

The Reckoner

of Marc Garneau C.I.



NOVEMBER 2021

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NEWS BOARD

A board to keep the student body informed about their school and local community.

MGCI Key Club Goes Trick-or-Treating for UNICEF

by ANNE LIU

For some, Halloween isn't all about collecting candy or dressing up in scary outfits. It isn't about having costume parties or telling ghost stories. For many, Halloween revolves around the Trick-or-Treat for UNICEF fundraiser that protects and saves thousands of lives all around the world. This year, MGCI's Key Club is taking part in this initiative to raise money and awareness to support UNICEF's efforts in the WASH project.

"The project we'll be supporting is the WASH project, standing for water, [sanitation], and hygiene," said Sarah Li, the club's president. "For children, access to clean water and proper hygiene is important, especially during COVID times. With the money we raise, WASH will be able to support people in drought-affected areas with water access and hygiene solutions."

Worldwide, more than two billion people lack access to safe, clean drinking water [1]. In response, UNICEF put together a plan to ameliorate unhygienic sanitation practices commonly found in many countries. Their project focuses on empowering communities through developing campaigns such as the Global Handwashing Day; establishing facilities with clean water and sanitation near schools; and setting up protocols to prevent and control infections. Furthermore, they prepare for and respond to humanitarian emergencies, meaning that resources are always supplied for crises. These initiatives have helped to raise awareness and support countries and communities in need.

From 17 to 29 October, the club aims to raise money and awareness for the service project. In 2019, they were able to generate over 250 dollars for Trick-



Photograph: Angela Xu

or-Treat for UNICEF, a grand success made possible by the generous students of Marc Garneau CI.

"Our primary and most obvious goal is to fundraise for those in Haiti in hopes of improving their situation: alongside the aftermath of a major earthquake, they must deal with the effects of the ongoing pandemic," said Fatima Shari-pova, the club's bulletin editor. "Second, we [hope to] raise awareness around one of many world issues and encourage students at school to contribute to the cause," she added. "Finally, we want to show other youth that it is within their ability to make an impact on causes they are passionate about—whether it be through volunteering for existing fundraisers like this one or through starting their own. We hope that our service

project will motivate students at MGCI to be leaders."

To prepare for the event, members of the club wrote announcements to inform the student body, created vivid visuals to post on social media, and assembled and distributed donation collection boxes to classes. Key Club is asking for small donations from MGCI's large student body to raise money for the project. "We understand that COVID may put a financial strain on some families," Sarah said. "Regardless, we are certainly excited!" When asked what the club is hoping for with the project, she added, "We hope that, no matter what amount we raise, it'll make a difference for someone in need." ■

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[1] <https://www.unicef.org/wash>

Fall Cleanup Hosted by Don't Mess with the Don

by RAND ALAHMAD

On 17 October 2021, the Don't Mess with the Don organization (DMWTD), in partnership with 53 division officers, hosted a fall cleanup behind the buildings in Thorncliffe Park. DMWTD was joined by residents of Thorncliffe Park, as well as The Neighbourhood Organization, Thorncliffe Park Urban Farmers, Toronto Netralya Lions Club, Earthheadz, and Toronto Nature Stewards. Greenwin Property Management provided free food and refreshments to all volunteers.

On the day of the event, volunteers gathered behind the parking lot of 75 Thorncliffe Park Drive. They helped clean the area behind the apartment buildings leading into the Don Valley from 9 am to 12pm. Coffee and snacks were served while everyone got to work. In total, there were around 220 volunteers, and 163 bags were filled with trash—about 5 200 lbs of garbage was piled up. “A good cleanup results in a eco-friendly environment,” said Leah Naidu, a Grade 9 student at MGCI. The cold and windy weather didn't stop this event from being a great success. “A huge thank you to all our hard working volunteers, partners and sponsors!” the DMWTD Organization concluded at the event.

DMWTD, fully run by volunteers, was founded in April 2018 by five members. They are currently at eight members. Since their founding, they have removed over 170 000 pieces of garbage from the Don Valley. They have created a large stewardship site dedicated to removing invasive species and planting important native species from the valley.

