Being a Lawyer is No Joke
It’s Not a Gold Mine Either

I recently had one of those experiences that always gets me lathered up for a fight: someone told a lawyer joke. Lawyer jokes really piss me off, especially the ones about killing lawyers or comparing them to slugs and slime. I take them personally. After all, I left the law after only nine years of practice because it was physically exhausting, emotionally gruelling, and (comparatively) financially unrewarding. And that was after having dreamed all my life of being a lawyer and not actually becoming one until I was 46. Despite having worked in law firms since I was 16 years old – doing everything from reception to real estate clerking – I found the difficulties of lawyer-ing outstripped the rewards. So when I hear a lawyer joke, I try to defend our profession and to explode the myths that we are rapacious, slathering money-grubbers who have only our own interests at heart. Needless to say, my indignation usually falls on deaf ears. They don’t believe it when I tell them about the lawyers I know who are lucky to make sixty grand in a year (which, by the way, is what the average well-trained legal assistant makes), or the many who get out of the profession because of the endless work and limited return. I tell them about the lawyer I know who drives for Uber to make ends meet. For every rich lawyer living in Forest Hill, I tell them, there’s some guy who’s three months behind on the rent for his storefront cubicle. We are not all rich, and some of us even go broke. But this joke-teller had a reason for having so little sympathy for the poor, broke, lawyers. Indignantly he told me that his lawyer was charging him $650 an hour – for corporate work! He simply could not fathom that sum. After all, he was an engineer, and his hourly rate was only $90. What, he demanded of me, could possibly justify asking six hundred and fifty dollars an hour? Oddly, I couldn’t really say. In fact, I kind of agree with him. The fact that we lawyers look at an hourly rate of $650 and say, that’s reasonable, is kind of – sorry – nuts. Where on earth do we come off charging that kind of money? Yes, we have grotesque overheads – see above re: the sixty-thousand-a-year assistant – but we can also be totally profligate. Every time I went into a Bay Street firm for a meeting or negotiation, I cringed at the embarrassment of riches: the carpets, the art, the grotesque show-offery of the furnishings in reception, and the meeting rooms. No wonder the damned hourly rates were so high. Somebody had to foot the bill for this stuff. The argument is, of course, that the clients wantand expectthat sort of cathedral-like...
With Privilege Comes Duty
White Privilege Exists: Do Something Good With It

I have the privilege to look at them from the outside, and find pathetic, racist apologists arming instead of frightening. I also have the privilege to not give a damn about racism issues in general, but I think of white supremacy should be more willing to engage with fringe racist, misogynist, and xenophobic persons or groups, albeit only briefly. This is admittedly a distasteful prospect, especially regarding ideologies like Nazism, which at its core is an incitement to violence against anyone who isn’t a certain kind of white, and even talking about it in public can be a criminal offence under Section 319 of the Criminal Code. That was a teacher of mine who personally survived a Nazi invasion of his country liked to say, “give a man enough rope, and he’ll hang himself.” We saw that adage prove true after the Charlotteville riots. Nazis did their Nazi thing, and the GOP establishment desperately attempted damage control when Trump refused to offer consistent and unequivocal condemnation of their actions. Also, the Canadian alt-right media basically implored, because it’s spearheaded by Ezra Levant, whose ethnic identity would make supporting Nazism promotion of his own murder. It seems like the GOP and alt-right media might bounce back from this debacle, but it was nice to watch the swine squeal as they looked their monster in the face. The Charlotteville Nazis were their supporters, and up until that moment, they’d been returning the favour. Even if it doesn’t trigger an existential crisis among the political right, sometimes it’s good to let these people talk. How else are they going to get charged with willful promotion of hatred?

As for how people like me can use our white straight privilege to do good, rebuking fascists is certainly one way to do it. It’s hard to imagine enduring a five-minute conversation with a Nazi as any sort of privilege, but you do what you can to stand for what’s right. For the most part, we’re the only ones these people truly want in their corner, aside from a few Quisling mouthpieces. If we tell them that they don’t represent us and never will, it might hit home. We can remind them that their failure to compete in a diversifying world is not the fault of the people of colour, women, and LGBTQI persons who are born at a disadvantage and still managed to hack it. At the core of white supremacy and nationalism is cowardice and insecurity; a realization that they aren’t strong or smart or tough enough to compete with anyone other than other white straight cisgendered men. As white, straight cisgendered men (who aren’t fascists), we have an obligation to say “we did fine in this diverse world, so your failure is a personal problem,” when confronted with the words and deeds of such people.

And for Mr. Singh to stare down pure hatred and rebuke it with love and courage, I can express nothing but admiration for his response. I wouldn’t have been able to do the same, as a man of any colour in his shoes. The incitement with the heckler was analogous to the core nature of bigotry: a screeching, wretched thing trying to blame its failures on people who are too good to even hate it.
What is Freedom?

