

THE VOICE

MAGAZINE

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A Tree Grows in Cyberspace

The Banyan Project

AUSU AGM

Annual meeting recap

Visionary

African cinema

Plus:

Antboy

*The Mindful Bard
and much more!*



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***The Voice
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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.



AUSU ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING: A RECAP

Christina M. Frey



In the midst of the recent controversy surrounding all things post-secondary, there's some good news: The AUSU Annual General Meeting, which took place via teleconference on Wednesday, April 10, showed that the undergraduate students' union is in good shape financially and is working diligently advocating for its student members and creating new and exciting opportunities.

All members of Council were in attendance, and a quorum was established. The meeting moved quickly through various housekeeping items and on to bigger topics, like the financial status of AUSU, a proposed change to the by-laws, and an outline of some of the things AUSU's been working on the past year.

VP Finance Jason Nixon presented AUSU's current and projected financial situation. At a time when budgetary woes are hitting post-secondary education hard, AUSU has been financially stable, ending the fiscal year with a surplus (despite the costs associated with the new offices). Nixon noted that AUSU is in a "strong position financially," with funds sufficient "to take care of members' needs" and "to grow."

The next order of business was amendments to the by-laws. While one amendment merely corrected a typo, the other was more significant. AUSU is committed to serving its members, and to do that more effectively it's necessary to adjust by-laws to reflect current realities. Under the Post-Secondary Learning Act, graduate students aren't represented by undergraduate students' unions. AUSU has a unique situation, as many graduate students take undergraduate courses and therefore are eligible for AUSU membership. AUSU will continue representing graduate students who are otherwise eligible for AUSU membership; however, these individuals will no longer be able to run for Council if they are "defined by AU as a graduate student."

The reasoning? Because of the Post-Secondary Learning Act, a graduate student, if elected to Council, would not be eligible to sit on committees at AU as AUSU representatives. The by-law was amended in order to allow Council to more fully serve its members. Council will be reviewing its policies to cover the unique situation of future Council members who may apply for a graduate program during their term on Council.

After the amendments to the by-laws were passed, the discussion turned to an outline of what AUSU's been doing this year. One of the most exciting projects has been coordinating AUSU member access to Lynda.com, an online database of professionally produced tutorials and training videos covering software from basic computer literacy to more specialized products, like Adobe Creative Suite. There are also videos and material on business skills, career development, and even basic software installation.

Although normally student access to Lynda.com costs \$375, because AUSU has purchased a three-year license to Lynda.com, access to tutorials and training are now completely free to AUSU members. So far the response from both members and AU personnel has been overwhelmingly positive.

AUSU is continuing to make the service more visible to students, including coordinating advertising with AU departments and “creating viewing lists grouped by topics and area of interest,” according to AUSU Executive Director Tamra Ross.

Although the official announcement will be rolled out very soon, AUSU members can access the tutorials and training now: visit the AUSU [forums](#) for more information on how to set up your Lynda.com account.

What’s next for AUSU? This year Council has continued to be busy with member advocacy and project development, but it’s full of new and exciting ideas for the future. AUSU will soon be entering its planning phase for the year, the time when it will consider still better ways to serve its members.

Got some ideas of your own? Have an issue you need resolved? Want clarification on some of what AUSU offers? AUSU wants to hear from you! Email the office at ausu@ausu.org.

DID YOU KNOW?

Online Learning



Need to brush up your skills or pursue an area of interest, but don’t want to take a formalized university course? As flexible learning becomes increasingly popular, more and more schools and organizations are offering online learning opportunities. Add two to the ever-growing list: Coursera and Udacity.

[Coursera](#), “partners with the top universities in the world to offer courses online.” Courses come with a specific start date and run anywhere from four to twelve weeks, and there are always new courses becoming available as the calendar progresses. Offerings range from English from Duke to organizational management from Vanderbilt to computer science from Princeton. Anyone can study with Coursera; all materials are freely available online.

[Udacity](#) takes a different approach; courses are also free, but are available via open enrollment. There are no deadlines. Instruction is accomplished through “bite-sized videos,” and the site offers forums and a place to arrange study groups and meetups. Current course offerings include business, computer science, math, and physics.





Férid Boughedir: Propheying the Arab Spring, Part I

Férid Boughedir, Tunisian author, screenwriter, filmmaker, director of the Carthage Film Festival, and jury member at Cannes, can boast among his great achievements his advocacy of other African filmmakers. His ability to see the big picture and his willingness to speak for the silenced make him one voice that should not be ignored.

