



Osgoode Hall Law School of York University
Osgoode Digital Commons

Obiter Dicta

Alumni & Law School Publications

10-10-2017

Volume 91, Issue 3 (2017)

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.osgoode.yorku.ca/obiter_dicta



Part of the [Law Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

"Volume 91, Issue 3 (2017)" (2017). *Obiter Dicta*. 39.

http://digitalcommons.osgoode.yorku.ca/obiter_dicta/39

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Alumni & Law School Publications at Osgoode Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Obiter Dicta by an authorized administrator of Osgoode Digital Commons.

Rewriting NAFTA

Negotiations Underway to Overhaul Free Trade in North America



Source: www.international.gc.ca

Author › Jeevan Kuner
Contributor

The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), a longstanding trade agreement between Canada, Mexico, and the United States, is being renegotiated. Enacted in 1994, NAFTA was introduced to facilitate greater economic activity between the signatories through the elimination of tariffs on agricultural and manufacturing goods, removal of trade barriers restricting foreign investment, and the codification of procedures to resolve trade disputes and protect businesses from unfair practices. During the U.S. presidential election last year, the topic of free trade was hotly debated. On the campaign trail, Republican candidate Donald Trump referred to NAFTA as “the worst trade deal in American history”, and vowed to renegotiate the agreement or abandon it altogether. Within months of being sworn into office, President Trump made good on his promise and talks were initiated between representatives of the three countries to begin the process of rewriting NAFTA. An ambitious schedule was announced: seven rounds of negotiations would be conducted in order to hash out a new agreement before the end of the year.

In August, the first round of negotiations between the countries took place in Washington, DC. Canadian

Foreign Affairs Minister Chrystia Freeland, Mexican Secretary of the Economy Ildefonso Guajardo, and United States Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer convened with policy experts and stakeholders from the private sector to discuss a wide range of topics. Over the course of several days, representatives from each country had the opportunity to deliver a presentation outlining general concerns about the agreement as it currently stands, and offer preliminary suggestions for how to move forward with a new agreement. Topics that were addressed during this first round of negotiations include rules governing automotive parts, labour, and cutting-edge pharmaceuticals. On the subject of automotive parts, U.S. Trade Rep. Lighthizer made it clear that his country would push for a quota on auto parts manufactured in the United States, which would provide a substantial boost to the American auto industry and fulfill an abiding promise made by President Trump. Canada’s Freeland and Mexico’s Guajardo, however, responded with swift opposition to the proposal, citing the adverse effects that such a quota would have on the economies of their respective countries.

In early September, a second round of negotiations

were held in Mexico City. The topics that were up for discussion included environmental protection,

»» Continued on page 4

In this Issue . . .

editors' note	
Hugh Hefner and not Growing up	2
news	
What's next for Syria	3
opinion	
Incarceration	8
opinion	
Recent developments in Arabia	9
arts and culture	
Game of Thrones Lives on	11

Hugh Hefner and Not Growing Up

Author › Ian Mason
Editor-in-Chief



Source: www.cnn.com

Hugh Hefner died on 27 September 2017, at the age of 91. It seemingly took all of five minutes for people to start arguing over whether he was a progressive icon or a glorified sleaze merchant. As a prospective lawyer, I naturally spent far too much time trying to explain to several people that the truth is somewhere between those two extremes.

It was honestly surprising to see the magnitude of both adoration and loathing levelled at Hef. Some people regarded him as a super-suaive he-man who was unfailingly cool and charming well into his 80s. Others called him a vicious pimp and hoped there was a hell just so he could burn in it. The most visceral reaction seemed to come from feminists who were understandably angered when a few people tried to suggest Hefner was a feminist icon. There have been many men who have been much more misogynistic, but the guy did make his fortune portraying women as sex objects, and some of the stuff that went on at the Playboy Mansion bordered on the nightmarish. Still, the idea of wishing eternal suffering on anyone seems distasteful to me. Especially when the person in question became a shambling caricature of himself in his final years, dry humping the leg of his lost potency. Intensely disliking him makes sense, but hating him enough to take pot-shots at his corpse is a bit much.

It's also important to remember that this is a guy who became a progressive icon in the 1950s. You might have to bear with me on this one, because I'm about to compare Hugh Hefner to Bam Margera. If you don't know, Bam Margera was a member of Jackass and CKY, and introduced the world to such things as BMX jousting and beating up your dad while he's on the toilet. He was a phenomenally talented skateboarder and stuntman who got famous at twenty. He then spent the next

fifteen years doing what a lot of twenty-year-old skaters would do with tons of cash and fame; getting high holy hammered with other kids. He was recently the subject of a Vice documentary where they covered his life, newfound sobriety, loss of his best friend, and return to skateboarding. In that documentary, one of his former Jackass co-stars notes that "the age you get famous is the age you stay at forever," and while Bam Margera does sincerely seem to be getting his act together, he was certainly trapped in his adolescence for well over a decade. Why grow up when you have everything you think you want?

That's exactly what happened to Hugh Hefner. By his late twenties, he was rich, famous, surrounded by beautiful women, and (most importantly) infuriating the establishment. On top of that, people kept indulging him. For example, more than fifty years after the publication of the first issue of Playboy, he appeared as himself on the popular animated sketch comedy Robot Chicken, dropping easy one-liners, and basically showing off how he could still date women in their twenties. Sure, everything was an obvious act, but some people take themselves much too seriously, and to his credit, he certainly wasn't doing that. He became famous in the 1950s, and built his own world around that high point in his life. At its heart, it was pure fantasy, but he never had any incentive to come down from his monument to his best days, especially when so many people were willing participants.

But it isn't 1953. Hell, by the 1960s, Hef was well on his way to becoming backwards. Decades have passed since the days when Playboy could have been considered even remotely provocative, and in the end, he was little more than a passive misogynist from an age when

being politely condescending to women was somehow respectful. Frankly, it's remarkable that so many people cared about his passing, one way or another.

That said, since I've gone through enough effort to write something of a eulogy for the guy, I might as well draw attention to a couple of lessons we can learn from his passing (or at least the reaction to it).

First, we have a cultural tendency to completely glamorize or demonize certain people. I'm guilty of this too, as anyone familiar with my opinion of Donald Trump or Doug Ford can confirm. Certainly, some people can be irredeemable jackasses or paragons of decency. But, for the most part, we're only human. I used to idolize Hunter S. Thompson, and still think he was one of the greatest journalists in history. He was also cruel to his wife, squandered much of his talent, and as much as I think *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* is one of the great works of American literature, it was basically a chronicle of an epic crime spree. My dad idolizes Winston Churchill, because the guy had the quintessential acid wit. He was also a racist who basically orchestrated a famine in India, and got kicked out of office after trying to continue World War II with a proposal to invade Russia (you know, because it worked so well for the Germans). People are people, no one's perfect, and a lot of us are capable of being total jerks.