Philosophising by Osgoode’s Front Doors on a Sunny September Afternoon

Author: Rocco Scocco
Arts and Culture Writer

The front entrance of Osgoode Hall Law School is a regular sparring ring for minds to go head-to-head. Concrete blocks and the iconic Osgoode Hall plaque all make up a congregation space suited for busy minded law students to unwind and let their colours show. It’s the second week of school, and I sit with one of my old colleagues from 1L. The air is still warm from the summer. One of those September days where we look to the sky and say to ourselves, "thank you for not being shitty." I set down my heavy backpack and my 5000-page Income Tax Act on the concrete bench; it has been a long day, and I can think of nothing better than to just sit and let my mind run free.

"Freedom, what the hell is that?" I blurt out to my friend. He is aptly armed with sunglasses and a black polo T-shirt. Freedom, he says, needs to be looked at objectively. We are free when we can pursue whatever we wish to do without anything stopping us from doing it. It is objective because a person either has it or they do not have it. How do we figure out whether a person has freedom? We look at their surroundings. Look at where we are: Osgoode Hall Law School; the greatest law school in Canada. We have freedom here, because we have the facilities, the staff, and a diverse and vibrant student body. A place where ideas flourish, and where future lawyers regularly face the dark realities of the profession.

We can say that freedom is similar to opportunity. At least, from the objective perspective, freedom exists whether we know it or not. We have all of the resources of Osgoode at our disposal, but it is up to us to seek them out. You, as an Osgoode Student, have an abundance of opportunity at your disposal, and you have the freedom to use it. In the objective analysis, we look at person's surroundings, and we can know what freedoms they have. In practice, if you are like me, you will only see as much opportunity as you think you deserve. Better yet, you will only see the opportunities you can see.

What do I mean by this? Imagine you are taken into a room as a prisoner and the guard tells you, "I am locking you in." You believe him. He closes the door. Unbeknownst to you, the guard does not lock it. By simply looking at the door, you cannot tell the difference. You firmly believe that the door is locked, when it is in fact open. Objectively, you are free, but you cannot see it. Nothing will stop you from opening the door, but that doesn't mean you will open it.

I look at the sky, then glance down at the massive construction project before me. There is a new student centre being build right across from Osgoode’s beautiful front entrance. Observing the bare steel and concrete is something I do often. I try to envision what the final product will look like. Why are they building a new student centre? and what will it look like. Why are they building a new student centre?

"One of the ideas we were involved in making the new student centre happen. The opportunity was not there; it was waiting to be seen, or given to us. It was created. Let’s call this "creative freedom". If creative freedom is a thing, can we accept the objective view of freedom? Again, the objective view is supposed to be a creative exercise of freedom, then we need a creative analysis of objective freedom; that way nothing gets left out of our theory. More to the point, if I want to analyze how objectively free someone is, how do I quantify the extent of that freedom if there are opportunities available that we have not created yet? On the other hand, how do we objectively rule out certain freedoms? Five years ago, if someone said that students are not free to actually initiate a construction project, they would be wrong. They would be objectively wrong. Further to the point, for all we know, any random idea that comes to our heads can become possible if we take it seriously.

Let’s try it and see if objective freedom and creative freedom are compatible. Supposedly, the opportunity to petition for a student centre existed before the students ever got the idea. It must have been there - the metal, the concrete, the machines, the space, the workers and everything else necessary all existed. By this analysis, every student had the opportunity to pitch this idea because anyone could have had the idea. Now I ask, how do we draw limits on the creative freedom? If the objective analysis includes creative exercises of freedom, then we need a creative analysis of objective freedom; that way nothing gets left out of our theory. More to the point, if I want to analyze how objectively free someone is, how do I quantify the extent of that freedom if there are opportunities available that we have not created yet? On the other hand, how do we objectively rule out certain freedoms? Five years ago, if someone said that students are not free to actually initiate a construction project, they would be wrong. They would be objectively wrong. Further to the point, for all we know, any random idea that comes to our heads can become possible if we take it seriously.

In my humble opinion, we are free to do anything we imagine. From using what is plain and obvious before our eyes to creating something from nothing. So, what is freedom really if we are free to do just about anything? We have grown up being told, “this door is locked, and so is that one, and don’t even bother with that door over there, its triple locked”. Not to mention, there may be unlocked doors we have not even found yet. Who says that we even need a key to open the door?

If creative freedom is real, then we can believe just about any idea, and it can be true, we just haven’t figured out how it is true. Thinking now, there is not much difference between using Osgoode’s first-rate opportunities to join clinics, intensives or RA positions, and having the idea to make a new student centre appear. Both enrolling in programs and creating a building is a freedom which students at York and Osgoode have. In fact, it takes courage to even pursue freedoms that are right before us. To raise our hand in class, to join a student club, or participate for the first time in a moot. Courage is indispensable when it comes to exercising our freedoms. The more far-fetched the idea, the more courage it would take.

By this time, hours have gone by. I have not done any readings. I have a million things on my mind, and I am killing time talking philosophy. You could say I have this freedom to spend my afternoons making fuzzy philosophical arguments to pass the time. That really is the beauty of freedom; we can exercise choice. I often try to remind myself every choice amounts to something.

