

# THE **VOICE**

## MAGAZINE

Vol 21 Issue 34 2013-09-13

### **Women's Fertility**

A natural approach

### **Beyond Borders**

Peace in outer space

### **Detropia**

The mighty has fallen

*Plus:  
From Where I Sit  
In Conversation  
and much more!*



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# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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comments to [voice@voicemagazine.org](mailto:voice@voicemagazine.org), and please  
indicate if we may publish your letter.



## HEALTH MATTERS

Katie D'Souza



## Optimizing Your Female Fertility

In today's hectic North American lifestyle, women are multitasking like never before. But it's also women whose body systems are being most negatively affected. It's no wonder we're seeing a major decline in female fertility; in fact, as of this year over 10 per cent of all North American women of childbearing age are considered infertile.

In my Ontario practice, I see many women struggling with infertility. There are many ways to

evaluate your fertility, and these methods are usually used in combination with each other. Based on clinical experience, I've written some basic guidelines to help you evaluate your own fertility health. Take a look, and if you think you might be experiencing issues with any of these, talk to your naturopathic doctor or alternative health care provider.

- **Physical health:** Health conditions like ovarian cysts, uterine or fallopian tube scarring, or endometriosis can negatively impact fertility. Pelvic and transvaginal imaging can help provide a detailed description of the physical aspects of your reproductive system.
- **Hormone health:** Are your female reproductive hormones working as they should? Remember that hormone levels are not static; progesterone rises after ovulation (as estrogen levels reduce) and drops just prior to menstruation (while estrogen levels begin to rise again). Other hormones are active, too, like luteinizing hormone (LH) and follicle stimulating hormone (FSH). And don't forget important hormone precursors, such as DHEA.
- **Thyroid health:** The importance of a fully functional thyroid can't be underestimated. For example, because the thyroid controls metabolism and body temperature, hypothyroid (low-functioning thyroid) conditions affect cervical mucus quality and can contribute to lowered luteal phase (post-ovulatory) temperatures. A basic way to assess thyroid function is to take your BBT, or basal body temperature; essentially, you want to compare the average temperature of your resting body before and after ovulation. The "resting" quality is extremely important, since activity causes muscle motion, which generates heat. As soon as you wake (before getting up), check your oral temperature with a digital thermometer, and record it. Your temperature will vary, depending on your cycle (lower pre-ovulatory, higher post-ovulatory), but if it's riding below 36.3 degrees Celsius before ovulation, then you may have a hypothyroid condition (called Wilson's temperature syndrome).
- **Ovulation health:** Are you ovulating? If your body isn't releasing an egg with your cycle, then it's impossible to get pregnant. A basic way to tell your ovulation story is to watch for slimy, egg white-



consistency mucus when you wipe. This mucus is considered fertile. Other mucus you may note, such as sticky, pasty, mucus, is not associated with the same high fertility levels.

- **Mind-body health:** How would you rate your stress levels, on a scale of 1 to 10 (with 1 being no stress and 10 being extreme)? Stress has a hugely negative impact not only on fertility, but also on menstrual cycle health in general. High blood cortisol levels (cortisol is a long-term stress hormone that your body produces) negatively affects all cells in your body. Ways to combat high stress situations and lifestyles include daily meditation or prayer, regularly doing low-stress activities (think of something you enjoy doing, such as reading, drawing, or hiking), and regular mild to moderate exercise.
- **Cellular health:** If your cells are healthy, your body will be healthy. What can affect the health of our cells? Long-term stress is a big factor, as discussed above. Another thing that can significantly impact cellular health is toxicity. Are you routinely exposed to environmental toxins? These can be either home or job-related. Do you regularly consume canned foods, which are known to contain high levels of BPA and other hormone-disrupting chemicals? Does your diet contain an abundance of antioxidant-rich (and therefore cell damage-reducing) fruits and vegetables, or would you rather pass on the carrots and grab a Big Mac instead? Do you smoke or breathe second-hand smoke on a regular basis? Do a lifestyle scan on yourself, and think about potentially toxic aspects.