Second, bad people can actually be a force for good, and good people can do a lot of harm by prioritizing their intentions over results. One of the arguments I heard condemning Hugh Hefner was that he gave the sex trade a false veneer of legitimacy. I'm not disputing that, but it's not actually a bad thing. Disapproving of the commoditization of women's bodies is fine, but no good stems from keeping sex work on the fringes of society. Sex work being illegal means that it must be done in the shadows, where the victims of the trade are placed at greater risk of violence. If Hugh Hefner did in fact legitimize sex work, good, because it's not going away, and no problem is solved by ignoring its existence. Disliking what he did is understandable, but he might have actually done more good than the well-intentioned people who ended up harming vulnerable women by trying to outlaw the world's oldest profession. Sometimes, a douchebag forces people to have a necessary conversation they've avoided for far too long.

Anyway, so long Hef. You were an interesting man of questionable character, which very well might have been why so many people found you so interesting. You made the world face ugly realities, and you looked cool doing it. At the very least, you were a hell of a lot better than the pick-up artists and MRA swine we have to deal with today.

Oh, and, uh, thanks for that stack of dirty magazines I thought was so cool when I was twelve. ▲

Obiter Dicta

a. Osgoode Hall Law School, 0014G
York University
4700 Keele Street
Toronto, ON M3J 1P3
e. ObiterDicta@osgoode.yorku.ca
w. obiter-dicta.ca
t. @obiterdicta

editorial board

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF | Ian Mason
MANAGING EDITORS | Alessandro Perri,
Hunter Norwick
LAYOUT EDITOR | Kay (Jia) Wang
BUSINESS MANAGERS | Anthony Choi
editorial staff
COPY EDITOR | Chris Mansur,
Hina Ghaus
NEWS EDITOR | Jerico Espinas
OPINION EDITOR | Amanda Byrd
ARTS & CULTURE EDITOR | Jacklyn Tuckey
SPORTS EDITOR | Kenneth Lam

ARTS & CULTURE WRITER

Rocco Scocco

SOCIAL MEDIA

Linda Noorafkan

staff writer

Ankita Nayar

layout staff

Yasaman Bahremand

The *Obiter Dicta* is published biweekly during the school year, and is printed by Weller Publishing Co. Ltd.

Obiter Dicta is the official student newspaper of Osgoode Hall Law School. The opinions expressed in the articles contained herein are not necessarily those of the *Obiter* staff. The *Obiter* reserves the right to refuse any submission that is judged to be libelous or defamatory, contains personal attacks, or is discriminatory on the basis of sex, race, religion, or sexual orientation. Submissions may be edited for length and/or content.

What's Next for Syria

Author › Hunter Norwick
Managing Editor

I and the public know,
What every school child has to learn,
He who has evil done to him,
Will do evil in return.

W. H. Auden, 1939

In exchange for six years, five-hundred thousand lives, and the destruction of all things agreeable, Syria has secured its own immolation. The first protests in March 2011, which later turned into armed opposition, were intended to lighten the yoke of Bashar al-Assad's oppression, but the noble, democratic chorus that initially emerged was counterpointed by shrill cries for jihad and a promulgation of Shari'a.

Only recently has fate, through the tiniest imaginable aperture, shone any pleasant light on Syria's future. Fighters from one of the YPG's international brigades, currently leading the siege on Raqqa, have informed this author that the Islamic State is predicted to collapse within two to four months.

The perennial question re-emerges, then:
What comes next?

United States

The Syrian civil war endures on several levels, each antagonistic to the other: it is fought locally, fueled regionally, and decided globally.

But, policy made on each warring plane is always shifting and often unintelligible. That is particularly true for the United States. In 2013 the Obama administration greenlighted a CIA effort to train 15,000 rebels, which, according to many analysts, bore some fruit by 2015 as the Free Syrian Army (FSA) made gains against the Assad regime in Idlib, Aleppo, and Latakia, the latter being the heartland of Alawis.

Then came the blowback. Most of these defeats were achieved in alliance with al Qaeda's affiliate, Jabhat al-Nusra—now Tahrir al-Sham—and the then-second largest Islamist group in Syria, Ahrar al-Sham. It is doubtful that any success could have been made without these groups. The program was implemented with America's traditional intolerance for success, and by June 2017, when it was finally shutdown by President Trump, only a couple dozen rebels remained on the roster. The rest either dropped out or defected to jihadi groups, bringing with them their US-funded weaponry.

In 2014, the US commenced its air campaign in defence of the YPG—now subsumed under the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)—a paramilitary group regarded as suspect by the FSA and utterly and fully detested by Islamists. The primary targets of the US air force have been the Islamic State and al-Nusra; the latter, however, is perceived by many Western-backed opposition groups as indispensable for the revolution.

Further contradictions abound. The SDF is dominated by the YPG and the YPG is a sister organization of the PKK. The PKK has waged a nearly four-decade-long insurgency against Ankara for its own autonomy in southeastern Turkey, and, as a result, has been designated a terrorist organization by Turkey, the EU, and the US. Any serious observer will recognize that the conceptual difference that the US government draws between the SDF and the PKK does not in any way correspond to the fact that these two groups are ontologically the same. Their leaders are PKK, their ideology is PKK, and their chain-of-command is PKK.

Quite surprisingly US support for the Kurds, whether it be in Iraq or Syria, has persisted in spite of the unceasing, squealing protests of its NATO ally, Turkey. In fact, thousands of military advisors are positioned in northern Syria to deter the Turks from invading. One is thus bound to observe that either the US is valuing this enclave as a way to combat radicalism and undermine the Assad regime

in the longer run, or it sees the Kurds as leverage over the Turks and the Iranians—or both. This is a query for which there is little evidence to stabilize either answer, as caprice and confusion seem to be the chief driving forces behind US foreign policy in the region.

Russia

Russia's goal is far more straightforward: Assad must win. No soil too stained, no life too valuable, the regime must prevail and at any cost necessary.

Russia's role was limited to diplomacy for the first three years of the war. Then, as the regime was being routed by a front of the temporarily-united opposition, Russia seized the skies in October 2015 and targeted al Qaeda-linked groups, as well as the occasional Western-backed FSA unit. The most significant defeat to the opposition happened at the siege, and eventual conquest, of Aleppo in December 2016, which took several months and, after four years of back-and-forth fighting, tens of thousands of lives. This forced many fighters to withdraw to the north-western province of Idlib, where the most powerful opposition groups now share, and contest for, power.

Fortunately, there are points of convergence between Russian policy and American policy. Russians are stationed inside Afrin, a Kurdish canton, on the border of "Euphrates Shield," Turkey-occupied territory, in order to prevent the latter from expanding and developing supply lines with the rebels it arms and finances in Idlib. Russia has also lobbied—with Turkey shutting it down each time—for Kurdish participation in the Astana talks that have been going on since the fall of Aleppo last year. This is consistent with Russia's attempt to introduce an almost-federalist draft constitution for Syria's future transition, which would offer communities greater cultural and administrative freedoms independent of Damascus.

