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Zoom University: A reflection on the 2020-2021 academic year

The Pro Tem Editorial Team

We're now at the end of March, nearing the close of yet another academic year at Glendon. Around this time, course evaluations are rolling out, and students are asked to give an honest review of their academic experience. Our question for you, Glendon, is how would you rate this past year? A year of courses held online, a year lacking, if not completely devoid of student community, a year without the support systems and resources students are accustomed to having on campus. And yet, a year that cost students the exact same amount in tuition as any other at York University.

For some, the 2020-2021 academic year had its difficulties, but was manageable, and may have even offered a welcome break from long commutes. But for many, the past year will forever be considered the worst of their

university careers. Students were faced with incredible challenges — losing jobs and dealing with financial strain, losing loved ones and enduring grief, losing community and coping with loneliness, just to name a few.

What's more is that an overwhelming amount of students feel that the quality of their education was significantly lower this past year online than it would be during a normal year on campus. Glendonites speak of asynchronous classes in which professors failed to post any lectures until halfway through the semester. Courses in which students received no feedback or grades until a letter appeared on the myyorku course and grade list. Workloads in which students were expected to wade through hundreds of textbook pages without any real instruction from their professor. The Pro Tem team has taken it upon ourselves to dig into the

true quality of education being provided at York University this past academic year, and to ask the burning question: Why is this institution charging the same price for an inferior product?

Of the six students we interviewed for this article, five expressed that they feel the quality of their academic experience this year was lower than it is during a normal year at Glendon, some even going so far as to say quality has “gone down exponentially”. Common complaints among students include awkward and forced class discussion, overwhelming amounts of readings, very heavy workloads, an absence of extracurriculars and school community, and, of course, technical difficulties.

The infamous E-Class shutdown on the very first day of school in the fall semester set the tone for

Continued on **PAGE 3**

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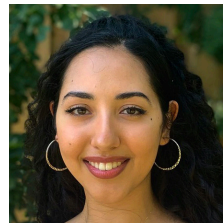
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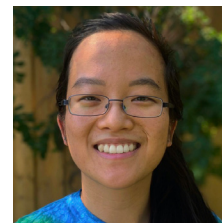
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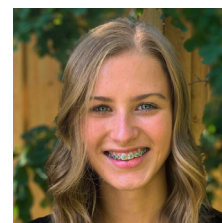
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Bonjour, Glendon!

I want to begin by saying that I cannot believe this is the last letter I will be writing to all of you. This academic year has flown by, and it feels like yesterday that I was writing my first letter, introducing myself as the new EIC. Ce fut un honneur et un privilège de diriger Pro Tem cette année. Je parts en savant que le journal est dans les mieux mains que possible avec la nouvelle Rédactrice en chef, Brianna Carrasco, et la nouvelle Cheffe d'opérations, Josée Philips.

Je suis très fière de cet dernier numéro du trimestre. Nous avons beaucoup d'articles incroyables qui couvrent des topiques très importants. Je recommande particulièrement "The Amadou" par Zipporah Davis, "Zoom University: A reflection on the 2020-2021 academic year" par l'équipe éditorial du Pro Tem, "York Students Remember the CUPE 3903 Strike" par Ameer Shash et "York Professor Holds Student in Myanmar Responsible for Military Coup" qui a été écrit de manière anonyme.

While I am sad to be seeing the end of the year, and the end of my time at Pro Tem, it has been incredible to experience the reality of the Glendon community coming together to create conversations about important subjects, and to amplify student voices. Thank you to the Pro Tem team. Your tireless efforts to make Pro Tem possible, even amidst the uncertainty and stress of a global pandemic, have been remarkable, and are so appreciated. Thank you to our readership. You have stuck with us through a tumultuous time, and we thank you for bearing with our online issues. We hope to provide you with the real, printed Pro Tem experience next semester! Thank you, most of all, to every single contributor who submitted articles this year. You have contributed to the culture of free press at Glendon, and have made our school a better place for it.

Without ALL of you, Pro Tem would not be what it is today.