Over the past years, they've built

strong relationships with similar organizations, advocated politicians for increased funding, and involved businesses and communities in their goal. In June 2021, they hit a milestone when they became an official charity. The founders of DMWTD have stated that “DMWTD believes in inspiring and unlocking the passion people possess for change.” Their mission, as outlined on their website, is to “bind a volunteer's belief in environmental change and the great satisfaction that comes with seeing that difference realized.”



Photograph: Bill Yan

DMWTD is known for the success of its many events, such as the Earth Week trash challenge and their trail cleanups. “Great organization doing some great work bringing together volunteers to keep our local trails clean!” said Dismount Bike Shop. Their achievements have been recognized not only by the City of Toronto, but also the Government of Canada. DMWTD has formed partnerships with multiple businesses, schools, and community groups. They have built an extremely successful community, and plan to continue sustaining it.

The 5 founding members of this initiative are Lawrence Warriner, Irene Vandertop, Sean Symea, John Scott, and Floyd Ruskin.

Warriner's life has been filled with bike rides and wandering off in

the Don Valley. He believes in small acts of goodness and helping each other when needed; these acts led him to find a community with DMWTD.

Vandertop has been advocating and taking action for the preservation of natural spaces, such as local ravines, ever since she moved to Toronto. She works in digital media and has worked on numerous projects regarding climate change.

In his early childhood, Symea always loved Toronto's trails, biking, running, hiking, and exploring. He is a self-proclaimed naturalist who adores witnessing changes in the woods. Capturing these moments has always brought him joy, and he insists on keeping these spaces cared for.

Currently, Scott is the CEO of Our Human Company, a wellness consulting and coaching business. He loves the outdoors and cleaning up in natural spaces.

Ruskin has been exploring the area of the Don, from Lake Ontario to Steeles, for 30 years. In the past, he has worked with the TDSB and the City of Toronto, as well as organizations like Lost Rivers, Todmorden Historical Site, Toronto Field Naturalists, and Evergreen. He strongly believes in volunteering and community responsibility. Floyd continues to advocate with municipal, provincial, and federal governments regarding local funding.

Students and community members can get involved with the Don't Mess with the Don by volunteering and/or donating to the organization. Learn more about Don't Mess with the Don at their website, <https://www.dontmesswiththedon.ca>. ■

Bridging Towards a Safer Future

by RENA LIU

Being splashed by slush and rainwater. Squeezing through narrow walkways. Walking under dim, inconsistent lighting. These are only some of the problems that plague the thousands of students and residents who cross the Charles H. Hiscott Bridge—also known as the Overlea Bridge—every single day.

Originally constructed in 1960, the Overlea Bridge is located next to Marc Garneau Collegiate Institute and Valley Park Middle School. It is a central link between the communities of Flemingdon Park and Thorncliffe Park.

The Overlea Bridge Project began last November when Mr. Langford assigned the redesign of the bridge to his Grade 12 technological design course. On 29 January 2021, students from the class presented their designs to city councillors, MPP Kathleen Wynne, and MP Rob Oliphant. Barely two months later, MGCI students, staff, and parents presented their deputation to the City of Toronto's Infrastructure and Environment Committee about Overlea's inclusion in the ActiveTO initiative on 23 March.

"By far, my favourite part about the project is exactly the same thing I love about teaching: working with the students," Mr. Langford said, emphasizing the esprit de corps among the teachers and the students. "In fact, working on this project gives a similar satisfaction to the one a teacher gets by coaching an interscholastic team."

Yolanda Zhou, a Grade 9 student, said that she especially enjoyed helping make posters and buttons, 110 of which were distributed to teachers. Through the project, she wanted to "help our community and reduce the amount of time it takes for [students] to get to school." Yolanda said she would like more pedestrian space, a bike lane, and less traffic.

Similar concerns—overcrowding,

lack of bike lanes, dim lighting, poor drainage systems—were raised by other students and residents, as described on the Overlea Bridge Project's social media pages. This issue has been a major complaint of parents in the school community for more than a decade. The members of the initiative have organized a writing contest as well as a survey, created by Ms. Roberge, which asks about participants' experiences with the bridge. This fall, the team began the Overlea Bridge Design Contest (<https://bit.ly/3oYa4gj>) in which students will compete within their own grade level to create an economical and structurally sound bridge. In each grade, the first place winner will receive a \$50 gift card and the second place winner will receive a \$25 gift card.