The geopolitical significance of Syria is considerable. The governorate of Tartus provides Russia with its only unconditioned naval base in the Mediterranean. Moreover, since former Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat wilfully chose to be under American auspices in 1978–79, and especially after the fall of Afghani President Najibullah in 1992, Syria has remained Russia's only client state in the region.

Thus it may be easier to understand Russia's posturing through a Cold War lens. The Soviet Union, for example, became the protectorate of the first Kurdish proto-state in northwestern Iran following the Second World War. It only agreed to withdraw its troops in 1946 after receiving proportionate economic and energy concessions from Iran, the United States, and Britain. It is very possible, then, that Russia will subject its support for the Kurds to the partial or full withdrawal of Iranian and Turkish forces in the country.

Strategically, Syria has always been a reliable, secular client-state for Russia. But, with the infiltration of potentially recalcitrant Iranian and Iranian-backed forces, this enduring alliance may become less feasible. Russia and Iran, allies, but also rivals, will certainly be, in one way or another, using the Kurdish issue to resolve other contradictions in their policy.

Saudi-Egyptian-Emirate Alliance

Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, and Egypt (and, recently to a lesser extent, Qatar) form a regional bloc in opposition to the Iranian-Syrian alliance.

The Gulf powers have been among the primary financiers and arms-providers for opposition groups in Syria. The chief goal of this bloc is to dismantle the Alawite-dominated government in Damascus and replace it with a Sunni regime friendly to their regional interests. There are some pundits who suspect that Saudi Arabia is interested in building a pipeline through Mesopotamia and into Anatolia (and from there into Europe). However, even if that

is indeed a reason, it is highly doubtful that it is the principal driving force behind the Gulf's foreign policy decisions.

To build a pipeline to Turkey would require such an immense amount of diplomatic maneuvering and deal-making that the project seems almost impossible. And even if it succeeded, the pipeline would not only have to go through two of the least stable countries in the world—Iraq and Syria—it would have to run through Sunni, Shi'a, and Kurdish territories, always at risk of being upended in times of conflict.

It is better, then, for analysts to view Saudi Arabia's foreign policy as part of a larger, regional war, with Shi'a on one side and Sunnis on the other. The Kingdom has on-and-off financed several of Lebanon's media outlets, politicians and even the military to combat the influence of Hezbollah. In Yemen, the Saudis have continued a horribly destructive war against the Houthis under the pretext that they are backed by Iran. And, earlier this year, Riyadh invited, on separate occasions, the company of Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, as well as powerful militia leader, Moqtada al-Sadr—both Shi'a. This was clearly a tactic to undermine Tehran's influence in the country, which has on many occasions resulted in intra-Shi'a wars in Iraq's south.

Saudi Arabia still clings to the largely outdated "Geneva Communiqué" issued in 2012, which is interpreted by the West and its allies as a United Nations Security Council authorization to appoint a successor for Assad that will replace his Alawite cabal. But as time lapses, a tenable successor is becoming a more and more remote possibility. The most powerful rebel groups in Idlib, Tahrir al-Sham and Ahrar al-Sham, and their respective coalitions, have turned their guns on one another in a bloody conflict that has left Saudi Arabia and Turkey with a weakened, almost non-existent Ahrar al-Sham. This considerably diminishes Saudi Arabia's purchase over the Higher Negotiations Committee that was established to represent the opposition forces in Geneva and elsewhere.

In short, the only cards that Saudi Arabia can play are those that antagonize both enemies and allies. Idlib is increasingly becoming a hotbed for terrorist and jihadi groups, and has hence become a mutual target for both the West and its rivals. There is some worry that Saudi Arabia and its regional allies will become "spoilers" in the final negotiations once the Islamic State is eliminated, but with firm pressure from President Trump, it is not hard to envisage the Saudis recognizing their defeat and capitulating to an Iranian-backed government in Damascus.

Turkey and Iran

While Turkey and Iran are diametrically opposed to the future status of the regime in Damascus (Iran wants the Alawite cabal to continue running the country whereas Turkey wants a transitional government that divests power into Sunni and non-sectarian forces), both countries are apprehensive about the rise of a Kurdish autonomous region in Rojava, and both countries want to quicken the demise of ISIS. And now that the Kurds in Iraq have held their referendum and are approaching the potential of a unilateral declaration of independence, Iran and Turkey have all the more reason to work side-by-side to effect their foreign policy goals in Syria.

Alongside the Gulf states, Turkey has been among Ahrar al-Sham's and the FSA's largest arms suppliers and financiers. After the collapse of talks between Ankara and the PKK in 2015, Turkey feared that the latter would use northern Syria as a launching pad for its insurgency, and has since taken a far more aggressive tilt against the YPG forces. This policy reached its apex in August 2016 when it launched operation "Euphrates Shield" to push back ISIS fighters off its border and ensure the three Kurdish cantons remained asunder. Although Ankara has announced that

this operation has ended, Turkish forces still remain in the area and continue to provide cover for FSA units in the area.

Iran's intervention has been far more pervasive and without it Assad's regime would have likely already fallen. Its foreign policy in Syria is managed by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), a sort of "deep state" military force that has grown immensely powerful over the years. In 2012/2013, the IRGC played a significant role in the creation of the National Defense Forces (NDF), a militia group fielding upwards of 100,000 men, Shia and non-Shia alike, to bolster regime forces.

In addition to the 2,000-3,000 advisors placed throughout the regime's military ranks, Iran has funnelled refugees from Afghanistan and Iraq to join militias and help fight the Islamic State, as well as other Sunni groups, to ostensibly protect Shi'a religious monuments. Furthermore, the penetration of Hezbollah into Syria out of Lebanon is by no means independent of the foreign policy goals of Iran, which is the militant group's largest and most resolute backer, extending as far back as the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982.

Strategically, Iran, similar to Russia, wants to keep Assad in power. It fears the disintegration of government institutions as well as the secession of Kurds in the north. These may be properly noted as Iran's "redlines." If the Kurds break away, Iranian Kurds will feel empowered to re-commence their own struggle for autonomy or independence. And if the state's institutions break down, or if there is a federal constitution that gives local groups regional power, that will, in Iran's eyes, provide a vehicle for extremists to retain power.

In short, the IRGC is committed to destroying the Islamic State, ensuring the status quo, and preserving its own foothold in the country.

Non-State Actors

Since the outset of the war, there has been a seemingly infinite proliferation of non-state actors contesting for power, often times with diverging interests.

Hezbollah – Hezbollah intervened in 2013 to protect the regime's interests in southern and western Lebanon. It is also attempting to consolidate its power around the Golan Heights, opening up another front with Israel in the next war. Israel and the US perceive this not only as an unacceptable threat but also another way by which Iran has sought to improve its geopolitical stand across the Middle East.