Sincerely yours,

Eden Minichiello
Editor in Chief | Rédactrice en chef



Zoom University: A reflection on the 2020-2021 academic year (cont.)

countless more technological breakdowns to come. Many students spoke of professors who were incapable of using technology like Zoom, or who were generally unprepared to teach, which led to upwards of twenty minutes wasted in class. Others talked about their experiences facing humiliation for lacking the technological tools needed for a year of classes online. One student reports: "Halfway through a test, I was told I needed to print the next portion. When I said I didn't have a printer, I was told to buy one in front of the entire class." Many students who do not have access to high-speed internet have missed out on course content due to Zoom failures, or have been unable to connect to YorkU remote lab or MyApps to use software required for coursework.

Almost all of the six students interviewed also expressed concern about the intense workloads placed on students over the course of the last academic year. Several students reported that they feel professors are using extra readings to compensate for lacking lectures, but that this change only puts more pressure on students. One interviewee said: "I know students who have 60-90 pages of readings per week. On top of assignments. And part-time jobs. And staving off the anxiety brought about by a global pandemic. Not to mention the poorly photocopied PDFs and textbooks that are egregiously expensive..."

Furthermore, ALL of the students interviewed explained that a significant factor in their dissatisfaction with their education this year is the lack of human interaction. One student reports that "since everything is through Zoom, there are less interpersonal interactions, less discussions, and the environment in general is less motivating." Even the most optimistic of the interviewees admitted: "Though the quality of my education remains strong, it has indeed been slightly weakened, especially due to the lack of social interaction and active exchange of knowledge among my peers." It seems that we all agree that university education is an immensely interpersonal experience. Where intellectual discussions and academic exchanges are absent, can higher education really be ex-

perienced? Can that space really be considered a university?

The common conclusion among students is that what constitutes high-quality education is not simply truthful information provided by a reputable professor, tested in a meaningful way. It is an intellectually stimulating, social experience, in which students are supported, and meaningful connections are made among the faculty and the student body. And ultimately, that just hasn't been delivered at Glendon and York University this year.

That all being said, Pro Tem is determined to provide Glendon students with a wholesome and realistic report on the quality of education this year, and that can't be done with a one-sided story, so we made sure to interview professors as well. We feel the need to state that the professors we interviewed are all incredible. They have gone above and beyond normal efforts to provide the best education and experience possible for their students this academic year. Their willingness to participate in an interview for the student press is also a testament to their enthusiasm and genuine care for the students. Therefore, the experiences of these remarkable professors may not align with other, less engaged professors at Glendon, or your experiences with your professors.

When asked whether they feel the quality of education they are providing to students this year online is the same as in previous years, all the professors we interviewed had similar opinions. Common consensus revealed that in terms of learning and course content, quality has remained the same. Though many professors struggled to adapt in-class curriculum to the new online format, some have been successful in making their course material informative and engaging despite this difficult transition. In many ways, professors feel that there has even been opportunity for content to be improved, as Zoom classes provide the perfect platform to host guest speakers and conferences. These guests have added a richness and variety to the monotony of online classes, and have provided students with insight from other professionals in the field they hope to enter after graduation.

However, the professors also agree that the online university experience as a whole has been very different. One professor stated: "I think that I am providing my students with a quality learning experience this year, and maintaining the standards that I usually keep. However, the limitations of online learning have affected the quality, due to the fact that nothing can replace the nuances of in-class interaction." While we recognize and appreciate professor's remarkable efforts to deliver

the same course content through unfamiliar technology, we return, once again, to the common conclusion that university is more than just course content, and that interpersonal interaction plays a huge role in quality of education.

With this conclusion in mind, students are clearly being charged the same price for an inferior academic experience. The question that remains is: why, and is this fair? York University's website states that "academic fees... include tuition costs, as well as essential and non-essential supplementary fees." "Essential" services include academic support, athletics and recreation, campus safety, career services, financial aid offices, health and counselling, student achievement and records, student buildings, and student ID cards." Of all nine of these services, at least six have been virtually non-existent in student experiences over the past academic year. If students are not being provided with these services, why are they paying for them?