There are many factors influencing female fertility. Women's bodies are unique and complex, and deserve to receive the treatment they need.

*Katie D'Souza is an AU graduate and a licensed naturopathic doctor. She currently practices in Ontario.*

*Disclaimer: The information contained in this article is for personal interest only; it is not intended for diagnosis or treatment of any condition. Readers are always encouraged to seek the professional advice of a licensed physician or qualified health care practitioner for personal health or medical conditions.*

## 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."

## IN CONVERSATION

Wanda Waterman

**Billy Martin, Part II**

***Billy Martin** is a percussionist, filmmaker, music producer, composer, sculptor, visual artist, and carpenter and is part of the groundbreaking jazz trio Martin, Medeski & Wood. His latest musical production (due out this month) is *Road to Jajouka*, a remix tribute to Morocco's Master Musicians of Jajouka (see [Voice review here](#)). Recently he took the time for a conversation with Wanda Waterman about his "innocent" approach to artistic creation, the importance of sincerity, and his first major film*

***score. This is the conclusion of a two-part feature (see the first part [here](#)).***

**"They Just Happened"**

Billy Martin continues to explain his views on the importance of "unguarded expression" in creativity: "To be honest, most of the best things I've done or collaborated on were not meticulously planned out—they just happened. Everything I do, from performing to composing to visual art, is done that way."

So how does "unguarded expression" work out in practice? "If I'm working on a piece of visual art, for example, I just start with a line or a colour. That's the first action, and then something else comes from that. It starts taking shape and I start following it and shaping it.

"The same thing with music: I'll make a sound and then I'll answer that sound with another sound. I call it a 'string of phrases.'

"I work with student musicians to help them build their vocabulary in this way. Even in conversations like this one, you say one thing, you leave a space, and you say something else. You just string along and add to each phrase. The phrases either complement or contrast each other.

"When I compose I just sit at the piano and put my fingers on the keys without any idea what chord I'm playing or what it's going to be. Then I'll move my fingers to another place. I'm developing a kind of language just by moving my fingers around and using my ears. After a while a pattern emerges.

"I always try to maintain that innocent approach. It's a way of being honest with yourself and your audience, that this is who you are and you're giving it your all. It's the same thing for a writer or anybody who's a performing artist. It's all performance art for me. You make an action and you follow it, whether it's erasing or adding or editing—it's performance."

***"Creativity makes a leap, then looks to see where it is."***

***Mason Cooley***

## In My Solitude . . .

Billy cites the guarding of sufficient parcels of time and space as a necessary condition for the creative life.

“Sometimes domestic distractions add to the creative experience,” he remarks, “but there are so many things happening in our lives that we really have to make sure that we have the space and the solitude to let projects take shape. You need the time to be able to take chances and make mistakes.”

Another important consideration is his relationship to his physical environment. “If I’m drumming, for example, my relationship to my instrument—how the instrument sounds, how it resonates—is important. All instruments have a personality. And then there’s the room you’re in—smells, acoustics, the sounds around you, vibrations . . . are all going to influence your playing and output.”

