch on a hill in Georgia. Intriguing, but hardly based in reality. Except that they are. Nearly 200 thousand pounds worth of real, and almost as controversial. (You can get a fascinating look at their history in this *Wired* [article](#).)

And the *Guidestones* interactive series? Not only does it involve the fascinating real-life Guidestones, but its creation sprang from a real mystery. That clinched it. It was time to sit down and figure out the twists and turns with creator Jay Ferguson.

To start with, I can't help wondering if I'm the only person who's never heard of the Georgia monolith, and just how Ferguson discovered it.

"There was an article in *Wired* magazine," he says, "and it was about the Georgia Guidestones and a friend forwarded it to me and I became immediately fascinated with the structure. So I started doing research . . . and then I came across this woman in a chat room. She had this kind of crazy story."

At first he dismissed it. "And then I went back and started researching a bunch of the things she had said to me," he continues, "and there was some validity to some of it. The series itself certainly isn't entirely what happened to her, but her story was kind of a jumping-off point for me. So it was definitely inspired by an actual person."

Although Jay's background is in documentary filmmaking (in 2008 he won the Canadian Society of Cinematographer's top award for cinematography), at the time that he encountered the real-life conspiracy he was also trying to figure out "interesting and unique ways to distribute things online." *Guidestones* the thriller was born.

In spite of the mystery, controversy, and even vandalism surrounding the structure, the series' crew didn't run into any problems filming at the site. "We just showed up and started shooting . . . and nobody ever

turned up. I wondered at that, because there's nobody really to talk to. Nobody knows who's in charge of them. I sort of had my fingers crossed and everything was fine."

Guidestones is an interactive web thriller that allows viewers to follow the story as it unfolds in real time. Viewers can also track clues on the thriller's related sites and apps to figure out what's coming next. It's an innovation in storytelling—and very addictive!

The result is a gripping series that had me hooked from the start. The story follows two journalism students, Sandy Rai (Supinder Wraich) and Trevor Shale (Dan Fox), thrust into dangerous and cryptic events when a course assignment leads them to the trail of a recent murder.

Each episode arrives in viewers' inboxes in real time—that is, they follow the timing of events as they happen to the characters. So if the action moves quickly, with major discoveries only minutes apart, viewers will get two or three episodes in quick succession. If there's a gap (say, where the characters are travelling), viewers won't get a new episode until a realistic amount of time has passed. That might be a day or more, since the action takes place across three continents.

But that doesn't mean you have to wait before figuring out clues. As Ferguson notes in one of the site's trailers, "you don't know when the next episode's coming, but if you watch the last one . . . and you scrutinize it, there are clues in there that can help you get to find out what the characters are going to discover in the next episode. You can actually get ahead of the protagonists if you choose."

There's a *Guidestones* app as well (for both mobile and desktop), where viewers enter clues they've discovered and get new information. Several episodes have links to supplemental content, like videos and blogs and other sites built specifically for the series.

Ideally, Ferguson would like to do at least one more season of *Guidestones*, and possibly two.

One interesting connection to the engravings on the real Guidestones is an ongoing project of Ferguson's, the documentary *Uncivilized*. It's a complex, fascinating series that explores modern global civilization, and I noticed that some of its major themes—like sustainability and the collapse of civilization—are reflected in his online thriller.

Although he didn't consciously highlight those themes in *Guidestones*, Ferguson believes that "we're all a little bit curious about the future. Especially in a time when you can see change happening so rapidly, [both] positive and negative. I think every day I'm constantly engaged with this notion of what are we doing to ourselves, and how much of it is random and how much is controlled."



Guidestones: Sandy (Supinder Wraich) follows the Guidestone clues in India.

As far as future projects, Ferguson believes that “audiences, less and less, want to be totally passive in their storytelling experience.” He likes the idea of “being able to tell the story across multiple devices. So you could be watching an episode on your TV or your laptop, and then engaging in a different way in the story on your phone or other device.”