Privilege is another important dynamic to remember in this context. As Osgoode students, we are free to enjoy the facilities and opportunities of Osgoode because we are privileged enough to have these freedoms granted to us. Not just anyone can walk into Osgoode’s library during exam season because you need that red "Osgoode" sticker on your York University student card; otherwise you are not permitted. Not just anyone can graduate with an Osgoode JD. Only students who can scrape together the high tuition fees may have a hope to graduate. Privilege is not just important when analyzing freedom, it is indispensable.

Much of the afternoon has now slipped by, and indeed I feel rejuvenated after a long and fruitful conversation with my colleague. Although we cleared a lot of the air, he remains convinced that I have not understood his position. He is probably right about that, as I would likely suggest he has not understood mine. I write this article, partially, in hopes that someone will have something to add to this discussion.

What do you think of freedom, privilege and choice? Send your thoughts to the Obiter Dictum.
display. They equate it with competence. They don’t want the storefront guy who is surrounded by out-of-date books, overflowing towers of sloppy files, and an assistant who’s a volunteer intern on work term from a second-rate career college. They want top-of-the-line service, and they believe that ‘top-of-the-line’ and ‘expensive’ are the same thing. I once lost a client on a real estate litigation matter who readily admitted that I knew more and had more experience in the area than the Bay Street guy he was taking the file to. But he thought the other guy’s firm was a bigger name, and that it would be ‘more intimidating.’ The Bay Street firm’s rate was twice what mine was. (PSS: I hope that client lost). (PS#: With a big costs order against him.)

But I would disagree that the best lawyers always cost more. One of the finest lawyers I know – scrupulous, informed, dedicated – works out of a small suite of offices above a karate school in a strip mall. On the other hand, one of the most outrageous rip-off artists I ever had the misfortune to cross paths with was a boutique guy whose hourly rate (he boasted to me) was $850. Certainly the ‘go-to guy/gal’ is often a downtown lawyer, but not always. I met more than one of the most outrageous rip-off artists I ever had the misfortune to cross paths with was a boutique guy whose hourly rate (he boasted to me) was $850. Certainly the ‘go-to guy/gal’ is often a downtown lawyer, but not always. I met more than one modestly-priced practitioner who knew their stuff cold. Just because they’ve got opulent offices and in-house catering does not mean they’re ‘worth’ the rates they charge. It merely means that people will pay them. But it’s not just the shockingly high rates that make people hate lawyers. It’s the perception that we’re crooks, thieves, and slime-balls; that we drag things out and waste time; that we’re sloppy and incompetent. Then there’s the less justified notion that ‘getting the lawyers involved’ will escalate any dispute to a full-out war. Even in this, though, there’s truth. For every lawyer who counsels negotiation and compromise, who spends hours in the woodshed with his unreasonable client, there’s someone who just can’t stop themselves from turning everything into a war. Sometimes it’s beyond all reason: I once had to litigate with another lawyer who was clearly suffering from some sort of paranoid disorder, whose face would contort in fury when she spoke to you in person, spit flying from her mouth. There was nothing to be done, but my job. Ask any lawyer. We all have horror stories about other lawyers we’ve encountered; stories of incompetence, sharp practice, rudeness, slippery behaviour, time-wasting, madness, the works. So it’s hard to get indignant about lawyer jokes when we, ourselves, recognize that there’s a problem. Which leaves us with: what can we – each of us, as lawyers – do about it? I have a few suggestions. First of all, do what my grandma said: keep your own doorstep clean. Don’t be that lawyer, the one that the other lawyers shudder when they talk about. There’s a difference between being a forceful advocate who asks the tough questions and being a trouble-making, time-wasting jerk. Be professional, always. Shove up on time. Answer your emails. Don’t take on more clients than you have time for, and don’t do work in areas you’re not up to speed on. Don’t lose your temper (or try not to lose it too bigly) either in person or in writing (remember that saying: dance like nobody’s watching, email like it’s going to be read out in court some day). Know the damned rules – be they the rules of a court or the rules of conduct – and follow them, even the little ones. Don’t kid yourself: they’re all important. There are reasons for the rules, and a lot of those reasons had to do with attempting to control bad lawyering. A lot of bad lawyering would be cut right out if people just followed the rules.