## Next Steps

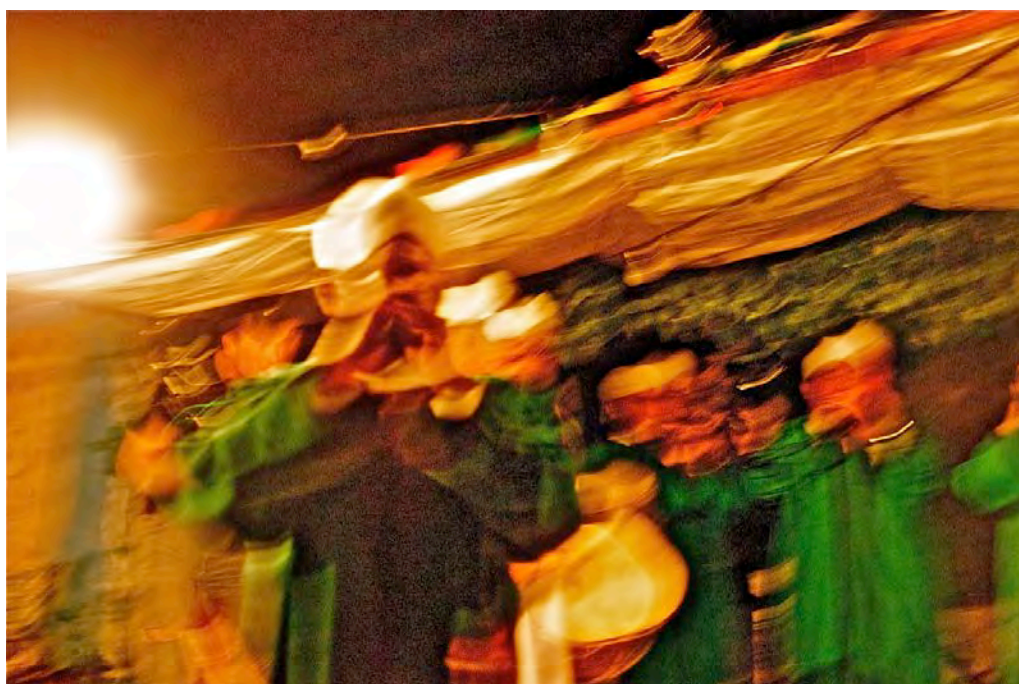
“My next project is the score for a Hungarian film called *Mirage*. It’s basically a western that takes place in Hungary, about a soccer player who defects from the team because it’s a fixed game.

“He’s gotta get out of town, so he ends up in the Puszta, which is an outlands region of Hungary. It’s actually a very beautiful area with lots of farmland and now there’s a protected nature reserve there, but when communism fell a lot of people quickly became farm lords and kept people in forced captivity to

work the farms. This soccer player ends up on one of these work farms.

“There’s actually a lot of humour in it. I’m really excited to be working with this director and also because it’s the first major film for me as sole composer. There’ll be an African feel along with the chamber music that I write.

“That’s my next major project, but I have so many other things going on!”



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.



## Another Reminder

The busier I get, the less time I have to read. With hundreds of books in the house and millions more out there, it pains me to say that. And it feels like an ache in my soul.

For the last several months I've spent most of my waking moments (and several more when I should have been sleeping) working on or thinking about the festival I was coordinating. Hardly a balanced way to live, but the success of the event and rave reviews almost made the sacrifice worthwhile.

Because I logged a lot of time driving, I turned to my growing collection of audiobooks to feed my need for distraction. I grew to love the beauty of Michael Chabon's words in *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*. At times I laughed out loud. I marvelled at his lyrical word paintings. I vowed to search out more of his work. Now waiting on my night table is *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay*, the book for which he won the Pulitzer Prize. I'm loathe to start it if I have to read it in dribs and drabs and stolen moments. I think it's worth waiting for my annual retreat to Canmore in November.

But the book I listened to over and over again in the last few weeks was Paulo Coelho's *The Alchemist*. I snapped up an audio copy even though Hilary had given me the print version several years ago when I was treading troubled waters. I dutifully read it, marked passages, and promptly forgot it. Couldn't really understand why everyone was raving about it.

As I faced challenges and setbacks with the event planning, I found myself drawing strength from the story of Santiago, a shepherd boy in search of a treasure. The book is deep, meaningful, and metaphorical. The minute I finished it, I replayed it. Again and again. It gave me hope and courage and the belief that I was on the right path. It reminded me of truths I already knew but had forgotten or abandoned. It shone new light on the idea of omens, the lessons in betrayal, and the need to follow our dreams and our heart's desire.