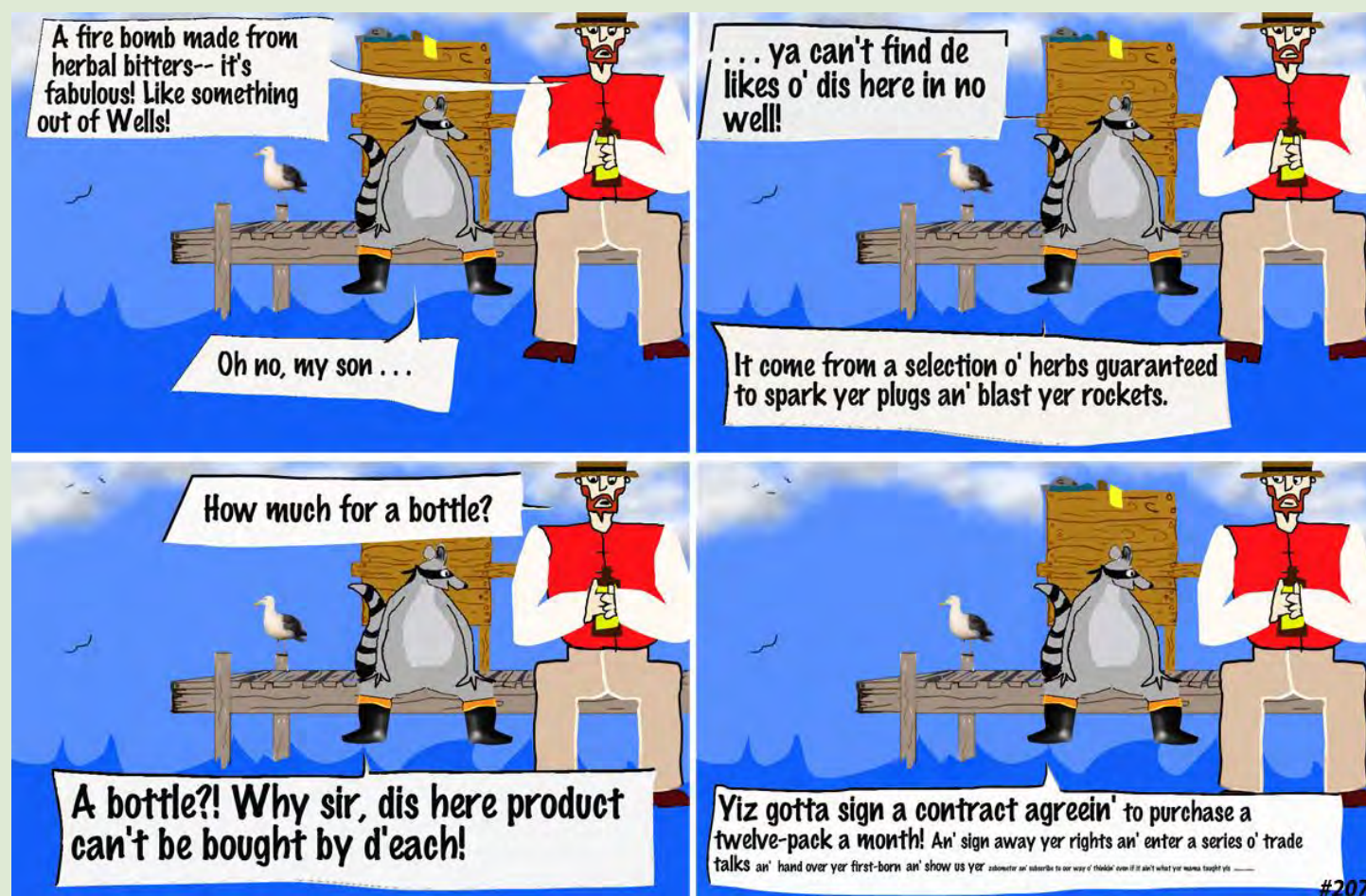
No doubt Ferguson will impress with his next innovation, since *Guidestones* is top-notch. The lead actors, Wraich and Fox, bring an unstudied, natural feel to the screen, and I’ve actually caught myself wondering at random moments what their characters were doing—as if Sandy and Trevor are real. The overall quality of the series easily rivals larger productions, and the blending of fiction and reality is seamless. Are those crumbling buildings and their dark histories real places or inventions? I still need to Google to find out.