Regime and pro-regime militias – the objective of the regime and its local allies is obvious: the destruction of the Islamic State, the retention of autocratic power, and the end to extremism across the nation. As has been shown,

the regime will do anything necessary to reach this point.

The People's Protection Units/Democratic Union Party (YPG/PYD) – the Kurds in the north declared a "federal democratic system" in 2016. The region is governed by the PKK's Marxist-Leninist ideology. Although many Kurds were reluctant to ally with an "imperial power" like the United States, the YPG has been the most effective non-state force in Syria against the Islamic State. It is currently squeezing IS in Raqqa, its former de facto capital, and is attempting to seize as much territory as possible in the Deir ez Zor governorate in order to increase its leverage in the post-war negotiations.

Tahrir al-Sham – Tahrir al-Sham is the latest manifestation of Fatah Jabhat al-Nusra, al Qaeda's dog in the Syrian fight. Recently, it has consolidated its grip on Idlib province and has decimated Ahrar al-Sham and its allies in a bitter internecine war among opposition groups. In general, the group's intention is not to use Idlib as a base for terrorist attacks against the West, but there are elements within this group that certainly have a different opinion on the matter.

Ahrar al-Sham – Ahrar al-Sham has been the leading militia group and has formed several different coalitions with other opposition forces across north-eastern Syria. Currently, it is located primarily in Idlib, but as a consequence of its infighting with Tahrir al-Sham, many analysts suspect the significance of this group has waned without any prospect of it waxing.

Free Syrian Army – the Free Syrian Army is a disparate, fragmented group that is composed of local militias, some with secular leanings and others that are more Islamist. Many of its units are scattered in cantons across the country and it is not certain which of these groups will remain by the time the fighting ultimately stops. Since its founding in 2011, it has suffered several leadership failures, defections, and betrayals. And because of its standing in the eyes of the West, the Assad regime recognizes that its negotiating position in the post-war talks will be limited to the extent the FSA retains power.

Southern Front – The Southern Front is a Western-backed alliance that receives its supplies through Jordan. It has managed a relatively peaceful arrangement in the southern regions of Syria—due to both Russian and American efforts—and this group will likely contribute to the negotiations that follow after the fall of radical jihadi groups.

Final Negotiations

Every assessment of the Syrian civil war is liable to being contradicted by future, unexpected events. The conflict is an unpredictable and vicious contest between dozens, if not hundreds, of different state and non-state

actors vying for power, each with their own conception of what the future of Syria should hold. Ceasefires are never armistices, and lulls in combat are merely periods for rearming and preparing for the next fight. Nevertheless, here are a few predictions of what the final negotiations might entail.

Since most actors realize on both sides that the Assad regime is here to stay, it is likely that his ousting will no longer be a requirement for Western powers (this has not been made official, which may indicate a negotiating tactic rather than policy). And although local forces detest such an outcome, without external backing, their fighting power is limited in the face of the Russian-Iranian-Syrian alliance's military strength. Moreover, the chief concern of Western powers, particularly the United States, is no longer regime change in Damascus, but the destruction of the Islamic State and all of its terrorist infrastructure.

The only result that approximates a compromise equidistant to each major party's demands is a kind of federal system that provides additional rights to local citizens, as well as a democratic system that would attempt to check the power of the Assad government. Russia has given some support to this idea, and on several occasions has entreated its negotiating partners to provide a seat for the Kurds at the negotiating table (rebuffed by Turkey each time).

What's more, the militant forces in Idlib are still quite powerful, as are the forces in the southern governorates that border Jordan and the Golan Heights. During the Astana talks between September 14 and 15, Turkey, Iran, and Russia agreed to ceasefire and de-escalation zones across Idlib, in addition to previous agreements in the south. This gives credence to the prediction that these groups are here to stay, only to be fully de-mobilized through a negotiated settlement.

And, at this point, the Rojava project seems to be a foregone conclusion. It is militarily strong, absent of religious extremism, and currently backed by both the Russians (who are positioned in the Afrin canton) and the Americans. The Iranian and Turkish desire to crush this enclave is therefore unlikely to succeed. Instead, it is probable that the Kurds will achieve a similar autonomy as those in northern Iraq, thereby paving the way to secession sometime in the future.

In short: Assad will retain his power. Governorates will be invested with greater administrative functions. Rojava will always be under threat but will nevertheless continue to exist. And, last but not least, whatever emerges from the Syrian civil war will constitute the new proxies for the regional and global powers, without much chance of being spared the geopolitical contest that has defined international relations from time immemorial. ▲

Continue from cover page »»

telecommunications, and anti-corruption measures. Building on the modest consensus that arose out of the first round of negotiations, the countries tabled several chapters that each agreed would form the bedrock of a more refined and modernized NAFTA. However, not everyone was on board with the trade agreement as it currently stands. Union leaders from Canada, Mexico, and the United States staged a rally outside of the hotel where the negotiations were taking place. The crowd demanded improved unionization practices, higher wages, and an international mechanism to ensure stricter compliance with labour laws. Jerry Dias, a leader of one of Canada's largest private-sector unions, was present among the masses. According to Dias, NAFTA has not been beneficial to workers in the three countries, and Mexico, in particular, has been hit the hardest: "The Mexicans who work in these auto plants can't afford to buy the cars they build. And that is an absolute disgrace."

Most recently, a third round of negotiations took place in Ottawa in late September. A few days earlier, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau gave a speech at the United Nations General Assembly where he declared

Canada's commitment to reaching a trade agreement that featured more worker-friendly policies. "This is not the time for retrenchment," Trudeau said. "It is time for the Atlantic democracies to renew our commitment to universal standards of rights and liberty, enforced through a multilateral, rules-based order that has promoted peace and stability, and stood the test of time." During the third round of negotiations, Canada's Freeland echoed Prime Minister Trudeau's statements and sought to address a few key themes: progressive trade, the promotion of human rights, and the preservation of multilateralism between the three nations that has existed since the end of the Second World War. To achieve these goals, Freeland argued for greater labour regulations, including increased union protections for Mexican workers, and a termination of right-to-work laws that prevent the establishment of unions in the United States.