The language was simple and the concepts repeated over and over. The English translation of this 1988 work by Brazilian author Coelho was done in the early 1990s. As I listened to the book it dawned on me that perhaps I learn better through auditory means. Yet the tangible print version allows me to underline and read and reread a line as often as I want or need to.

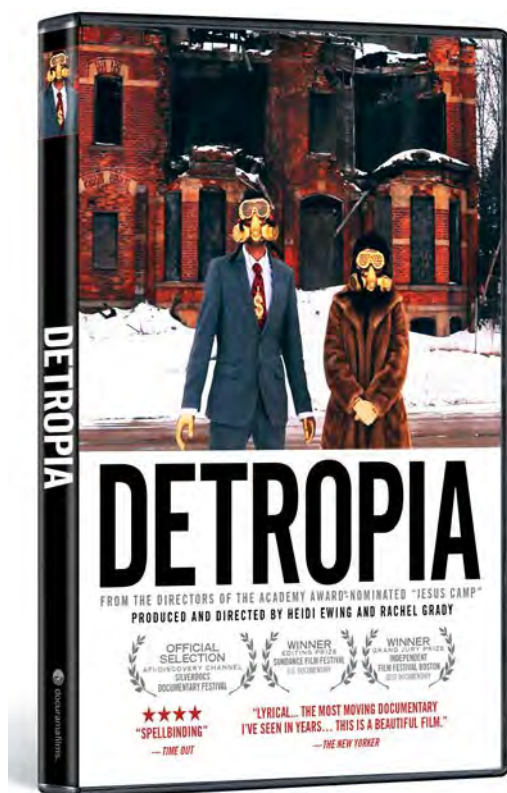
Just as it's easy to have eyes skip over words and paragraphs, so too is it easy to have traffic or intrusive thoughts prevent the absorption of the message. Maybe what I believed to be a new insight into how I learn is really just a reminder of mindfulness and intention. Another reminder in our frenetic world, from where I sit.

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



## THE MINDFUL BARD

Wanda Waterman



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

Film: *Detropia*

Directors: Heidi Ewing and Rachel Grady

Genre: Documentary

## The Dystopian Landscape of Your Punk Dreams

*"These people lost this house to taxes. So the city just lets it sit empty and pyromaniacs come and they burn it up, and this is repeated all over the city. You got these guys who love fires. They set the fire and then go somewhere and masturbate. They're sick. They get thrills out of that. We got some sick people here in America, but they have a right to be sick. I defend their right to be sick."*

Tommy Stephens, owner of the Raven Lounge in Detroit

## Culture of Sore Losers

I grew up in a small Canadian province that had at one time boasted the highest standard of living in the world thanks to profits gleaned from harvesting then-plentiful old-growth forests to build sailing ships. Now many rural and coastal areas of the province look like parts of the American Deep South—miles of farmland with large hulks of colonial mansions that few can afford to maintain.

When steamships came along, everyone was out of a job. While hordes escaped to higher ground, many stayed behind simply because they loved the land. But sadly the social climate was often dictated by the kind of people who would rather cry in their beer about the old days than try to make the best of changing conditions.

Why do I remember this now? Because there's a scene in *Detropia* that brought it all back to mind: a couple of former auto workers are sitting on a porch making fun of passersby, making fun of the government, and making fun

Still from *Detropia*. Image: Tony Hardmon.



Still from *Detropia*. Image: Tony Hardmon.

of proposed solutions to the current slough of despond. It sounded just like some of the negative nellys I'd known back home.

### Former Worker's Utopia

Detroit is famous for having once generated a high standard of living for people who laboured with their hands. It was a major international success story. But those who thought this

was a given were sadly mistaken; the workers who inherited this American dream but had never actually worked to achieve it were very poorly equipped to rouse themselves to action once the dream began to slip away.