The Buried Wish

In his 1982 documentary *Camera d'Afrique*, Boughedir offered strong evidence that art is a necessary and prophetic expression of the stifled desires of a people.

This is especially true in light of the fact that Africans and African cinema share a large number of struggles. In *Camera d'Afrique*, Boughedir showed the concerns voiced by African filmmakers at a time when they were mostly ignored. These turned out to be exactly the concerns that led to the sparking of the Arab Spring in the Maghreb region, which began with Tunisia's Jasmine Revolution in 2011.

What, for example, were some of the problems the Pan-African filmmakers pointed out? For one thing, they saw a need to protect cinema from the greed of commerce as well as from the propaganda brokers.

They bemoaned a lack of government support and at the same time a reluctance to become dependent on that support. They feared oppression while admitting that it is sometimes under oppressive regimes that the best work emerges. They voiced a desire for freedom of speech and an awareness that this would free the airwaves to the very extremists who would work with political parties to silence artists.

They spoke of their disgust with the incompetence of their leaders. They spoke of the artist's responsibility to put up limitations on the unbridled power of government and to act as a watchdog against the excesses of power. They emphasized the need to let the rest of the world know what's going on in their backyard in order to muster international solidarity.

This is so similar to the list of concerns expressed during the Arab Spring as to be practically synonymous; the Arab Spring was and continues to be a revolt against dictators kept in power by foreign greed and who served the interests of those foreign powers far more than they did the interests of their own peoples.

"African cinema is only beginning to explore its unlimited potential."

Férid Boughedir, Camera d'Afrique (1983)

Global Solitaries and Local Communities

At the time this documentary was made, there was no system to distribute the films to Africa itself, even though there were limited means of distributing African films to the West. African cinema had to compete

with American films on African soil, provoking exactly the same protests that I grew up hearing among my more thoughtful Canadian friends: *We actually like our own movies and TV shows better than most of the American shows. So why are we constantly being flooded with these American movies and shows?*

It's not just a matter of taste. Communities need to see films about themselves: their own history, customs, and legends. For complex reasons, individual artists need to be mindful of their global context while at the same time feeling grounded in specific cultures that enable them to stand firm against the "truths" asserted by foreign colonizers, whether these colonizers are political or commercial.

Camera d'Afrique gives a keyhole view of Boughedir's well-informed and highly sophisticated aesthetic. Most telling of all is the little scene at the end where he shows a clip from *Finye* (*The Wind*), a 1982 film by Souleymane Cisse.

A shaman approaches a great gnarled tree to summon the resident spirit. After a minute or so of rattle-shaking, the spirit responds:

"SPIRIT: Who beckons us? Who awakens us?"

DJANDJO: It's Djandjo.

SPIRIT: Djandjo! What a long time it's been. What is wrong?

DJANDJO: I have come for help. They have arrested my only hope, the last son of my race. Help me so that he may be safe and sound.

SPIRIT: I see two stars darting across the sky. Between them darts a shining star. It is coming towards us. It shines over all the planet. Djandjo, the sky is changing colour. It is getting darker. This means that our knowledge escapes us. The divine forces have deserted us. Now act by your strength and by what you know. Make offerings and go. From now on act according to your knowledge."

It's this dictum—act according to your knowledge—that illuminates much of Boughedir's worldview.

(To be continued.)

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.

"For complex reasons, individual artists need to be mindful of their global context while at the same time feeling grounded in specific cultures that enable them to stand firm against the "truths" asserted by foreign colonizers, whether these colonizers are political or commercial."

ANTBOY

Wanda Waterman

ANTBOY IN: WHAT ABOUT ME?

Greetings, Antboy! I've just finished an intense night of fighting crime, beginning with putting the boots to a roving horde of Petid, angry—

Hold on! Every morning you fly in here expecting coffee and doughnuts and demanding that I immortalize your nightly exploits in my comic panels! What about ME? What about MY struggles?



But you don't have any struggles.



Hello! I'm an ant! A social insect who lives alone and creates superhero comics for a living! I'm a psychological powder keg!



But do you bear the weight of the balance of good and evil on your shoulders?



Do you still take your coffee black?