Now, about money. Remember, people worked hard for their money. They cash in RSP’s to hire us. They go into debt. They are often frightened, desperate, and bewildered. They are facing a massive financial drain that they can’t avoid. So don’t be greedy, and don’t assume you’re entitled to be rich. Just because you have the opportunity to charge more, don’t automatically do it. An example: I once attended a CLE lecture on powers-of-sale where one topic was how to deal with the surplus. (FYI, on a power of sale under mortgage, the lender is only allowed to recoup the debt and the recovery costs/expenses; anything left over is returned to the borrower.) The speaker actually said, at a CLE lecture, “if there’s any money left over, you haven’t charged enough! Hahaha! Joking!” And to my horror, people in the audience laughed. Jesus wept – it’s bad enough to lose your house to a mortgage enforcement, but to lose the equity to the lawyers’ bills? No wonder. I suppose it’s thin gruel indeed that I’m counselling good behaviour and adherence to our duty (and charging lower or, at least, conscionable rates) when I started this article with whining about how hard it was to be a lawyer, and how there wasn’t enough money in it. Fair enough, it wasn’t the profession so much as it was me. After decades of wanting to be a lawyer, I finally became one, only to find out that I was in a profession that – as one senior lawyer warned me it would – utterly consumed my life. But am I proud of what I did as a lawyer? Did I think I did a good job? Was it worth it? You betcha, baby. There are at least three families in Toronto who have their homes because I waded in against the mortgage fraud artists, and their willfully-blind lawyers, who had stolen their titles. I still have the little string of pearls that one set of clients – dear people, devout, and harmless Christians – gave me after we finally managed to fend off the vicious adjoining landowner who’d been trying to steal half their backyard on a bogus adverse-possession claim. “Every Sunday we thanked God for you,” they told me. Then there’s the clients in a boundary dispute who had trouble keeping their cool when their neighbour would come out and hurl insults at them from the other side of the driveway. I told them about the Bandar-log, the nasty, fifth-throwing monkeys in Kipling’s Jungle Book, and how all the wise jungle folk ignored them. When the case was finally over (they won), they gave me an illustrated copy of the Jungle Book. I should take my own advice when I hear the insults in lawyer jokes. I should remember all the good lawyers, all the wonderful hard-working counsel that advocated strongly without being obnoxious, sly, or unprofessional; all the like-minded souls who loved the business, despite its endless difficulties; all the conveyancing solicitors who stayed late and dug deep to solve some title problem that was jeopardizing a deal (and charged nothing to do it). So here’s to all the lawyers who keep it clean and keep it honest, and who do their duty to the best of their ability, and who don’t treat their clients’ hard-earned money like their own personal piggy bank. No matter how much filth is thrown our way, this is a profession we should be proud of, all joking aside.  

FROM THEORETICAL TO PRACTICAL  
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Why Kurds Should Vote “Yes” in the Referendum, But “No” for Independence

Author: Hunter Norwick
Managing Editor

On September 25, residents living in KRG-controlled areas will vote on whether Iraqi Kurdistan should sever itself from Baghdad and become an independent state. For now, we can assume that at least Iraq will support the Kurds seizing the reins over their own destiny. This unique anarchy is the fruit of a mutual apprehension of an imploding Arab world and the security threats posed by Turkey and, of course, Iran. The rest of the world, however, seems quite opposed to it. Just about every relevant state—Britain, Russia, Germany, and the United States—has unequivocally witheld its support. Baghdad, Tehran, and Ankara lead the fiercest opposition to Kurdish independence, as it would inevitably spur the Kurds in neighboring countries to expect a similar national unification. Unfortunately, the Kurds are at the centre of the twenty-first century’s Great Game: new players, new stakes—same rules.

A Post-Saddam Era

Standing on the mountains and peering over Sulaymaniyah, invariably one finds Kurdish locals waving their arms and pacing back and forth dangerously close to the precipice to draw out the city’s expansion following the Anglo-American invasion in 2003. Indeed, only two years later Iraq had its first (January) and second (December) free and fair election—the ‘free and fair’ bit being the most important feature.

The new Iraqi National Assembly was tasked with devising a constitution amenable to the interests of religious groups—Christians, Sunnis and Shi’ites—as well as ethnic groups—Turkomans, Arabs, and Kurds—in addition to several other minorities. The morose concoction of Iraqi inhabitants did not make this task simple. Nevertheless, the Kurds, for their part, succeeded in enshrining their gains and turning their de facto autonomy—consolidated in 1992 under a U.S. no-fly zone—into law.

The KRG was given fixed borders and now had the legal right to retain its own militia force. It was granted exclusive control over the region’s land and water rights. But in recent years, constitutional provisions that had been intentionally left vague in 2005 have helped rally Baghdad and Arbil against each other. And there are no assurances that these disputes will be settled off the battlefield.

Why Kurdistan Is Not Ready for Independence

According to the political, military and economic argument, and just about every other indictment one can conjure up, independence will almost certainly augur a future of despotism, isolation, and, worst of all, subordination.

The most contentious feature of the referendum concerns the status of the “disputed territories,” particularly Kirkuk and Shingal (Sinjar). These are territories that Baghdad asserts are part of Iraq proper, but which the KRG regards as essential to the Kurdish region. The legal means to resolve these disputes is found in Article 140 of the Iraqi constitution, which recommends a step toward normalization followed by a census, and that a referendum be held to determine the will of the people. This procedure, however, was supposed to be completed no later than 31 December, 2007.

There are two “camps” competing for the Shingal district. On one side is the Turkey-KDP axis and on the other is the PKK-Iraq PUK-Iran alignment, which is less an ideological alliance than it is a camp with tenuous shared interests of transient convenience. Shingal’s prize feature is not only that it sits on the former

IS supply route from Mosul to Raqqa, but also that there may be large, untapped oil reserves in the area. And, as of now the KRG and Turkey have closed their borders to northern Syria where PKK-linked YPG/PYD Kurdish forces are governing. Having control over Shingal, then, would provide the KRG with additional leverage over its neighbours, and Rojava (west Kurdistan) with an economic lifeline to Baghdad and the rest of the world.