### Visual Inspiration

There's a strange fascination in urban decay, and if you're looking for a shot of wonder, this film is extremely engaging, ripe with beautiful images of rotting mansions, building demolitions, empty streets at night, and idle industrial monoliths. It's deliciously close to watching a rose slowly wither and die, and just as poignant.

### What Happens Now?

In *Detropia* Detroit is presented as a microcosm of circumstances in America at large, and the media has given us ample evidence to support that. One video blogger in the film calls Detroit's current status a wakeup call for the rest of the country.

Have the mighty really fallen? Has the country that brought us jazz, Hollywood, and Silicon Valley really lost its edge? Will future generations look back on America



Still from *Detropia*. Image: Tony Hardmon.



in the same way that we now look back on ancient Greece?

How is the world about to change?

### **Artistic Production During Times of Decline**

History testifies that the best art often emerges during periods of decadence, when societies begin to lose their grip on their traditional beliefs, values, and material resources. And if Richard Florida is right that the fastest growing job sector in the US is now in creative jobs, maybe this is a time to be lauded, not mourned.

Detroit has seen a 59 per cent rise in the population of young people moving to the downtown. According to the film footage, this group appears to be mostly bohemians bent on pursuing artistic freedom and living out alternative lifestyles in a low-rent economy. One filmmaker delightedly reports that only in Detroit can he rent a great studio and apartment and devote his time to his creative projects.

Sometimes it's hard to tell endings from new beginnings.

*Detropia* manifests 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 inspires an awareness of the sanctity of creation; 5) it gives me artistic tools; 6) it makes me want to be a better artist; and 7) it makes me appreciate that life is a complex and rare phenomenon, making living a unique opportunity.



*Still from Detropia. Image: Craig Atkinson.*

## PRIMAL NUMBERS

S.D. Livingston



## Peace on Pluto

Look up. Look way up. What do you see? Planets, stars, asteroids—maybe even the future outlines of space colonies and national borders. It might sound like sci-fi, but technology is steadily bringing space settlement closer to reality. The question is, should we allow corporations to sidestep the rules of the Outer Space Treaty?

If you've never heard of it before, rest assured that the Outer Space Treaty isn't a piece of science

fiction. It's a real document, signed into force way back in 1967. It was an expansion of a previous declaration drafted by, believe it or not, the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs. Yes, Virginia, there really is an office at the UN dedicated to keeping the peace in outer space.

The Treaty, like so many other international agreements, sounds great in theory. Astronauts are considered "the envoys of mankind," which effectively means that no nation can use their astronauts to lay claim to space property. Their space job is to represent humankind, not a specific country. As well, no one's supposed to pollute outer space or celestial bodies; the universe will only be explored and used "for the benefit and in the interests of all countries and shall be the province of all mankind"; and celestial bodies will "be used exclusively for peaceful purposes."

And the Moon Agreement, drawn up in 1979, gets even more specific about the idea of owning outer space. As NBC News notes, the agreement "bars private ownership of extraterrestrial property in the solar system."

All very easy to agree to when there's not much chance of rival nations actually colonizing the moon anytime soon. But as sci-fi theory edges closer to reality, some old-fashioned, Earthly competition has already started, in the form of the Space Settlement Prize Act.

The idea, as the same NBC News article notes, is that even though the Outer Space Treaty prohibits "its signatories, including the United States, from asserting sovereignty over other worlds," that doesn't necessarily mean they're barred from recognizing "claims made by private parties." In other words, the treaties and agreements have a loophole that might allow someone to build, say, a McDonald's on Mars one day.

Some supporters of the Prize Act compare it to private industry opening up the North American West. It was private capitalists, the railroad barons and cattle ranchers, who put their money up and drove expansion and settlement. Similarly, if we want to drive exploration in space, to find new resources and colonize new planets, it will take the same kind of private ambition—investors willing to take both the risks and the payoffs—to get us there.