WRITTEN BY WANDA WATERMAN



The Banyan Project

We've all heard about the decline of print media, but how does that affect the news you get online? Fewer journalists, less time to get the story right, and the pressure to give it all away for free mean a real threat to reliable, independent news coverage. Enter the [Banyan Project](#), a news co-op that brings together the best of trained journalism and citizen reporting.

Tom Stites, the project's founder, sums up the problem well in a short video on the site: "It's not just newspapers that are declining. It's the news that's in decline. There are lots of ways to deliver news, but you can't deliver it if it hasn't been reported. This is a threat to democracy."

Sure, we might be drowning in celebrity "news" and recycled press releases that often substitute for fact-checked articles, but real investigative journalism is getting harder to provide. Professional, trained writers and editors can't exist for free, no matter how much we prefer endless freebies over a

newspaper paywall. Citizen journalism is fine to a point, but digging deep to uncover a complex story takes specific skills that an untrained journalist rarely has.

The Banyan Project aims to confront this growing "news desert" through a model that's worked in everything from banking to farming: the co-op. And it's already been proven to work in the newspaper business, with successful read-owned papers in Germany, Italy, Switzerland, and Mexico.

To build the US news co-op, Stites put together a team that includes senior journalists, academics, financial strategists, and web developers. Their first news site will launch later in 2013, at [Haverhill.Matters.coop](#) (the URL currently points to the Banyan Project's homepage).

The project's journalistic integrity will rely in large part on the editors, who will manage submissions and final content, and the professional freelance writers that contribute stories. And unlike with some other popular media sites, those editors and writers will be paid. The project's funding model has four revenue streams: annual membership fees, advertising, crowdsourcing, and grants. According to the project's site, basic membership fees are \$36.

Both citizen journalists and readers can contribute as well, and the project's software allows for plenty of feedback from readers.

What will readers get from their local Banyan Project? Hopefully, a refreshing change from the partisan bombast that passes for news on many major sites—as well as the dubious news "facts" that float around

cyberspace. In contrast, the Banyan Project plans to focus on local news; articles on life issues, such as jobs and finances, that will “help less-than-affluent people deal with” those issues; and a resource bank of links to local resources.

Can the US version match the success of other reader-owned media outlets? Only time will tell, but if we’re interested in a reputable and (relatively) impartial press, let’s hope this banyan tree grows.

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!).

CLICK OF THE WRIST

In a Flash

Flash mobs have been around for a while, but we still just can’t get enough of them. Bored with the usual group converging on a mall food court to do the Harlem Shake? From a symphony in the square to a recreation of Renaissance artwork, these flash mobs may not be impromptu, but they’re fascinating nonetheless:

Symphony of Joy

Who says art and money can’t mix? In commemoration of its 130th anniversary, one bank put on a fantastic flash mob production of Beethoven’s Ninth/“Ode to Joy,” with the musicians and singers arriving one by one.

Night Watch

Surprised shoppers in a Dutch shopping mall stood and stared as “actors stormed the shopping mall, dressed in 17th century outfits.” Men and women (and a few animals!) rappelled over balconies, rode up on horses, or rushed around in period dress, eventually converging in the centre—where they reenacted Rembrandt’s *The Night Watch*.

Blue Shirts

Improv Everywhere is known for its creative flash mobs and pranks. Here, the company organizes a large group of ordinary people wearing blue shirts and khaki pants—who all head into Best Buy. Unique and hilarious!



THE MINDFUL BARD

Wanda Waterman



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

Album: Mario Rusca, *Joyette*

“There’s a way of playing safe, there’s a way of using tricks, and there’s the way I like to play, which is dangerously, where you’re going to take a chance on making mistakes in order to create something you haven’t created before.”

Dave Brubeck

A Spirited and Joyous Musical Buddy to Kindle Those Inspired Moments

Piano was one of my earliest jazz proselytizers. At my music teacher’s suggestion, I’d been slowly cultivating a taste for the genre by listening to my parents’ jazz records, but it took a slow-swinging Joe Sample solo, rising like a phoenix from the folk rhythms on Joni Mitchell’s *Hissing of Summer Lawns*, to show me how jazz was so wonderfully *different*.

This epiphany returned to my memory after one quick listen to Mario Rusca’s new album. I immediately tried to look him up, but it was hard to find much online in English about this guy, even though he’s shared the stage and/or studio with Gerry Mulligan, Chet Baker, Al Gray, Tony Scott, Art Farmer, Toots Thielemans, Stan Getz, Lee Konitz, and Woody Shaw, among other notables.