A fourth round of negotiations is scheduled for early October and will take place back in Washington. While trade experts have cautioned that the issues under negotiation are exceedingly complex and will carry over into next year, a joint statement from the

three countries presented a more optimistic tone about the progress that has been made thus far: "While a great deal of effort and negotiation will be required in the coming months, Canada, Mexico, and the United States are committed to an accelerated and comprehensive negotiation process." Recently, both President Trump and Prime Minister Trudeau affirmed their commitment to reaching a new deal by the end of the year, and for good reason: Mexican politics. As a result of term limits, President Enrique Peña Nieto of Mexico will be out of office for good next summer, at which time, according to Secretary Guajardo, the politics of free trade in Mexico will likely prevent a new deal from being reached for several years. Only time will tell whether the issues at hand will be resolved and a modern version of NAFTA will materialize before politics gets in the way. ▲

The Family Law Fight Towards Accessibility: *Coates v Watson*

Author › Lily MacLeod on behalf of the Osgoode Hall Family Law Association



Source: unsplash.com

Canada's Economic and Social Context

In Canada, 1 in 6 adults live with a disability. Compared to their able-bodied counterparts, adults with a disability are more likely to lack a post-secondary education, be unemployed, and live in poverty. The overall Canadian poverty rate is approximately 10%. However, over 14% of those with a disability live in poverty. The Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) is a financial support accessible to adults with a disability. However, this form of social assistance is difficult to attain and sparse at best. It does not pay the bills – especially for those who are unable to work and receive no voluntary financial support from their families.

The Decision

It is in this troubling context that *Coates v Watson* emerges – a recent Ontario decision which makes child support accessible to adult children with a disability whose parents never married. The case contemplates the constitutionality of section 31 of Ontario's *Family Law Act (FLA)*. The provision applies to parents who were never married and obliges unmarried parents to pay child support for their adult child, but only if that child is attending school full-time. Compare that provision to the federal *Divorce Act* which applies to married spouses. This piece of legislation obliges married parents to pay child support for their adult child if the child is enrolled in full-time education or is unable to work due to illness, disability, or other cause. The court found that the distinction between the two pieces of legislation is arbitrary and assaults the dignity of disabled children of unmarried parents.

Judge Sullivan acknowledges that the circumstances of people with disabilities have often been and continue to be

disregarded – in inaccessible buildings, hospitals that lack sign language interpreters, and ableist legislation. Section 31 of the *FLA* “assumes that children over the age of majority will be self-sufficient unless they are in full time school. It does not consider the needs and circumstances of adult children who are unable to leave a parent's charge or obtain necessities of life by reason of temporary or permanent disability.”

Judge Sullivan notes that, “disabled children of unmarried relationships, and their residential parents, most often mothers, face economic hardships and insecurity not visited upon those whose parents married. It is substantively discriminatory that children and residential parents have diminished access to financial resources as a result of the parents' marital status.”

Judge Sullivan further notes that “even if the perfect public supports were in place for people with disabilities, the legislative regime here denies access to child support to ‘illegitimate’ children in contrast to ‘legitimate’ children, sending the message that the claimant families are less worthy of respect, concern and consideration. The offence to dignity is substantively discriminatory.” As a result, the court concludes that section 31 infringes the equality guarantee in section 15(1) of the *Charter* on the grounds of disability, marital status, and sex and is not saved by section 1. The court recommends reading in the definition of “child of the marriage” from the *Divorce Act* into the *FLA*.

Ultimately, the court affirmed that child support is the right of the child and acknowledged that children ought not to be treated differently based on their disability and the spousal status of their parents. The Ontario government agrees. In response to this decision, the provincial government has promised to amend the *FLA* to mirror the

provisions of the *Divorce Act*. This decision takes pressure off the public purse since private sources will now be obligated to provide support for adult children with disabilities.

Implications for Family Lawyers

A mother, Robin Coates, brought this constitutional challenge before the court. As a result, she is now able to obtain child support for her 22-year-old son who is diagnosed with DiGeorge Syndrome. This illness involves physical and cognitive health symptoms that demand full-time supervision and care.

The decision expands the definition of what it means to be a child for the purposes of child support. Therefore, the decision gives family lawyers “more options” to present when advising their clients. Previously, if an unmarried mother wanted child support for her adult child who was not in school, there was not much a lawyer could do to help. Now, single mothers are empowered to pursue child support from parents with an income.

The other side of the coin: this expanded definition may lead to more litigation. New questions arise: Will parents be obliged to pay the standard child support table amount for adult children with disabilities? If not, how will child support amounts be calculated, particularly if an adult child is receiving ODSP? These questions remain unanswered but one thing is clear: this decision is a positive step in the fight towards accessibility for adult children with disabilities.

Sources

<http://www.ccdonline.ca/en/social-policy/poverty-citizenship/demographic-profile/poverty-disability-canada>

<http://shawyerlaw.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/2017-07-07-Coates-Reasons-for-Decision-of-Sullivan-J.pdf> ▲

The Dos and Don'ts of Law School

The Law Student Filter

Author › Anikta Nayar
Contributor

There is a constant refrain among law students: “But I’m in *law school!*” You become the priority, the exception to every rule, the excuse to not go out when you’d rather stay in, to your mediocre GPA, to binge-watching *Narcos* because you’re “so stressed” and just “need a break.” Because law school.

It’s a different world down this rabbit hole. There are things you can’t do here. There are things you absolutely should do. These aren’t hard and fast rules, by any means. But there are good guidelines for all law students to follow. *The Rules of Law Student Conduct*, if you will.

DO wear a lot of black. Black is classy. Black is sophisticated. I recently heard of a judge with red nail polish and the lawyer who complained about it. Yes, pink has been proven to make people happy. But we’re not Elle Woodses. Keep the colour at home. This is law school.

DON’T sleep too much. Let’s be real: if you’re getting enough sleep in law school, you’re probably doing something wrong. We’re law students. Health comes second (or third or fourth or eighth). Ambition is always first.

DO drink a lot of coffee. Look, coffee is just a way of life, #WeTheNorth, #TimmyNation, #lolstarbuxsux, #whatever. It’s not just to get you through a 22-hour day; this is the symbol of hard work. If we wanted the health lecture, we would’ve gone to med school. But we didn’t. We’re in law school.

DON’T read non-law books (especially young adult or romance or high fantasy). We like what we like, but we’re in a demanding, highly-specialized field now. Law is different. Law needs technical language and knowledge. Pick up some Stuntz and grow your brain.

Most importantly, **DO disregard everything you’ve read here.** Look, law school is hard. We all have all-nighters and seven-cups-of-coffee days. No one can manage square meals, lavender oil rubbed into their wrists, breathing in the smell of orange peels every day (all actual suggestions for stress relief, by the way). But there’s a difference between “I’m busy” and “I’m busy because I’m in law school.” Hint: it’s in the last five words.

It’s something specific to this Snapstagram generation of moping selfies with your twelve 1L textbooks, or photos of your coffee cup balanced on your open laptop, your half-finished essay on screen, three extensively-highlighted

textbooks in front of you, with a caption like “Law school got me Lit the hell up.” No judgment: I’ve been there. But the social media obsession around law school is dangerous. Law school, and being a law student, becomes a crafted image. You’re not just a law student, you’re a #lawstudent.

But here’s a hard truth:

Law school doesn’t make you special.