Governments, in comparison, have neither the funds nor the sense of urgency that corporations and venture capitalists do. Left to political leaders, the settlement of space could end up looking like the Euro crisis: a chronic state of upheaval marked by endless consultations and international bickering.

And even though many corporations have a long history of corruption, mismanagement, and outright abuse (from sweatshops to pollution), so do governments all over the world.

Still, the Outer Space Treaty starts from a point of good intentions—of putting peace and cooperation at the very foundation of space settlement and exploration. So as cool as it might be to walk into a Starbucks on Saturn one day, I think I'd rather visit a celestial centre for international cooperation. An impossible idea? Maybe. But just because we haven't managed peace on Earth doesn't mean we can't accomplish it in space. Beam me up, Scotty.

*S.D. Livingston is the author and creator of the Madeline M. Mystery Series for kids, as well as several books for older readers. Visit her [website](#) for information on her writing.*

## AU PRESIDENTIAL SELECTION COMMITTEE INVITATION

*Athabasca University has established a search committee for a new AU president to succeed Dr. Frits Pannekoek in 2014. Students are invited to attend a consultation meeting via teleconference or in person. Details are below. AUSU strongly encourages member participation in these consultations to ensure that students take a strong role in the future of AU.*

The Selection Committee has a broad representation from the University community; furthermore, all staff and students will have an opportunity through the consultations (see below), and through their committee representatives, to provide input to the Committee on the selection criteria.

**Date/Time:** Monday, September 16, 2013, 6:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m. MST

**Location:** AU Calgary, Room S6024, Bow Valley College South Campus, 6th floor 345-6 Avenue S.E. Calgary

**Teleconference:** Participant pass code: 79494#

- **North America:** 1.877.385.4099
- **Edmonton:** 780.421.1483
- **Calgary:** 403.232.0994

### Topics for discussion:

- What do you consider to be the major issues/opportunities/challenges that will face AU and its leaders over the next few years?
- In light of these, what characteristics should we be looking for in the next President?

## COMIC: ANTBOY

Wanda Waterman



## INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK



### At Home: The Money Question

As Canada rises in world economics, Canadians as a whole are starting to become wealthier. But there's a dark side that might take the edge off the celebration: we're also getting deeper in debt.

As *The Globe and Mail* reports, "Canadians are getting richer, but are saddled with troubling levels of debt."

The numbers from Statistics Canada show that "national net worth rose 3 per cent in the second quarter of the year," and "among Canadian families, household net worth rose 0.7 per cent." Rising property values are a factor in the increase.

However, statistics also show that consumer debt has risen "again to a record level, having declined over the previous six months." The concern is that households may be having difficulty "[juggling] their finances," which could prove disastrous when interest rates rise in the future.

The measure of debt is expressed in the ratio of "credit market debt to disposable income," and this past quarter it rose "to 163.4 per cent from 162.1 per cent in the first three months of the year . . . a dangerous level."

Some economists, however, point to positive trends such as "gains in household net worth and income, [and] the moderation in household debt growth points," one told reporters.

### Around the World: So You Think You Can Dance

We've all heard of the interview from hell—the rude interviewer, the sexual harasser, the comedy of errors—but it became a reality for a group of interviewees attempting to land a sales assistant job at a UK electronics chain.

As Reuters reports, a Cardiff Currys Megastore asked the interviewees to "perform dance routines during team building exercises."

One job seeker told reporters that "everyone initially thought it was a joke," adding that he "ended up . . . doing . . . rubbish robotics in my suit in front of a group of strangers." He also said that one "middle aged guy looked really upset as he danced to a rap song."

Currys headquarters has "issued an apology," insisting that dance-offs are not part of the formal interview process for the chain. In an official statement, Currys said that it was "extremely disappointed that one of the management team at the store in question did not follow . . . official recruitment processes." The chain is offering interviewees a second chance at an "opportunity to demonstrate how they can contribute to our business."

## 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](mailto:ausu@ausu.org).



# CLASSIFIEDS

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## THE VOICE

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