For now, though, it’s time to check my inbox for the next episode.

S.D. Livingston is the author of several books, including the new suspense novel Kings of Providence. Visit her [website](#) for information on her writing (and for more musings on the literary world!).

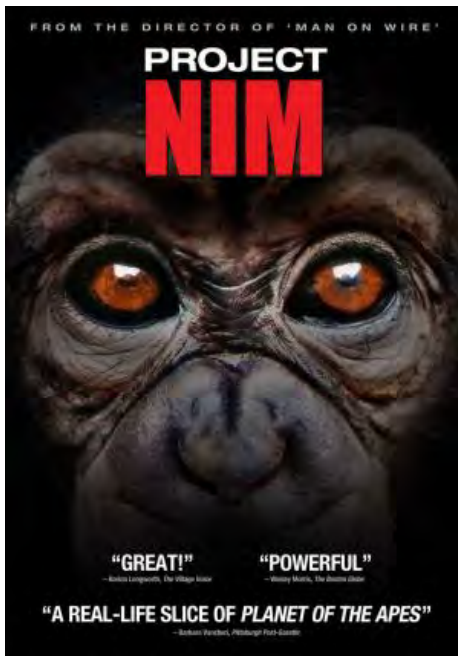
CHRONICLES OF CRUISCIN LAN

Wanda Waterman



THE MINDFUL BARD

Wanda Waterman



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

Film: *Project Nim* (2011)

Director: James Marsh

Genre: Documentary

"The insufferable arrogance of human beings to think that Nature was made solely for their benefit, as if it was conceivable that the sun had been set afire merely to ripen men's apples and head their cabbages."

Cyrano de Bergerac

How do you make a sociopath? Take him away from his mom too early, have him adopted by a family of rich, hedonistic hippies who don't believe in saying "no," and let him do what he wants—then take him away from that family and subject him to intensive language training in a sterile laboratory. Every time he becomes deeply attached to a parental figure, take that figure away. Isolate him for extended periods in a cage. Keep him from his own kind and let him think he's something he's not. When he no longer serves your purposes and starts acting out the behaviours that are the logical result of the treatment you've given him, use him for medical experiments.

But what could possibly justify subjecting someone to this kind of life? This goal: to scientifically determine the likelihood of being able to plumb the intellect of a fellow primate.

Nim Chimpsky was a chimpanzee born in 1973. The name is ironic given that behavioural psychologist Herbert S. Terrace's experiment with Nim was attempting to challenge Noam Chomsky's theory that only humans could learn language. A similar experiment had been conducted with the chimp Washoe and with much better results, but both experiments failed to produce evidence that chimps were capable of communicating in language. Neither chimp had been able to effectively use syntax to express meaning in sentences; although they were able to construct simple sentences, they were unable to change word order to express specific meanings (e.g., they could not distinguish between "you pick me up" and "me pick you up").

Nim is the star of his own life, his every need catered to, his whims indulged. He doesn't know that he's part of an experiment in the same way that Jim Carrey's character in *The Truman Show* doesn't know that his life is an artificial staging of a kind of reality TV. When his expectations are severely let down, Nim is just as shocked and angry as is Truman when he discovers that his life is a sham.

Project Nim is a prime example of creative documentary, the digital equivalent of the kind of literary non-fiction espoused by Truman Capote; it organizes and presents the facts in such a way as to recount a moving story in a memorable way.

Why would a mindful artist benefit from watching this? As much as the history of Nim shows us that despite our common DNA, humans and chimps are fundamentally different, it's impossible not to anthropomorphize. Nim has a kind of soul and his life is a kind of human tragedy. As mistaken as this may be, watching the story unfold is still an enlightening experience.

In the end, what we see from the story of Nim (as from the stories of Washoe and of Coco the gorilla) is that when we observe our fellow creatures we must never separate cognitive ability from emotion. The thing staring us in the face is the utter dependence of living things on the omnipresence of love and the natural readiness of all creatures to give and receive it.