But all of this is a non-starter for Turkey. There are no circumstances under which it will permit PKK-linked forces—in the form of the Shingal Protection Units (YSİ)—to retain control over the area. It fears the district and its mountains will provide the PKK with a second Qandil, a region in northeastern Iraq where the militant group has been recruiting and training new cadres since the 1990s. At the very least, PKK control over the Shingal district may develop into a shock absorber in the event of a Turkish attack in Syria, or a place of refuge for fighters bombed out of Qandil.

Nor will Turkey allow Tehran-loyal Hashd al-Sha’abi militia to consolidate their control over Shingal. This would project Iranian power unceremoniously close to Turkey’s border, and help secure a “Shia Crescent” from Iran to Lebanon, a prospect that is also liable to antagonize the U.S. and Israel. Iran also has an interest in keeping the PKK out of Qandil since that inevitably invites Turkish forces close to its own border.

But Turkey has already showcased its intentions to thwart any outcome where its own proxies do not prevail. Since 2015, it has been strengthening its forces in the Iraqi city of IS sawiya with a KDP endorsement, and President Erdogan has ordered attacks against PKK-linked groups in Shingal as late as 25 April.

Mahma Khalil, the mayor of Shingal, told Rudawnews that Yazidis wanted to be part of an independent Kurdistan. But his announcement is simply the product of a KDP patronage network that purchases the affinity of Shingal’s elites, but not its people. If it comes down to a referendum, the Yazidis—many if not most of whom remain IDPs and refugees—would probably elect to remain in an Iraqi federation. Ideally the Yazidis would like to have greater control over their own governance, something which the KDP is unlikely to brook. And as a result of callous mistreatment over the years, residents of Shingal feel a deep-seated disdain and suspicion of the Peshmergas.

In August 2014, when IS was approaching the area after seizing Mosul in June, the Peshmergas abandoned the Yazidis. The massacre that followed turned genocidal. Thousands of men, women, and children were stacked in mass graves while girls were sold into slavery. It was only in November the following year that the region was recaptured. The PKK was the only local force initially willing to come to their rescue and the Yazidis are not likely to forget this.

Then there is the problem of Kirkuk. It sits on one of Iraq’s largest oil reserves and offers the surest and fastest path to economic independence. The city is broken up into thirds. Less than a third are Arab and Assyrian, one-third are Kurds, and just over one-third are Turkoman. But the Turkoman are apprehensive about the Kurds, they share an ethnic affinity for Turkey, and are likely to vote to stay inside Iraq’s orbit. For the Arab population, that is a given.

By all means, then, the Kurds are not likely to prevail from a free and fair referendum. Given the indispensability of these regions, it is very possible that the KRG will resort to force to secure their interests. In fact, one can count on it.

The current state of the KRG’s economic situation is also worrisome. After the 2014 “oil-for-revenue” deal broke down between Arbil and Baghdad, the KRG started to sell oil on its own accord. But this has largely been a diplomatic and economic blunder. The Iraqi Kurds now depend heavily on Turkey to sustain its economy, and tensions with Baghdad have encouraged an exodus of international oil companies. Prime Minister Haidar al-Abadi has also ceased paying the KRG 17 percent of the federal budget, a painful hit to an economy already in tatters.

Moreover, selling oil without Baghdad’s consent has had legal ramifications. On July 4, for example, Reuters reported that Canada ordered the seizure of a 720,000-barrel cargo...
of crude from Kirkuk as requested by the Iraqi Oil Ministry. Baghdad has further threatened to take its complaints to international legal bodies against those countries, particularly Turkey, which purchase oil directly from the Kurds. Despite perhaps being the most effective force against the Islamic State, the Kurds still do not enjoy the diplomatic cover to prevent their independence from turning into isolation.

The Iraqi economy has been doubly battered by the influx of refugees and internally displaced persons fleeing IS-controlled areas. Unemployment is high and the KRG has had difficulty paying its workers. Painful austerity measures have shrunk the budget by over $10 billion USD since 2014 when global oil prices first plummeted. Half-finished construction projects and derelict infrastructure can be spotted all over major cities. It is arguable that independence will only worsen the crisis.

With Syria in shambles, Baghdad irate, and Iran naturally chary to support Kurdish autonomy, President Barzani has built a house of cards with Ankara as its foundation. Now the KRG’s sole egress to the outside world is tethered to the whims of a government which has historically attempted genocide against its own Kurdish population and which also remains—suspended indefinitely. It just so happens that the premiership is held by his nephew, Nechirvan Barzani, who alongside his uncle now rules over the tribal democracy that the KRG has become, which more often than not falls closer to the adjective than the noun.