Photograph: Bala Venkataraman

In addition to staff support, students partnered with Diamond Schmitt Architects, an architecture firm, to design a logo for the campaign, and the company has completed designs of baluster extensions for the Overlea Bridge to prevent accidental falls. A Construction Notice was distributed to all households in the surrounding area indicating that the modifications will be installed by Toronto Transportation Services beginning this month.

When asked about his involvement with the project after his Grade 12 design class, Mr. Langford attribut-

ed much of the campaign's continued growth and momentum to Ms. Cordova, one of the TOPS curriculum leaders, who arrived at MGCI last year.

"I was inspired after I saw Mr. Langford's presentation with technology students regarding the safety of the bridge," she stated. "I've had a lot of experience working with underserved communities throughout my career, so I thought I could help support this cause and help support the campaign process."

The next steps for the project include an upcoming stakeholder session—the second phase—which will lead up to a public consultation session to raise awareness as well as a town hall to allow student voices to be heard. Students from various schools will be invited to discuss concerns about the renovation of the Overlea Bridge and the surrounding environment with city planners and politicians from various levels of government.

"I was inspired by the people around me. I draw inspiration as well from my colleagues who form the Equity and Social Justice Committee here at the school. Working with them helped me realize that decent infrastructure is an equity issue," said Mr. Langford. "It is very important that every student in this school, and their families, are convinced that they have a voice, and that they can use that voice to help improve their community."

For more information on the Overlea Bridge Project, check out @overleabridge on Instagram and @BridgeOverlea on Twitter. To contact Mr. Langford or Ms. Cordova, email tim.langford@tdsb.on.ca or giselle.cordova@tdsb.on.ca. If you would like to get involved, visit the greenhouse at lunch on Wednesdays to discuss plans for future projects. ■

Kenya's Journey to Genetically Modified Agriculture

by ZAHRA AHMED

The Kenyan government has made major advancements in adopting genetically modified (GM) crops into the federal market, as a step forward towards achieving the Big 4 Agenda. The country's economic development blueprint, launched by current President Uhuru Kenyatta, consists of the following main pillars: food security, affordable housing, manufacturing, and affordable healthcare. Through biotechnology applications, President Kenyatta anticipates that GM crops will significantly contribute to addressing the government's development plan, specifically towards food

insecurity and manufacturing.

However, in the past, Kenya's approach towards GM food and feed were restrictive. In 2012, former president Mwai Kibaki placed a ban on all GMO (genetically modified organisms) imports until the country was able to certify that they have no negative impact on people's health. The cabinet press stated that there was a "lack of sufficient information on the public health impact of such [modified] foods," and added that the ban would remain in effect until there was adequate information proving that GMO foods are not a danger to public health.

The ban was prompted by a

study publication issue of Food and Chemical Toxicology published the same year. The study indicated that rats fed GM foods developed cancer, and it highlighted the "truth and toxicity" of GM products. Food and Chemical Toxicology eventually retracted the article due to poor methodology and flaws. Even so, the publication inflicted serious damage to the development of GMOs and fueled anti-GMO sentiment amongst Kenya and other countries.

There were mixed opinions regarding the passed GMO ban. National Biosafety Authority (NBA) board chair, Miriam Kin'yaa, stated that biotechnology research in Kenya would continue, as the ban did not affect existing research and development activities. She added that researchers would continue to provide the government with information regarding GMO safety, so that a possible review could take place.

On the other hand, Richard Okoth, a biotechnology scientist at Kenyatta University, felt that the government was in a contradictory position, as they imposed a ban but continued to fund biotech research. "The essence of GMO research is to provide a product that can complement efforts towards food security. This ban will discourage research, as the product for which the research is being conducted has been placed on import ban," said Okoth.

The ban on importing GM foods remained until 2019, at which point the government began to encourage GMO research and approved the cultivation of GM cotton. After five years of



Illustration: Sonia Ravindran

field trials, the commercialization of Bt cotton, a genetically modified pest-resistant cotton which produces an insecticide to combat bollworms, was approved on 19 December 2019. Dr. Charles Waturu, the principal researcher on Bt cotton at the Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization (KALRO), said, “The general ban was not removed, but other crops will go through because the cabinet memo says that other GMOs will be considered on a case-by-case basis, meaning that the Cabinet is removing the ban essentially without mentioning it.” He added, “This has paved the way for other [GM] crops. Despite the ban, it means other applications will go through.”