Project Nim fulfills 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 is about attainment of the true self; 5) it inspires an awareness of the sanctity of creation; 6) it displays an engagement with and compassionate response to suffering; and 7) it makes me appreciate that life is a complex and rare phenomenon, making living a unique opportunity.

Wanda also penned the poems for the artist book They Tell My Tale to Children Now to Help Them to be Good, a collection of meditations on fairy tales, illustrated by artist Susan Malmstrom.

DID YOU KNOW?

Google Art Project



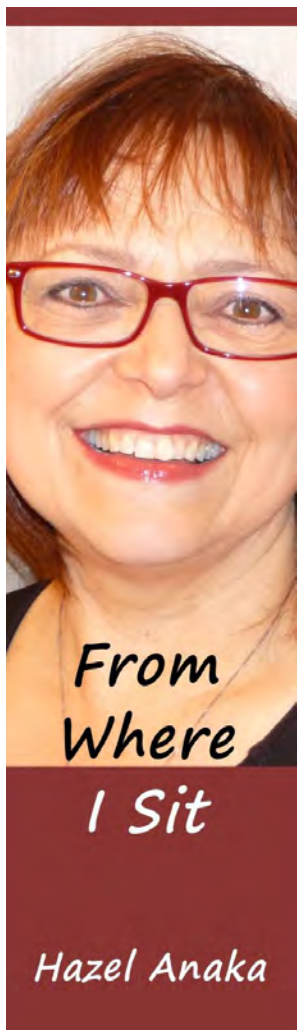
Searching for artistic inspiration—or the chance to relax while examining works of art? Whether you prefer the Louvre (Paris), the Museum of Modern Art (New York), or the Museum of Islamic Art (Qatar), there's a world of exploration available right at your fingertips with Google's new Art Project.

And you don't even need to leave your chair.

The Art Project, “a collaboration between Google and . . . art partners from across 40 countries,” is a “unique online art experience” that allows users to explore museums, artists, and collections from around the world. Over 30,000 works of art are currently available on the site, including “paintings, drawings, sculptures, historic and religious artefacts, photographs and important manuscripts.”

Some of the artwork can be examined “at brushstroke level detail,” while other pieces take the form of a virtual tour. You can also enhance your experience with video and audio guides, museum information, educational materials, and viewing notes. Users also have the option to create their own galleries with their favourite pieces from an eclectic group of museums.

In the future, Google Art Project is considering expanding to “showcase how Artists are using new emerging technologies to showcase their Art.”



Cancun or Bust

"As I write this, I've just consummated my first Kijiji sale. And it feels good. It couldn't have happened without my daughter-in-law, Carrie. She's a pro—and more conveniently located than our farm, which is a hundred kilometres from Edmonton. No one will travel that distance for anything but the biggest items.

Carrie offered her help, I believe at least in part, so that I'd never again bring up the idea of a garage sale at *their* place. Come on, aren't my designer bags more likely to fetch a pretty penny in Sherwood Park than in small-town Alberta? She wants no part of it, so instead she posts my listings and uses her address.

Because I don't want to push my luck, so far I've only given her three smallish items to sell: a Tungsten E2 Palm Pilot and accessories, a five-piece tapestry Oscar de la Renta luggage set, and a beautiful wooden jewellery box. It was the Palm Pilot that sold.

I told Roy that we should try to finance next January's trip to our niece's destination wedding in Mexico strictly by Kijiji sales. \$80 down; much, much more to go.

So far he's been far better at buying than selling. That in itself borders on near miraculous, because a short 18 months ago he couldn't turn on a computer.

To date he's bought a Hesston swather from a John Deere dealership in St. Paul and two pickup trucks in private sales. Two old farm trucks chose the same year to die. With over 400,000 kilometres and a couple transmission jobs on one of them, we've gotten our money's worth out of the old Chevy. The other one has also had its day and has served us well.