Worst of all, the two major parties have divided Iraqi Kurdistan into modern fiefdoms. Between 1996 and 2006 Iraqi Kurdistan was separated into a “green zone” and a “yellow zone,” the former being the region over which the PUK exerted control and the latter referring to the KDP’s ambit. A similar de facto arrangement endures today between Arbil and Sulaymaniyah. With the suspension of parliament and with a brute running the presidency, both parties have returned to this collision course with potentially ruinous consequences.

To restart a project that commenced twelve years earlier, in 2006 the KDP and PUK reached an agreement to unify their respective forces and depoliticize the Peshmerga. About forty thousand fighters are now nominally under the Ministry of Peshmerga’s control, which is nominally headed by a Gorran member of parliament. But that still leaves well over one hundred thousand forces directly beholden to political parties.

Some Peshmerga allegiances even break down to an individual level. Hâdî Talabâni of the PUK, for example, commands an anti-terror force that is not under the authority of any ministry, while Nechirwan Barzani has a personal security force that helped protect Kirkuk oil fields in 2014. This phenomenon is widespread. Thus Kurdistan is composed not of a monopoly but an oligopoly of force, whereby pockets of power dominate across political, ideological, and tribal lines.

Historically these divisions have allowed for outside powers to sow chaos inside the region, pitting the Talabani crew against Barzani’s, and vice versa. In the midst of the civil war that raged from 1994–1998, Barzani enlisted the help of Saddam Hussein to oust the PUK from Arbil and crush the KDP’s opposition, while the PUK sought Iran’s backing to defend itself and retaliate the offensive. The war did not end until Washington brokered an agreement and a thousand Kurds had already lay dead.

Conclusion

Thus while the people are ready for independence, the KRG and the world are not. On September 25, Kurds must get out and vote “yes” for severing from Iraq, but demand that the KRG withhold its declaration of independence until more propitious circumstances arise. Committing the Kurds to a different course risks dismantling the century-long project for which so many have perished.
In its 4th year, close to 900 licensees will have joined the Profession through Ryerson’s LPP.

Within one year of their Call to the Bar, 75% of our alumni are working in law and law-related opportunities.
The collective officially disbanded in 1990 after the Conservative Party’s third consecutive election victory in 1987 prompted a gradual dissolution of the group. In 2007, Billy Bragg founded Jail Guitar Doors (after the Clash song of the same title), a non-profit organization devoted to providing musical equipment to prison inmates. The program also funds individual projects such as arranging recording sessions for people who are incarcerated in or have been released from UK prisons. In 2009, Wayne Kramer of the MC5 (whose 1975 arrest and imprisonment, incidentally, were the inspiration for the Clash to write Jail Guitar Doors in the first place) founded a branch in the United States that coordinates volunteer music teaching programs and organizes outreach.

Billy Bragg plays September 26, 27, and 28 at the Horseshoe Tavern. All three shows have sold out.

Billy Bragg is a British songwriter, vocalist, and guitarist whose unusual style includes the use of solo electric guitar and reverb-drenched vocals. Born in 1957 in Barking, Essex, Bragg’s musical career took some time to develop. There are many inspirational stories about his dogged persistence in pursuing contracts and opportunities that reveal a great deal about his indomitable character, including bringing mushroom biryani to a hungry DJ in the early years in exchange for airplay.

Political Affiliations
Billy Bragg has been involved in politics and grassroots movements throughout his career. He is notably anti-Margaret Thatcher, and in 1984 played several benefit shows in support of striking miners in England. In 1986, he visited the former USSR under Gorbachev, during the Secretary’s promotion of perestroika and glasnost. During this visit, he performed in Leningrad and Kiev. In 1999, Bragg was invited to appear before a commission that was debating reform in the House of Lords, where he presented “the Bragg method” of reform—arranging the Upper House to reflect in proportion general election results. He also supports Scottish and Welsh independence.

Bragg’s more recent political activities include joining the Occupy Movement protests in 2011, and endorsing the candidacy of Jeremy Corbyn for leadership of the Labour Party in 2015, and again in 2016. Because of his opposition to fascism, homophobia, and racism, and his support for equity and diversity in Britain, he has clashed with far-right movements, including the British National Party.

Songs
In addition to performing traditional songs about labour and resistance, Billy Bragg has penned many powerful original songs with an activist message. The following lyrics are a meagre sampling:

There is power in a factory, power in the land
Power in the hands of a worker
But it all amounts to nothing if together we don’t stand
There is power in a Union.

Now the lessons of the past were all learned with workers’ blood
The mistakes of the bosses we must pay for
From the cities and the farmlands to trenches full of mud
War has always been the bosses’ way, sir.

("There is Power in a Union," Billy Bragg/Traditional; Album: Talking With the Taxman About Poetry, 1986)

I stood before the judge that day
As he refused me bail
And I knew that I would spend my time
Awaiting trial in jail
I said there is no justice
As they led me out the door
And the judge said, “this isn’t a court of justice, son
This is a court of law.”