The Kenyan government hoped that growing GM cotton would help revive the domestic textile industry. In 2020, cotton production was about 6 096 281 kg, which was well below the 10 668 492 kg produced in 2010. It was inadequate to meet the 43 544 867 kg domestic demand for cotton; thus, the country relied on large-scale imports.

According to the President’s Strategic Communications Unit (PSCU), Bt cotton commercial farming aimed to ensure farmers earned more from crop production. It was also a step forward towards the manufacturing goal of the Agenda, as Kenya sought to establish itself as a regional leader in apparel and textile production.

During the launch, the country’s Agriculture Cabinet Secretary, Peter Munya, revealed that the target was to have over 200 000 acres of land used for commercial Bt cotton cultivation by 2022. This would, in return, create over 25 000 jobs for Kenyans. “These job opportunities

will be in cultivation, processing or trading in locally manufactured garments and clothes,” said Munya. “Cultivation of Bt cotton by our farmers will guarantee a constant supply of raw materials to ginneries and cotton processing industries thus supporting value addition and job creation up the value chain,” he added.

Kenya has joined South Africa, Sudan, Ethiopia, Malawi, Nigeria and Eswatini in planting GM cotton in Africa. In addition, Kenya has become the first country globally to approve national performance trials of GM cassava, an important crop in sub-Saharan Africa.

The improved crop, developed by Kenya Agricultural & Livestock Research Organization (KALRO), was genetically modified to provide resistance to the Cassava Brown Streak Disease (CBSD), spread by infected cuttings and whiteflies. CBSD leads to devastating losses of up to 98 percent of production in the sector and at present, no cassava varieties have natural resistance to brown streak disease. Now, cassava has become the first food crop to be approved for field cultivation, and Africa’s fifth biotech crop approved for open cultivation after cotton, maize, soybean, and cowpea.

The Kenya National Biosafety Authority (NBA) approved the application for environmental release on 15 June 2021, following a safety assessment that proved cassava varieties were unlikely to pose risk to human and animal health or to the environment.

The approval by the NBA is valid for five years and paves the way for the National Performance Trials (NPTs), which is the last stage for full environmental and market release. The anticipated

increase in cassava yields as a result of the intervention is expected to significantly contribute towards addressing food security and nutrition in the country.

Pushing towards more GM agriculture innovation, GM insect-resistant corn is expected for full commercialization in 2023, as it has been field-tested successfully. The Director General of the KALRO, Dr. Eliud Kireger, highlighted the importance of developing insect-resistant corn: “[Kenya] is losing about 40% of the 42 million bags of maize to stem-borer and other pests and we have to import to make up for the losses.”

In addition to conducting extensive research and commercializing GMO crops, Kenyan scientists are working on many gene-editing projects, from building resistance in the sorghum plants to developing disease-resistant bananas and drought-resistant corn.

The decision by Kenya to pursue a strategy of encouraging GMO and GE crops is predicted to have a major impact on the decision of other African nations to approve their cultivation. ■

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LIFE BOARD

A board for imaginative self-expression through
written and visual content.

And All I Am

by EMILY LIU

I wish I could forget the clattering crunch of its
shell beneath my shoe,
The soul-sucking noise that rattled my bones,
As I felt its life draining away by my touch.

I am left with the knowledge,
That my karmic energies are imbalanced.
There is blood on my hands.
Can anyone else see it? Is anyone else here to
watch?
I cannot wash it off.

I wish I could forget the guilt, the shame,
The pain, echoing through the streets as the
striking, shattering sound did the same,
And the stages of grief that followed.

I wish I could forget,
And return to a better time,
A time before I had slain an innocent,
A time when I was still an innocent,
When I was simply a daughter, sister, and ador-
ing friend,
A time in which my hands were not stained with
red.