Hear me out. I am not Annalise Keating, leagues above mere mortals, or the Blue-Haired Lawyer, nasally tearing down an innocent waiter who can’t pronounce chowder (do I watch too much TV?). I’m just a 2L who spent far too much time last year differentiating herself based on her law school acceptance, telling you to stop putting that pressure on yourself. Yes, law school is hard to get into. Yes, you should be pleased. Yes, the work has just begun.

But few things cause more stress than putting yourself on a pedestal. You put unrealistic demands on yourself, and even when you realize that, you can justify it: “Yes, I’m exhausted, BUT I’m in a harder program now—I can’t sleep like I used to”; “yes, I’m stressed, BUT I can handle it, or I wouldn’t be here”; “yes, I’m sad all the time, BUT I’m in law school.”

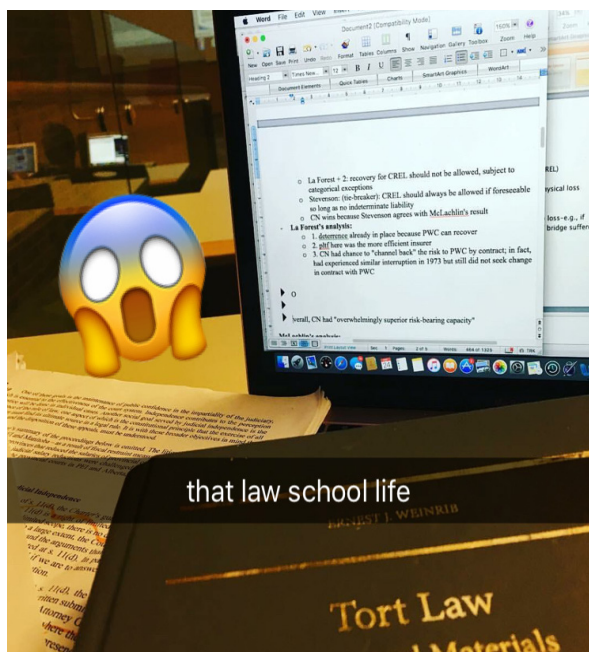
Don’t touch the but, Nemo.


That “but” is the line between you and the rest of the world. Cross it and you fancy yourself superwoman or man, able to leap judgments and scale references—and too proud to admit when you’re drowning in Latin.

No one is saying you shouldn’t be proud or push yourself. Just know: pride doesn’t belong here. Nor does pride NOT belong here. A lot of people won’t like what I’m saying, but this is just a building. Do what you want, be as you are. But don’t define yourself by your law student status. Law school is school and school is part of life. Law school is not a filter on Snapchat or a hashtag for Twitter. Law school is not your crowning achievement in life, and law school is definitely not your burden to bear alone. There are so many resources available to you for a reason; use them.


Forget the witty captions and the staged stress sets. Law school life has no special place on your social media profile. Law school is not a Kardashian. Law school is laundry day. Congrats on making it this far. But take it easy on yourself. You’re not done yet.

You’re a law student. ▲





RECEIVE REAL MENTORING



CASSELS BROCK
STUDENTS
cbbstudents.com

RYERSON'S LAW PRACTICE PROGRAM (LPP)

GREAT LAWYERS START HERE



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.



@RULPP | RYERSON.CA/LPP

INNOVATIVE • EXPERIENTIAL • ENTREPRENEURIAL

Incarceration, Rehabilitation, Reintegration

The Ultimate Goal of Our Corrections System Is Much More Than Just Punitive

Author › Deanna Cristovao
Contributor



Source: squarespace.com

There is a misconception, I think, that individuals convicted of crimes should remain behind bars indefinitely. Or, that these individuals should be forever marked with the stigma and second-hand citizenship of being criminals. Or, that they deserve nothing more than to pay for their crimes, and languish in prison without any consideration for their rights as human beings.

This is not the criminal justice system that I want, nor is it the one society needs. Yes, people who commit crimes should be held accountable for their actions. Yes, people who commit crimes should face consequences that deter them from re-committing and that denunciate the crimes they have committed, so others don't follow in their footsteps. But, people forget that the ultimate goal of our correctional system is not punishment; the goal is to rehabilitate and reintegrate offenders into society, where they can live a life that contributes meaningfully to society without re-offending. "Fixing" the problem doesn't mean convicting and locking offenders up. It means working towards reducing the amount of crimes committed, and preventing others from feeling the need or desire to commit crimes in the future.

In 2015, Marco Muzzo got behind the wheel of his SUV, drunk, and took the life of three children and their grandfather. It was a tragic and heartbreaking result of drunk driving – and for all those who followed this story, it hit hard. Muzzo, whose family net worth is estimated at \$1.8 billion, pled guilty and took responsibility for the loss of life that he caused. He was sentenced to 10 years in jail for impaired driving. I won't get into the debate of whether his sentence was too strict or too lenient – we'll save that for another day.

But, the Muzzo case has recently been brought back into the media spotlight, as Mr. Muzzo is eligible to apply for unescorted, temporary absence from prison this October. "Unescorted temporary absence is a release of limited duration in which an offender leaves a corrections institution for medical, administrative,

community service, family contact, parental responsibility, personal development (rehabilitation), or compassionate reasons, unaccompanied by corrections staff." It may not be difficult to understand why some would be outraged by this. He got behind the wheel of his SUV, extremely drunk, and killed four people. Why the hell should we let him out?

Actually, I find it difficult to be outraged. One of the fundamental cornerstones of our correctional system is reintegration into society. We want prisoners to be able to serve their sentences and leave as better individuals who will not re-offend. And this cornerstone of reintegration is supported by research that shows prisoners are much more successful at reintegration post-sentence if they are permitted to take gradual steps outside prison, and maintain relationships with family and friends. The research also shows that reintegration reduces recidivism (the likelihood to re-offend). The John Howard Society published a paper based on numerous studies showing the positive effects that reintegration has on offenders and society. The report states, "[a]n essential way to prevent recidivism is by providing an effective reintegration process; one that offers reintegrating individuals services, supports and treatment to address the issues that brought them into conflict with the law in the first place. Reintegration is a crucial component of community safety. People who have experienced time in jail and/or have police records are often eager to move beyond their past and to create a new life and identity for themselves."

In other words, helping offenders get back on the right track isn't about treating criminals "nicely"; it's about reducing recidivism and ensuring community safety once these individuals have served their sentence and are released. This can only be done if we focus on ways to help offenders reintegrate by providing meaningful employment opportunities, stable housing and encouraging positive social networks to

prevent reoffending. Focusing on reintegration and rehabilitation can only result in more people contributing meaningfully to society – we cannot expect criminal offenders to leave jail without any assistance to steer them away from returning to a life of crime. For drug-addicted offenders, or offenders with mental health issues, this is even more important. We cannot expect individuals whose criminal behaviour is fueled by their addiction or mental health to reintegrate into society on their own. We must care about reducing (and eliminating) recidivism. We cannot just throw people in jail and label them as criminals for life without caring about what happens when they're released.