("Rotting on Remand," Billy Bragg; Album: Workers Playtime, 1988)

Activism
In 1985, Bragg formed Red Wedge with fellow musicians Paul Weller (The Jam, The Style Council) and Jimmy Somerville (Bronski Beat, The Communards). Red Wedge was a musical collective that sought to promote the policies of the Labour Party and engage youth in politics. During the late 1980s, Red Wedge staged multiple concerts and tours in pursuit of its goals.

The collective officially disbanded in 1990 after the Conservative Party’s third consecutive election victory in 1987 prompted a gradual dissolution of the group.

In 2007, Billy Bragg founded Jail Guitar Doors (after the Clash song of the same title), a non-profit organization devoted to providing musical equipment to prisoners. The program also funds individual projects such as arranging recording sessions for people who are incarcerated in or have been released from UK prisons. In 2009, Wayne Kramer of the MC5 (whose 1975 arrest and imprisonment, incidentally, were the inspiration for the Clash to write Jail Guitar Doors in the first place) founded a branch in the United States that coordinates volunteer music teaching programs and organizes outreach.

Billy Bragg plays September 26, 27, and 28 at the Horseshoe Tavern. All three shows have sold out.
You turn the game on, and you just start playing. You have no idea why you are playing. You are some naked dude coming out of what looks like a tanning bed-induced coma. Your first thought is, “Where are my clothes?” You find some special-looking treasure chests, you stick your head inside, and find a dirt-stained shit and some well-worn trousers. The thought crosses your mind, “Who would store these in a treasure chest?” Shrugging it off, you pull out the clothes and hold them over your head; a fun and rewarding chime rings in your mind -- “da Da DAADAAD.” You get dressed, walk outside, and immediately are captivated as you gaze over a ridiculously vast landscape of hills, valleys, and an ominous volcano.

The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild is quite a stunning feat. It boasts the largest overworld in video game history. You can run around for hours, fighting the same seven or eight variations of the same monsters. I enjoy the fact that the enemies are generally all the same because it allows the player to get used to the combat and become unbeatable. To complement this, we are given colourful visuals to enjoy as we roam endlessly through the most non-linear landscape in video game history. You can go anywhere, climb anything, kill any- thing, die from anything, and overcome any obstacle. This is further complimented by a powerful array of weapons to be found scattered all across Hyrule. Sadly, nothing is permanent in Breath of the Wild, but isn’t that a little bit like life? (Too much?) Weapons will wear and tear, eventually disintegrating in your very hands; best not to get too attached to that King’s Claymore. Since there is an abundance of weapons, we are encour- aged to use them up, rack up a body count, and find yourself endlessly rewarded with more, better weapons (consumerism much?). This is as much a downside as it is a perk because running around for hours, smiling the baddies of Ganon is a staple in what makes Breath of the Wild such a fun game. Nintendo keeps things entertaining, and I think this latest Zelda installment is one of the most fun I have played since the Four Swords Adventures; not to digress.

But is it as 10/10 as Ocarina of Time? I am afraid not. While Breath of the Wild is extremely grand in scale, there are staples from the Zelda series that are missing, staples which could have been incorporated. I have to be very clear with this point because people may just call me out on my nostalgia if I get too reminiscent. This poses a challenge, but bear with me. Breath of the Wild is vast. The vastness of the game creates a void. Zelda fans who have played any of the previous install- ments might agree that it seems like Breath of the Wild took place 100 years after Ocarina of Time’s world and dark energy has caused a rapid expansion of old Hyrule without adding much to fill the gaps. Where previous Zelda games felt interconnected, intricate, and dense with objectives, Breath of the Wild feels dispersed and disconnected within itself. Now, that is not to say that Nintendo left the world feeling totally estranged within itself. Tall towers, which also serve as fast travel points, connect the landscape by providing sweeping vistas similar to those delivered by the game in its open- ing sequence. These vistas remind us that the world is larger and is indeed connected. The disconnect, how- ever, comes from the fact that what happens in one part of the map very rarely affects another part. Completing objectives tends to feel overly localized and does not demand adventure or exploration in itself. There are few, if any, epic kingdom-wide, item-trading sequences which in previous installments would tour you across the land and unlock highly prized tools or weapons. Furthermore, every shrine, with few exceptions, is a self-contained mini puzzle which requires limited fore- sight or experimentation. This I did not mind because the ease of completing them allowed me to readily feel like I was making progress; until it gets repetitive. The shrine mechanic was a fantastic concept, but did they really all have to look and feel the same?

I have spent a lengthy paragraph complaining about the emptiness of Breath of the Wild, however I would be lying if I said that it did not come with its perks. As a game with many gaps in space and effect, it allows the player to immerse in microcosms to uncover treas- ures and travel seamlessly through a varied and diverse landscape. The ease of transportation across the many unique territories of Breath of the Wild is improved by the fun horseback-riding mechanic, which allows you to take full control over any wild horse running about. Yes, there is wildlife. You can hunt animals or harvest vegetation to cook food – and food is really necessary. The only downside to the food mechanic is that you cannot cook pizza. Not a small sacrifice, but a tolerable one. Pizza aside, the diversity of food dishes you make depends on where you travel. Every ingredient is a part of the wildlife and vegetation. Although the wildlife consists of little more than wolves, deer, cows, horses, the birds, and the bees, thankfully the vegetation is highly diverse, including a selection of mushrooms and herbs which, when prepared correctly, cause Link to enjoy a variety of physical enhancements. He can withstand extreme cold, be super stealthy, walk across an erupting volcano, or even run naked in the frozen alpines. This truly is a game about breathing in the wild.