I wish I could forget my senseless actions,
Oh God, how could I have been so selfish?
Is there forgiveness for me?
Is there a way that I may repent?
Please, heal my ears and make pure my soul,
Cleanse my memories and all that I am,
I am a fool, a bastard,
And now it, naught but a stranger, is dead.

If I were ever given the chance,
I would take its place in a heartbeat.
'Twas a little creature with so much life to live
And all I am is myself.

I wish I could forget,
But alas, here I am.
I don't deserve to be here,
To live while it is dead.
What is there to do?
I'm so sorry, my friend.

I wish I could forget my actions,
Would you forgive me, kind stranger that you
were?
I doubt it, but here I must forgive myself.



Illustration: Helen Sun



The Tree's Lament

by JERRY HONG

I watched the morning dew, it
shined as rays

Of light beamed down onto the
glowing leaves.

Down deep below the hills this
sapling lay,

and yearned for sun and sky on
winter's eve.

From naught appeared the chill,
which stayed, steadfast:

The heavens darkened, wind ar-
rived in haste.

The burning light that shined just
instants past,

Was gone; the sky loves acting Ja-
nus-faced.

The flames of light, purloined
straight from the tree,

Now hid behind thick clouds, the
plant, left cold.

The tree now seemed to turn to me
and plea:

Please stop the tale of ice before
it's told.

The sun came back and warmed
the tree once more,

Which shook and prayed for heat
that reached its core.

Bloodred

by LISA ZHANG

The stars on their flag are
yellow
Yellow like their skin
Yellow
Like my skin
The stars on our flag are yellow
low
Red

Our flag is red
Red like the clothes we wear
Red like the lanterns we hang
The firecrackers we light
With the matches
We ignite

The fires in their homes
The fires in my home
Crack
The firecrackers sparkle
Crack
A head hits the floor
Bang

The firecrackers echo
through the courtyard
Bang
The bullets whiz through the
plaza
Bang

The speakers shake the classroom floor
Click
The light comes on
The stares won't fade
My lunch smells like their
contempt that day

Our skin is all yellow like the
stars in our sky
But my red is the blood on
their blades
Not the blood of their veins
They are not my people.



Illustration: Max Lu

A Picturesque Scene

by MAGGIE PANG

A canary-yellow belly faces the sky, swaying gently to the rhythms of a lazy afternoon. It faces an artist's sky, the type with pure white clouds lined with golden sunlight and a carefree shade of blue.

Some kilometres away, no doubt, someone perched on a sun-heated rock or nestled in a muskoka chair with a cocktail in hand, will look back on this time with a twinge in their worn and tired heart and think of it as a happier time. Such a tragedy, isn't it? How the cries of determination only fade away, ardent agony quietly hurrying into the shadows to make way for the glory of an idyllic summer. Here is the almighty will to live: a mere speck zoomed in on by novels and drama.

The methodic splashes and gurgles of water have condensed a bit strangely. Elsewhere, they are a soft backdrop to sizzles, chatter, hoots, and laughter. Here, some distance away—isolated from the gangly, leafy fingers softly skimming the water and the squawking seagulls circling around and the bobbing shapes in the water and anything and everything save for a half-submerged canary-yellow boat—they are a little stronger. Just a little.

Windmill arms grasp for something, anything. A measly twig, a rock, a turtle. Even the gusts of wind steadily pushing away the canary-yellow boat. They slap noisily, pathetically, against the surface, sending up grand displays of white and blue. The surface, which so insistently resists against the belly-flopping chil-

dren some distance away, crumbles away under tanned limbs like sand. They wave around faster now, as a stomach fills with the fishy, algae-tinged lake water, only to be rewarded with nothing but patient waves, easing hard-earned ripples into nonexistence.

So we are left with a symphony of questions, the shrill opera expelled from an aching throat—which someone must have mistaken for a bird song—having stepped away from the spotlight a long time ago. How did we get here? What about the shelves that haven't been dusted, the achievements that haven't been achieved, the moments that haven't been lived?

Why did the lifejacket have to go abandoned in the dusty corner of the closet? Why did a body, taking a rest from rental payments and constant arguments and rush hour traffic, have to be woken up by cold and wet and the world going sideways?

Would they be missed? Were they only ever a faceless passerby?