Permanently labelling individuals as "criminal" or "bad" because of their criminal records undermines the goal of community safety: "the more we socially exclude persons with police records, the more we edge toward creating a class of Canadians who are un-employable. It is a faulty assumption, based on stereotypes, that people with police records are universally dangerous or "bad" people who lack character." Muzzo did a horrible thing. And tragically, four lives were lost. A family is broken. They may never heal. But, Muzzo is still serving his sentence. He will have a criminal record once he's out. He won't be getting behind the wheel of any vehicle if he is granted an unescorted, temporary absence next month. He will leave prison after serving his sentence, and I hope that he will have learned from this and never drink and drive again. I hope that he will do his part to encourage others to not drink and drive. I hope that he will become an example of how a young man born into a billion-dollar empire is not above the law, and will face the consequences of criminal offending. But, how can we expect someone like Muzzo to change his life around post-release, and encourage others to not stray down the same path as him, if we only care about his punishment and not what happens once he is released? ▲

Recent Developments in Arabia

And Why we need to care

Author › Ashley Yoojin Jung
Contributor



Source: www.cnn.com

Why Should Law Students Care About International Human Rights?

A look at recent developments in Saudi Arabia and why we need to care

If you have recently tuned into the news headlines – or let’s face it, scrolled through Facebook – you will have noticed a big development for the international human rights movement. On Tuesday, September 26, Saudi Arabia finally lost their reputation as being the only country in the world to officially ban women from driving. The policy will come into effect in June 2018 and the decision for women to drive will not be subject to male guardian approval.

The country has come a long way from arresting female activists in 2011 for driving and posting photos on social media as a means of protest. Even more recently in 2014, Loujain Al-Hathloul was detained for 73 days after being arrested for trying to drive across the border from the United Arab Emirates into Saudi Arabia.

Manal Al-Sharif, one of the women arrested for partaking in the protest of 2011, underscores the importance of women being able to drive in Saudi Arabia. Since there is no public transportation within the country and no pedestrian cities, being unable to drive gravely restricts the mobility of women within their own country.

However, just because Saudi Arabia has lifted the official ban from women driving does not mean it will automatically translate to societal acceptance of the practice. There is already strong backlash of anger and disapproval from some Saudis. One of the main arguments is that women are bad drivers and will be dangerous for the road. I wonder if they used empirical evidence from Saudi Arabia to make that argument... There will also likely be many restrictions for women

behind the wheel. Nonetheless, it is still a step forward in the right direction.

So, just how did the ban arise? Is it a religious issue? Women driving was never a religious issue until 1990 when the first protest against the ban happened. After that, the Minister of Interior told the mufti (someone who interprets Shariah law) to create a religious fatwa (a ruling on a point of Shariah law) that would state why women driving would be bad. He recognized that although there was nothing wrong with driving itself, the fear was that the ability to drive would lead women astray and men would have a harder time maintaining control over women. So, if it isn’t a religious issue, maybe it’s a cultural one? But that wouldn’t make sense either because the women who protested by driving through city streets weren’t stopped by members of society; they were stopped by the government. Is it a political issue? Winner winner, chicken dinner! Previously, it made more political sense to place the ban but amidst increasing pressure from other countries, especially the United States, it now makes more sense to lift the ban. This idea is further emphasized by the fact that female activists were banned from saying anything about the new change in law (whether it was positive or negative comments) by the government.

I recently attended a conference called Canada’s Constitutional & Governance Challenges After 150 Years at Glendon College and Professor Macklin from the University of Toronto raised an interesting point. Her main focus was around private sponsorship of refugees in Canada and how that affects Indigenous communities. The central issue is that the level of hospitality and the welcoming nature of sponsoring refugees isn’t extended to many indigenous people who

continue to live under a host of problems, including unclean drinking water, unsafe housing, and a lack of access to education. The argument is that hospitality should begin at home.

Although Canada has come a long way in establishing gender equality, that’s not to say that the remnants of a society that was previously ruled by men aren’t still recognizable. There is still inequality in terms of wages between men and women, how women are viewed in society in terms of what they do and how they should act, and the lack of female representation in our government. So, perhaps an argument can be made that we need to focus on the gender disparities that persist in our country first.

My response to Professor Macklin is that the choice between helping people at home and helping people abroad is a misnomer as they are two separate issues. It is important to keep a global perspective in our increasingly interconnected world without sacrificing the need to help our own. We need to be doing more to support Indigenous communities. Period. It does not come at the price of helping people abroad.

As law students, it’s important to learn about human rights issues not only in Canada, but also around the world. It’s important for us to learn about victories in Saudi Arabia to appreciate that we can move forward and to assess the roles we can play in such situations when we’re normally bogged down by readings of past cases and abstract concepts. It’s important for us to learn about the current injustices in Canada and abroad to recognize that there is still work to be done and to ask ourselves how we can respond. ◀

The Evolution of Strangers Driving Us Around: The Dark Side of Uber

Author › Sarah Jane Attardo
Contributor

I seem to write for *Obiter* whenever something odd happens in my life – a noticeably hot day in Fall, in shorts and a tank top sipping a Starbucks PSL (which unsurprisingly has happened once again this year). However, this time it's about the need to catch my flight to a particularly windy city.

Now, before I begin, I want to add a disclaimer that Uber is wonderful and I am thankful for its far cheaper services and GPS tracking. It has succeeded in providing more feasible and affordable options for the lay person seeking good and efficient services. However, that does not ensure that it is a service without a potential dark side. You see, we tend to have blind faith in Uber – they have an app with a GPS system, tracking, ratings, reliability, affordability, accessibility, and most importantly, you avoid being stuck in an old and smelly taxi. In a somewhat lazy girl's opinion, there seem to be so many positives in not calling Beck or braving the TTC. So, like any other day, I put in the order for my Uber and, as I exited the building, I saw my driver waiting for me. He called me over... but remember how we were instructed about "Stranger, Danger!"? It is unfortunate, but as a woman I feel the need to ask if it's Uber, and for my name. The man confirmed and put my luggage in his truck, as I climbed into the extremely cramped back seat. He proceeded to drive and inquired about where I was off to. "Well good sire, you know..." My destination was Billy Bishop airport, but I made sure that I emphasized I wanted the entrance and not the ferry terminal (which are basically the same thing but it is differentiated on the app). He paused and looked alarmed, and then proceeded to tell me that he actually was not an Uber driver. I was appalled and swung open my door. He apologized and got my bag out. Thankfully, I was not far from my original location and my real Uber driver called me coincidentally at that same moment. The man sped off and I rushed to the legitimate Uber driver awaiting me.