In summation, I give The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild a B- in Osgood’s terms, because the bell curve applies where there are more than 20 evaluations. Meaning, on the bell curve, it is better than most but not among the elites of the Zelda franchise. A B- is really good grade! At least it didn’t get the D....
Last year, I made a significant mistake in my “5 Insane Drinks” article. I failed to realize that two of the beverages contained ingredients that can no longer be found in the LCBO. Apparently, André’s Almond Cream tasted too good for a wine that should never leave a paper bag, and Bacardi 151 (the key ingredient in Totally Awesome Sweet Alabama Almond Cream) was probably responsible for too many frat house infernos. Why can’t we be more like New Brunswick where the gas stations sell whisky, RCMP officers carry two long guns, and ditches make comfortable parking spaces for rented Toyotas?

Anyway, since I don’t own a wakizashi and can’t properly commit seppuku, I must atone with 5 other insane drinks for a (still) insane 2017!

Do you hear that sound? That’s your liver screaming like it was being faced down by a Lovecraftian horror.

I’d say this is a personal invention, but I’m sure someone somewhere else has made this. This one’s pretty mundane, but it’s also damned tasty. Sailor Jerry is a popular spiced rum with a lot of kick and strong notes of cherry and vanilla, which complement the “candy and bourbon” taste of the Red Stag (which just tastes like “you got your bourbon in my cherry syrup”). Why is it insane? Well, it’s rum and bourbon, so there’s the hat-on-a-hat aspect of it. It’s also easy to underestimate, and between the sugar and brown liquor, there’s high risk of a King hell bastard of a hangover. I call it Ol’ Kentucky Shark as an obscure pop culture reference, but also because bourbon is from Kentucky, and it’s magnificent until it suddenly destroys you.

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Serve as a shot, shooter, or on ice.

Hollandia Super Strong Beer

Open can. Drink. Regret.

I’ve only ever seen this at The Beer Store and in a head shop in Amsterdam where it served as a shroom antidote. The neat thing about beers this strong is that while no one could ever honestly suggest they taste good, they’re not so foul that you can’t get one down if you’re seriously regretting eating all those mushrooms in a foreign city and, holy crap, did that goose just tell me it wants my soul, and why would it want something I sold for Megadeth tickets in 2004? Or so I’m told.

Shake over ice, strain, serve in a chilled martini glass. Garnish with twist of lemon.

Cosmopolitan

Because I Haven’t Caused Enough Trouble

I haven’t. I can’t. I don’t want to. And thus, you have 5 Insane Drinks for an Insane 2017 that you can make with ingredients you can actually find in Ontario. Now, if you’ll excuse me, I have to deal with the incoming lawsuits.

Purple Jesus

Generally mixed in a bathtub or garbage can. Seriously. I suppose you may use a pitcher. This is an old-school college drink. You’re supposed to use Everclear, but I’ve never specifically used the garbage can or bathtub. I’m not sure what that is. I didn’t mix it in a water bottle and drink half of it before it got confiscated by a bouncer who looked like Penn Jillette (who apologized for doing so because we’re Canadian, dammit). It’s not bad. Vodka mixes with almost everything, and Spirytus is basically vodka without pretence. Some people throw fruit into the mix, but why waste perfectly good fruit?

Source: The Critic
Crossword Puzzle

**ACROSS**
1. Related by blood
5. Beige
9. Having a high temperature
12. Prefix for small
13. Part of speech
14. Very skilled person
15. Plot of ground
16. Throw
17. Child
18. Consisting of lines
20. Not difficult
22. Appears
24. Long
27. Apiece
29. Authentic
30. Tooth-bearing bone
33. Divest
35. Condensed moisture
36. Republic in SW Asia
38. Lively
39. Ancient Hebrew coin
41. Convergent
46. Ardor
48. Tongue
49. Which person
51. Tubular pasta in short pieces
53. Donations to the poor
54. Even (poet.)
55. Paradise
56. Cloak
57. Before

**DOWN**
1. Plentiful
2. Middle East rug
3. Silly
4. Saltpeter
5. Plea
6. Dove sound
7. Trick
8. Retract
9. Line for hoisting a sail
10. Wood sorrel
11. Spread out for drying
19. Matures
21. Become firm
23. Go away
25. Regret
26. Of recent origin
28. Mercenary
30. Dance
31. Part of verb to be
32. Combat area
34. Persian fairy
37. Not
40. Filbert
42. Knot
43. Eskimo dwelling
44. Deadens
45. Tenuous substances
47. Public swimming pool
49. Very small
50. Pronoun
52. Cardinal number

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