Given a sudden surge of all the miracles the world could squeeze out, tired limbs could have made it to shore. But waves—as comforting, forbidding, and unsettling as the ticking of time running out—kept on coming. One after another. And another. And another. ■



Illustration: Ajita Kanthathasan

A home that was never mine

by SAMAYA SADIQ

I tell you my favourite song,
You play it on repeat,
You memorize the lyrics
And trace them on me

You tell me your favourite dreams
Are the ones where you see me,
My translucent self,
The one sculpted just for you

I trusted you with my fears
And let you in on my rainy days
And you didn't rush to grab an umbrella
Rather you fell in love with the
dripping teardrops

But even though you were perfect
You were never really "the one"
Because you didn't fall in love with me
You fell in love with the image you crafted
in your mind
Of me

And as you realized I wasn't who
You were in search for,

You didn't do the brave thing and
Leave

You held on to me,
And tried to change me,

And I let you

Because I've never felt love quite like this
The longing,
The anticipation,
The stolen glances,
And the hidden smiles

I never felt like I've belonged
But you were home

And every once in a while
I start to lose myself
But knowing it's making you whole
Seems to make it worth everything

Because my happiness was never really
mine
And I don't mind ever being myself again
As long as you keep me to be yours



Illustration: Zoe Cheng

Blossoms of Love
Lucy Qi



Armour
Donna Zhang



The Drowning Street
Oriana Zhou



EDITORIAL BOARD

A board that amplifies student voices through supported opinions.

Ernesto, A Fellow

by ADA AKSOY

The one with the glaring glow in his eyes, who stands straight and tall, a 'fellow' composed of pure determination. The one who gave up his comfortable upper-class life to fight for the oppressed and exploited. Ernesto 'Che' Guevara, a man who has inspired countless people across the world, yet seems also to spark hatred in many as well. The ninth of October was the day that he was murdered, and we would like to ask the correct questions about him in his memory. Who was this man? What did he actually fight for? It's hard to know in this world of ours, but let us see how far we can get.

Let me solidify my views: Che Guevara was a hero who fought for the freedom of the various nations he struggled in. In Cuba, he fought against the corrupt puppet dictator—Fulgencio Batista, who retained power through autocratic behaviors and sold out his nation to the Americans [1]. What Cuba was before the revolution was a mafia state, a nation that served no purpose but to act as an American satellite. Throughout his life, Che Guevara helped out various anti-imperialist movements throughout the world, which eventually led to his death. I believe that figures like Che should be protected from the lies that are sent their way, even after their deaths.

Ernesto Guevara was an Argentine revolutionary and guerilla fighter most notable for his prin-

cipal part in the Cuban Revolution. He grew up in a moderately well-off family, and studied in the medical sciences. Early on in life, he took no interest in politics, but as time went on he progressively became more attracted to it. One very important part of his personal political development was his trip through Latin America with his friend, Alberto Granado [2]. During this journey, he witnessed the misfortunes of the people of Latin America, of how foreign business would enslave the peoples of these nations, how the ruling classes lived so well through the exploitation of these other nations. This solidified his anti-American and anti-Imperialist political world-view. While he was not yet a Marxist, his beliefs were closely aligned with Marxism.

The Communist world-view of his came from his interaction with Communist contemporaries and through study of the classic theorists of Marxism. He slowly became more and more engaged in Marxism and eventually identified as a Marxist.

Now, we are not here to discuss his life and development, but who he was and the impact he had on the world. For a biography, one that is generally seen as the one definitive impartial biography, and which dispels many of the lies hurled against him, is *Che Guevara: A Revolutionary Life* by Jon Lee Anderson [3]. We are here,

instead, to see whether he actually was the villain that the Yankees made him out to be.

In terms of violent activity, what other way did the activists of that time have to change their society? Peaceful methods for change were not possible. The dictatorship allowed no force of legal resistance against itself. The only way to fight against violence that has been imposed on a society is to fight back with violence. The guerillas did not kill innocent people. They only fought the necessary fight against the state's forces. We cannot criticize oppressed peoples across the world for utilizing the only method we left them with to fight against their oppressors.