Despite my best efforts, someone still attempted something potentially malicious. More often than not, I have observed my friends enter into Ubers without even uttering their name. This blind faith can be potentially harmful to the individual. So, although Uber is the light of a tired law student, its dark side can be extremely nasty. Currently, we hear about how there is no real ability to regulate Uber. It is a business, but not the same as a taxi company. Some US states have banned Uber, but it's still used—just under the guise of something else. Some drivers place the Uber emblem as a sticker on the back of their respective vehicle, ensuring that customers instantaneously recognize it as a part of the company. Is there a way for the law to create legislation that is accepting of Uber and taxi companies, while enforcing a rule that Uber drivers MUST place the sticker somewhere visible on their vehicles? The sticker would act as a warning to many passengers that it is actually the service you requested there at your location. At the end of the day, the superpower that is the Toronto taxi monopoly should one day end. It is the 21st century and apps and affordable and quality service are the future of driving services. Without the proper institutional



Source: assets.bubbleair.com

regulations for how Uber drivers conduct their practices, situations like the one I faced can occur. Almost anyone can pretend to be an Uber driver, and almost anyone can forget to ask, "Uber?". The regulation I suggest is likely to be shot down as Uber is a global corporation, and we see how Uber reacts when they are told to operate under similar conditions as taxi companies: threats to leave, bashing political representatives, holding conferences reprimanding localities, etc. For now, it seems that Uber's reign will continue until something unfortunate happens, although I truly hope that this will not be the case.

I wish to conclude here with a happy, optimistic thought about how women and men can feel safe entering an Uber. Honestly, you usually are safe, but how do we ensure peace of mind for our safety when entering one? Is there a way to enter into a peace of mind contract, or is that simply for the driver and Allstate Insurance (or any other motor vehicle insurance provider)? I think everyone should be their own advocate! Speak out and ask; there is no reason to be shy because at the end of the day, we will all face a Motions Judge and advocate for clients. We should first advocate for ourselves and getting into an Uber car can be one exercise of advocacy for your own safety. ▲

Game of Thrones Lives On

The craziest fan theory you've heard yet:
Westeros is not that different from our world.

Author › Alexandra Valeri
Contributor



Source: www.cnn.com

If you are a big *Game of Thrones* fan like I am, then you probably agree that no matter how much you love the show, you are not planning a trip to Westeros anytime soon. Firstly, because it is obviously fictional, but secondly because it is ruthless as hell and I would definitely not last a week there. The world of *Thrones* is full of murderers, rapists, sadists—you name it. And that's not to mention the culinary options and lack of a sanitary plumbing system.

Despite all its craziness, I have been thinking lately of how, in creating Westeros, George R.R. Martin created a world that is very similar to our own. The ruthless lawlessness and violence in Westeros might shock us viewers, but should it really? Martin, as well as the show's creators Dave Benioff and D.B. Weiss, have created Westeros in our own image and they work from our own sordid history. So, what truly separates Westeros from our own world? In my opinion, the only thing that makes Westeros different is that it is unapologetic about its brutality. Westeros wears no masks of civility or politeness—it shows citizens exactly what kind of world they are living in and how they must survive.

On August 21st, the date of the penultimate episode of the seventh season of *Thrones*, Mindy Kaling tweeted, "I am legitimately worried about when *Thrones* ends and what it does to our already unstable collective mood as

a nation." Kaling is a comedian and this tweet no doubt elicits a laugh, but there is also a sense of truth to this statement. The reference here is clearly to the fact that the show's massive popularity brings together a wide audience from different corners of the world. All you have to do is check Twitter on a Sunday night *Thrones* airs; #GameofThrones is almost always the number one trend as people share their shocked reactions, theories, and concern for the lives of their favourite characters. What *Thrones* also does is bring the world together in the pursuit of a common enemy, while simultaneously destabilizing our cozy notions of "good" and "bad". People like the show because it is so recognizable to us, but is distanced enough (cushioned under the guise of a fictional world) that we do not need to be truly connected to what we are witnessing. If we take up Kaling's worry that the collective mood will crumble once we no longer have our weekly fix of *Game of Thrones*, we might understand that by watching this seemingly horrific, gory show, we could actually learn something about how to make our own world a better place.

Our first lesson from Westeros might be that we need to elect Jon Snow as Lord Commander of the World as soon as possible. Since that is not really a realistic option, I am left with the real lesson: nothing will be solved while powerful families or nations squabble

amongst themselves and vie for power. The "true enemy" in *Thrones* is not the Boltons or the Lannisters, but the "dead"; the army of White Walkers marching south to claim the living as their own. For us, the White Walkers are symbolic. We may not have an army of dead marching toward us to signal our impending doom, but, as a global community, we do have our fair share of environmental and other issues that can only be resolved if we all work together; if we stop seeing ourselves as Lannisters or Starks or Targaryens and simply view ourselves as the living.

The second and most important lesson I'm taking from Westeros and the *Game of Thrones* narrative is that no matter how far gone we might seem, it is simply never too late for redemption. How many characters have we watched go from bad to good? (Think Jaime Lannister). How many times have we watched a character we don't like transform to someone we are all rooting for? (Think Theon Greyjoy, Sansa Stark). How many times has the show asked us to feel sympathy for even the most vilified of characters? (Think Cersei's Walk of Atonement). We may all be struggling, failing to make the right decisions, and sometimes making even downright bad ones. It is never too late to start over, to try again, and to turn our negative storyline into something positive. Sometimes, it even takes getting to that lowest point to begin the transformative process of rebuilding. We see the characters in the brutal, nearly hopeless Westeros caught in difficult situations or circumstances all the time, and still they rise. They continue to fight. And if they can do it, why can't we?

I'm not saying *Game of Thrones* is the be-all and end-all of our world. We are in many ways very different from the world portrayed in print and on our televisions. But, even the most fantastical and fictional worlds and stories can tell us something about ourselves, sometimes in a more effective manner than non-fictional claims of truth-telling. We are all waiting in anticipation for the next and final season of *Thrones*, anxious to see the fates of our favourite characters and hoping, like Mindy Kaling, that the end of this epic doesn't further destabilize our world's sense of unity. For us viewers, there will be no White Walkers marching to our doorsteps, no dragons coming to save us, and no prince or princess that was promised to rule. Long after the finale, however, the game of thrones will go on, the wheel will keep spinning, and our world will carry on in the same fashion as it has—unless we do something to change it.▲

The Davies summer experience?

Ask our Osgoode students.



Eytan Dishy
Class of 2017



Ankita Gupta
Class of 2019



Russell Hall
Class of 2017



David Ionis
Class of 2019



Megan Moniz
Class of 2018



Jerry O'Young
Class of 2017



Dajena Pechersky
Class of 2017



Diana Pegoraro
Class of 2017



Michael Rafalovich
Class of 2018



Matthew Sherman
Class of 2017



Veronika Stefanski
Class of 2017



Cadie Yiu
Class of 2018



@davesstudents

Visit us at dwpv.com to learn more.