When Roy wrote off the third one, our newest, best truck (1999), in a collision with a deer, he turned into a crazy man. He's logged countless hours looking at hundreds of pages of GM and Chevy listings on Kijiji. It was the first and last thing he did each day (and many times in between). When his original (wishful) budget doubled, the possibilities exploded. We've looked at several; he's test driven some. Now it's crunch time. With deposits on two separate dealer trucks and a third private sale in limbo, the time is now to stop looking, dammit, and just buy a truck.

The decision is just days away and I, for one, will be glad to have it over. I'm not sure what he will do to fill his days, but you can be sure I'll be pushing him to put as much time and energy into unloading some stuff as he did in spending money. I keep reminding him you can sell stuff on there too!

Maybe with this first small success I should try again with the professional circular mat cutter. There's also the cattle squeeze and the old International Harvester seed drill. We'll need some bigger sales to get us to Cancun, from where I sit.

Hazel Anaka's first novel is *Lucky Dog*. Visit her [website](#) for more information or follow her on Twitter @anakawrites.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK



At Home: Northern Lights

Whether visible or not, chemical fogs often hang over heavily populated areas, polluting the air and causing unknown damage to human beings as well as to plant and animal life. However, what we may not realize is that the chemicals may also be seeping north to sully some of the last untainted air in North America.

As the CBC [reports](#), scientists from Environment Canada have found that “flame retardants . . . are drifting from the south all the way up to the High Arctic.”

The chemicals are “often sprayed onto products like furniture, computer equipment or children’s clothing” and

“keep flames from spreading.” Previously they have only been found near populated areas, but the recent reports showed their presence at a remote monitoring station in Nunavut.

Scientists are still researching how long they will remain in the environment, but concern has been raised because the chemicals “can take a long time to break down, and . . . accumulate in plants and animals.”

As one US researcher told reporters, “You can’t take it back once it’s out there. And if we keep on putting them out there, then sooner or later we may have a serious problem.”

Around the World: All for an “I”

We all want to own the latest electronic toys. But just how far would we go to get one? For one Chinese teen, the answer was extreme.

As the *Toronto Star* [reports](#), the 17-year-old high school student sold one of his kidneys to finance the purchase of a new iPhone and iPad.

Five people, including a surgeon and “brokers who looked for donors online and leased an operating room to conduct the procedure” have been indicted and charged with “intentional injury for organizing the removal and transplant of a kidney.”

The illegal trade in organs in China is in part fuelled by the organ shortage; while “about 1.5 million people in China need organ transplants . . . only about 10,000 transplants are performed each year.”

So-called donors participate to gain funds for everything from smart phones to debt repayment to medical services.

AUSU UPDATE: MARCH 2012

Bethany Tynes, President



ELECTION RESULTS!

AUSU Elections were held March 3-6, 2012, and 17 candidates appeared on the ballot. Thank you to all who ran, and all who voted! The nine candidates who have been elected to form the 2012-2014 AUSU Council are: **Wendy Barnard, Bethany Tynes, James Ramsbottom, Evan Schmidt, Ashley Charlton, Toni Fox, Kim Newsome, Jason Nixon, and Craig French.**

Of the nine candidates elected, four are incumbents (James, Toni, Kim, and Bethany), while five are fresh new faces! We'll look forward to sharing more about our new group as time goes on, but for an introduction, here's what they had to say about themselves while still campaigning:

Wendy Barnard: "In 2009 I enrolled in AU's BComm Accounting program, and it was the best decision I ever made. Until that point I had been randomly taking courses at various colleges and universities throughout Toronto, trying to piece together my own BComm. AU made everything simpler. As a part-time student at AU I still have plenty of time to devote to my (almost) husband and challenging teenage boy. I am also able to work full-time in the accounting industry (using what I learn to constantly improve myself) and still have time to do things I enjoy. My main hobbies are knitting and crocheting for charity, reading and reviewing books for my blog, and wrestling with my two German Shepherd "puppies." During my time at Mohawk College in Hamilton I was elected Business Director of their Student Council. It was a great experience and I hope to bring that knowledge to my position with AUSU. My main focus is to create a voice for the student body by interacting with them regularly through social media to learn, and share, their issues and ideas. A fellow student once called me AU proud, and he couldn't be more right!"