It is time to look at some myths about Che Guevara. One that is quite famous is the viewpoint that he was a racist. This is founded on a passage that Che Guevara wrote in his diaries when he was young and not politically engaged as an anti-imperialist and Communist. One quote that is seen is this:

"The black is indolent and a dreamer; spending his meager wage on frivolity or drink; the European has a tradition of work and saving, which has pursued him as far as this corner of America and drives him to advance himself, even independently of his own individual aspirations."

Of course this is a horrid quote, we cannot say that there is something that could be vindicated about this. What is to be said on this is that he was 24, still evolving from the ideals of his upper-class



Illustration: Grace Zhu

European Latin-American society. Later on in his life, he had many black comrades who fought along with him. He was a stubborn anti-racist who gave support to many African struggles, some examples being in South Africa and the Congo. Here is a quote from Nelson Mandela, a figure in the fight against apartheid in South Africa:

“The life of Che is an inspiration to all human beings who cherish

freedom. We will always honour his memory” [4].

Here is a quote from Che Guevara himself talking about racist discrimination in South Africa:

“We speak out to put the world on guard against what is happening in South Africa. The brutal policy of apartheid is applied before the eyes of the nations of the world. The peoples of Africa are compelled to endure the fact that on the African

continent the superiority of one race over another remains official policy, and that in the name of this racial superiority murder is committed with impunity. Can the United Nations do nothing to stop this?” [5].

How can we say this man was a racist? It all comes from manipulating information to fit your own narrative [6][7]. Let this lie show, as an example, how dishonest people can

be when talking about historical figures, and that it is up to you to be well informed.

What is another lie we hear about Che Guevara? It is that he was a notorious homophobe, and it is ironic that those who spread this lie are some of the biggest homophobes. Considering that he came from Latin American countries that were more socially conservative, it is very likely that he did have homophobic tendencies. Otherwise, there is absolutely no proof that he was homophobic, or filled concentration camps with gay people. The mistreatment of gay people in Cuba was much worse before the Revolution, and Fidel Castro also later on apologized for the mistreatment of LGBTQ+ peoples in Cuba [8]. Today Cuba has a very accepting view of LGBT peoples, much more so than countries such as the United States.

Was Che a murderer? Depends on what we see as murder. Did he kill people? Yes, he did, just as anyone who has served in action in the military has. Che Guevara was a guerilla fighter. It is absurd to think that one should not take up arms against a corrupt dictatorship that has sold out their country to foreigners and has imposed violence on the peoples to solidify its own foundation. In wars against dictatorships, and after revolutions, very strict measures must be taken. You are harassed from all points. Agents are sent in, materials are hard to come across, and your opponent has the support of the world's largest superpower. What are we to do? This is the nature of guerilla warfare; it is a strict but unusual method of warfare in which forces from the masses fight unexpectedly. Then, the idea that he was an 'authoritarian' leader and therefore shouldn't be supported is also absurd. Che Guevara was not the leader of Cuba. He was merely a famous fighter known for his dedication to the cause. He did all he could to consolidate the power of the new state, a state which gave its citizens universal suffrage [9], free healthcare [10], literacy [11], and for

the first time in the lives of many, conditions in which one could actually live [12][13]. Currently, Cuba has a higher total life expectancy than the United States, even though it has one of the world's largest embargoes placed upon them.

Now that we have gone over the lies, what did Che Guevara do that was deserving of praise? The most obvious is that he was a great fighter in the war against the Batista dictatorship in Cuba. He left his comfortable life in Argentina to fight for justice across the world and to fight against dictatorships. Unlike Fidel Castro, Che had larger ideas than just staying within Cuba. He fought in other places, and it led to his death in Bolivia. Even though Che had a respect for Fidel Castro, he was critical of the USSR, and was more aligned with China during the Sino-Soviet split. Fidel was less of a Communist than Che and therefore aligned with the USSR, which was larger economically than China, which was even poorer before the Chinese Revolution than Russia was before the Russian revolution.

We also have to see that Che Guevara was a romantic. His actions and perceived want of heroism led to him making bad choices such as the one that led to his death in Bolivia. He believed that groups of guerrillas could create the conditions for a revolution [14], and this theory of his was largely seen as romantic and not the way to achieve justice. Yet he proceeded. This only shows his will to fight for others, and disproves the view that he was a power-hungry man who fought for personal gain.