An Italian jazz pianist and composer, Rusca has a delightfully playful style that’s barrelhouse reckless, like a hyperactive pre-teen who hasn’t become self-conscious and restrained. Judging by his honky-tonk manual agility, it appears to be either a practiced and hard-won recklessness or the sign of a phenomenal gift. I’m guessing it’s a bit of both, judging from the fact that Rusca’s also done some amazing performances from the classical repertoire.

Also remarkable are his interpretations of jazz standards, which wander quite bravely from beaten paths into bracing musical escapades. He takes “I Fall in Love Too Easily” even further down the tender road of poignancy than most other versions, yet somehow adds to it a sense of triumph and transcendence.

Rusca’s original compositions are just as perpetually optimistic as his interpretations—an ideal of solace and stimulation for the temperamental artist at the drawing board.

Joyette manifests three of the Mindful Bard’s criteria for music well worth hearing: 1) it is authentic, original, and delightful; 2) it provides respite from a sick and cruel world, a respite enabling me to renew myself for a return to mindful artistic endeavour; and 3) it makes me want to be a better artist.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK



At Home: Take to the Streets

If you're in Montreal and you've got a hankering for street vendor hot dogs, you're out of luck—until this summer, that is. The city, which has banned street food for decades, is changing its strict regulations this coming June.

As *The Globe and Mail* [reports](#), in 1947 the city of Montreal instituted a ban on food carts because they “were seen as a threat to hygiene and scourge to public order.” Later, advocacy from the restaurant business helped keep the unique regulations in place.

All that's about to change, though, with regulations shifting to allow street food “on a trial basis” beginning in early June.

But the city will still strictly regulate the trade: Just ten sites will be allowed to host food trucks, and “[candidates] will be selected by a city committee, must be offshoots of existing caterers or restaurants, and do most of their food preparation off-site.” The latter provisions have appeased restaurant owners, and a representative from the Quebec association of restaurateurs told reporters that they “can live with the pilot project.”

So what will you find on the Montreal streets come June? Officials are hoping that it'll be a step up from the usual junk food street fare. The mayor told reporters that he wants visitors to know that even when they buy food from a truck, they'll be eating “something special, something they can't get anywhere else.”

Around the World: Kidnapper for Hire

Bored with the usual vacation thrills? Zip-lining, parasailing, and cliff-climbing not doing it for you anymore? Think outside the box—way, way outside the box—and hire a personal kidnapper.

As [ClickonDetroit.com](#) [reports](#), a Michigan-based company offers the ultimate in extreme tourism to clients who want to experience being kidnapped in Metro Detroit.

While the company's been operating for a decade, it's only recently that kidnapping has developed into “a big attraction around the world.”

Clients make arrangements with the company, which operates in the Detroit area only and offers thrill seekers the “adrenaline rush of getting snatched anywhere in Metro Detroit at any time.”

The experience is highly customizable, with prices ranging from \$500 for a basic kidnapping job, “where you are taken to a secret location and roughed up a bit,” to higher-end packages, which include overnight stays and customized torture.

Police say the concept “is a bad idea and it could be dangerous.”

AUSU UPDATE



Dear Members,

You may have recently seen information on the internet speculating about the future of Athabasca University. These reports suggest that the Alberta government may broker a merger between AU and University of Alberta, and that this may result in drastic changes to the services and programs offered to students AU students.

We want you to know that AUSU is aware of these rumours and is actively investigating the source – we will keep you informed as we know more.

We can tell you that AU is governed via a bicameral structure with two main governing bodies: the General Faculties Council (formerly Academic Council) and the Board of Governors (formerly Governing Council). AUSU has representatives on both of these governing bodies and we can confirm that there has been no formal discussion of a university merger among these groups. The AU president, Frits Pannekoek, has also assured the press that there is no truth to the rumour. On behalf of our members, we are seeking more information from the Board of Governors, the minister, and AU executives.

At this time we simply have no evidence that a merger is being seriously considered by AU, the U of A, or the Alberta government, and we note that among the many committees and working groups of AU, planning and development for the future continues as usual.

We know that our members are worried and want more information. We will update you as soon as we know more. At this time we do not feel there is any reason for students to worry or make changes to their study plans.

Do not hesitate to contact our office if you wish to talk about this or any other issue affecting AU students.

AUSU.

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.

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

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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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