Evan Schmidt: "Hello fellow members of AUSU! I'm a part-time student and I live in the town of Vaudreuil-Dorion, located in the outskirts of Montreal. I am currently enrolled in the Certificate of Marketing, and later plan on completing my Bachelor's degree after getting a few more certificates. I've been home-schooled since I was 10, live in a francophone community, am vegetarian, have six dogs, and have been involved with AU and AUSU since I was 14 (I am 20 now), so I really appreciate how Athabasca caters to the uniqueness of each student. Often doing things backwards myself (heck, I got my pilot's license two years before my driver's license!), I realize the importance of making sure that everyone is represented. I volunteer three nights a week with the Air Cadet Program (for teens ages 12-18), so I know what hard work and dedication can accomplish (hence the pilot's license!). I always strive for excellence and make sure that everything counts. That is why I think I would be great on the AUSU Student Council. It would be my honour to represent my fellow students, and a responsibility I would not take lightly!"

Ashley Charlton: “I have been an AU student since September 2009, working on a BA with an English major. I am a stay-at-home parent to my two preschool-aged daughters. My hobbies include long-distance running, playing the saxophone, and snowboarding; I am especially excited to be running my first-ever full marathon this summer. I also enjoy volunteering within my community. For over five years I was a member of the executive for minor soccer and I am now in my third year of acting as the secretary for the non-profit performance band that I play in. My previous involvement in minor sports gave me ample experience in conflict resolution and problem solving, while my experience with my band involves creative fundraising, finding new ways to recruit members, and keeping organized. I feel that these experiences, as well as my enthusiasm for AU and the flexible education opportunities it offers, make me an ideal candidate for a position on AUSU’s student council. During my time at AU I have found the AUSU community to be exceedingly welcoming and supportive and I would love the opportunity to serve this community by continuing the positive atmosphere and providing useful resources for its members.”

Jason Nixon: Jason Nixon lives in Sundre, Alberta and is in AU BComm program (Accounting Major). Jason has a BA Diploma from SAIT which he completed through distance education as well as over 10 years of management experience in both the for-profit industry and lately as an Executive Director of a non-profit agency working with urban underprivileged in a rural setting. Jason is excited about the opportunity to represent his fellow students on the council and if elected will use his experience and skills in management, program development, and distance education to work with council members and the AUSU executive to advance our members’ interests.

Craig French: “Eleven years after graduating with a degree in Computer Engineering and Management from McMaster University, I felt the urge to broaden my academic horizons. I enrolled in a night course at McMaster. However, I found that the structure of a traditional university course was challenging to interweave with my additional responsibilities as a husband, a parent of three young children, and my career as a software engineer. In 2008 I discovered AU. With the flexibility it offered, I learned that I could handle my responsibilities and pursue further education simultaneously. Since then I have been enrolled in the Bachelor of Science program as a part-time student. I have the skills and experience necessary to be an effective member of the AUSU Student Council. I have board experience. I’m currently serving as Vice-Chair of a not-for-profit organization that produces subsidized fresh food boxes. I have a reputation for getting things done. I was voted ‘Executive of the Year’ as Vice-President of the Student Alumni Association of McMaster. By virtue of my profession, I bring deep technical knowledge of Internet and telecommunications technologies. Finally, I have recently received awards for my public speaking skills at Toastmasters. Vote Craig French for great results!”

We look forward to seeing what the new council will be able to accomplish during their term! Congratulations to those elected, and thanks to all who ran!

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.

CLASSIFIEDS

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THE VOICE

500 Energy Square - 10109 – 106 St NW - Edmonton AB - T5J 3L7
- Ph: 800.788.9041 ext. 2905 - Fax: 780.497.7003 attn: Voice Editor

Publisher Athabasca University Students' Union
Editor-In-Chief Tamra Ross
Managing Editor Christina M. Frey

Regular Columnists Hazel Anaka, Katie D'Souza, S.D. Livingston, Wanda Waterman

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