The figure of Che Guevara has inspired so many people around the world. A personal connection I have is the figure of Che in Turkey, the country which my family is from. In Turkey, Che Guevara is one of the largest figures of resistance who is idolized. In the 1980s [15], when a US-supported military dictatorship was established, when my own father was tortured for months, Che Guevara was a figure of hope and of resistance. The example of the

Cuban Revolution served as an example for people in Turkey back then, and for those who struggle for change, he still does.

Today the figure of Che Guevara still stands, despite the lies sent in his way by those who uphold oppression. It is our duty to disprove the lies sent against all historical figures, especially those such as Che Guevara, who leave behind lives of luxury to fight for the oppressed peoples of the world. We must continue the fight that was started by these people to work towards a better world, *hasta la victoria siempre, always until victory!* [16]. ■

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Why We Should Go Back to 45-Minute Periods

by RAND ALAHMAD and LAKSHA SIVAKUMAR

Have you ever just sat in class annoyed with the new 2.5-hour-long classes? Well, don't worry, you're not alone. Hundreds of students from the TDSB feel the same way as they have expressed through social media. It all comes down to basic science. Both mentally and physically, our teenage minds and bodies aren't designed to adapt to this schedule.

Our mental health is only deteriorating progressively with each passing period. These 2.5-hour periods are quite unreasonable. Even the Grade 9 guidance counsellor agrees with this. Halfway through your class of absolute torture, if you look around and observe the students, you'll see that everyone looks dead (inside and out). Half of the class will have their heads down trying to get just a second of rest, while the other half will be leaning on their elbows forcing their eyes to stay open. It is irrational to expect a bunch of teenagers to sit down and learn for 2.5 hours straight without feeling burnt out. You might say that this could easily be fixed if each class got a break during their class, but not all teachers are willing to do this. I personally only have one class that gives us a break, but in all honesty, it seriously isn't enough for me to stay motivated. I'd bet the majority of students will agree with me on this. 2.5-hour-long periods are more than three 45-minute periods. By the time it ends, everyone is brain-dead. The amount of work you're given during these periods is so unreasonable. It's so mentally draining for all the students. How will we learn properly if all we think about in class is how long we have until the period ends? I check my phone more than 20 times each class, hoping that the time will start going by faster. It would be so much more manageable if we could

have our regular 45-minute periods back. Everyone will be awake and will be able to do everything with tons of energy inside them. The work will be done faster and we'll be able to comprehend everything so much more easily. It is an undeniable fact that the students will be able to focus so much better in 45-minute periods.

Along with our deteriorating mental health, the abrupt shift to this learning style has a significant influence on our grades and attention span. Because of the "Week 1 and Week 2" pattern, inaction in a particular subject can cause students to forget the material. When we had 45-minute periods, it helped us to freshen our minds every day as we studied for a respectable amount of time every day. Having 45-minute periods was also beneficial because we could ask questions instead of waiting a whole week! New study methods, such as the Pomodoro Technique, advocate for short rests in between activities. When we switched courses in the 45-minute period

model, we had at least 5 minutes to clear our heads and relax, but 2.5 hours of intensive concentration as a teenager isn't the ideal way to learn. Children's minds are more active from a neurological standpoint; moving between sessions and having shorter intervals of active learning help us effectively absorb what is provided while still having fun! Multiple lessons of the same subject are taught on the same day due to the lengthened periods, and because we won't be studying the information the following week due to the Week 1 and Week 2 schedules, we have less time to actually take in what was provided. It's quite clear that this huge change in learning style can be overwhelming and damaging to students and their grades.

Anyways, I hope now you're convinced that 2.5-hour periods are just not it, and that we should go back to having 45-minute periods. All we need right now is to go back to being happy in class. No more checking the clock 20 times during class—please and thank you! ■



Illustration: Ivy Liu



The Reckoner will be selling
postcards designed by our
illustrations board from
November 17 to November 19.

Keep an eye out for more details to come!

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Keep an eye out for The Reckoner's postcard event later this month! Send memorable holiday greetings to the special people in your life. In December, postcards will be hand-delivered to their specified recipients (feel free to send them to yourself!) Check out our five design themes on this page, and get excited!

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