Students have expressed their frustration with not knowing where their tuition is going during the pandemic. One student exclaims: "Where is the money going? When I return to Glendon, the walls and ceilings better be fixed, as well as the bathrooms, hallways, classrooms, and ventilation. With all the money being spent on this quasi fraudulent year, the least we could get is a nice building that doesn't smell like sewage after one person goes to the bathroom. #GlendonProblems."

Professors seem to have a better understanding of how funds are being allocated at York. One professor states: "From what I hear from York, they have a number of bursaries that weren't there before. [Furthermore], they are trying to fundraise with professors, alumni and so forth to get more money to give back to students. There was also the computer lending program. They had a number of computers set aside so that people who didn't have access to a computer could get one through the university. In terms of software... Office 365 is free for everyone, Antidote is apparently accessible through MyApps, so there's a bunch of software that's now free... for students. And I mean, have you heard the President's report on how many millions of dollars of debt they took on due to COVID?

So yeah, the university really invested A LOT of money to try and meet [student] needs." Unfortunately, this doesn't seem evident enough in student experiences to justify tuition prices staying the same. The fact of the matter is that York administration's efforts to compensate for a poor learning experience have simply not been enough. At this point, it is too late to stimulate tuition cuts for the 2020-2021 academic year, but what does this say for the future?

Thankfully, York's President recently released a statement that the university is "actively planning for a safe return to our campuses for the Fall 2021 term." She goes on to explain that "classes held on campus will be delivered in a small group format that maximizes interactive learning," and that "access to high-quality remote learning will continue." This message offers hope to tired students and burnt out professors, but the looming threat of uncertainty due to the COVID-19 virus remains. Inside information from professors reveals that "comments [have been] made that even after COVID ends, the administration intends to continue to have a significant online offering." We [the student body] must ensure that York administration is held accountable, and does not use COVID-19 as an excuse to make online learning a significant component of the post-pandemic student experience. It is the responsibility of Glendon students and faculty alike to demand a full return to in-person learning at the earliest safe opportunity. At a campus like Glendon with a small student body that prides itself on meaningful in-class interaction, the shortcomings of online learning are particularly pronounced, and students must insist on receiving the true "Glendon experience" they are paying for.

In the case that the pandemic takes yet another turn for the worse in the GTA, or that vaccines continue to be poorly supplied by our government, and courses are held online yet another semester, it will be high time for students to demand cuts to tuition during online classes, or alternatively, improved services from York administration. If that time comes, Glendon, you can count on Pro Tem to spark the flame for action against unjust costs for unsatisfactory education.



York Students Remember the CUPE 3903 Strike

Ameer Shash
Contributor

It was the end of March, and also the end of a march: one that saw over 3,000 union members at York University walk the picket lines in 2018. Between March 5th and July 25th of 2018, members of the union representing contract faculty, teaching assistants (known as 'CUPE 3903', or 'The Canadian Union of Public Employees 3903'), contested salaries and job security, among other matters. After about a month-long strike, a new contract deal was created and students were able to resume their classes. However, the matter is still unsettled: during the strike, students were not able to attend classes, as their teaching assistants and other administrators were partaking in the strike action. Teaching assistants would not evaluate course work or attend tutorial classes during the strike. The inequitable conditions that were pressed onto the CUPE members raised both scrutiny and disapproval from many students. This month marks nearly three years since the campus-wide strike, and senior students recall the turmoil as clear as day. Khalid Desai, a third-year student, was adamant about his view on the strike. "I don't think anything will change my mind on how the university handled the situation. The only nice thing was getting to work more hours, but I still fell behind in coursework". When asked about the scene of the protests, he described it as "an annoyance", Desai states that "people were gathering on the street without any regard for safety or traffic flow. I was stunned that nothing was done about it". Another student, Kwok, adds, "I couldn't even drive my car because of people using those steel barricade things". Frustration brought high tensions to the strike. CityNews interviewed York students and showcased social media posts showing fights breaking out between student protestors and the university administration. Despite the frigid March air, participants struck outdoors and made their presence clear by blocking numerous entrances to the university. Desai says, "living a short drive away is convenient, but during that time, demonstrators were just being dumb. I really feel as though protesting did not help, and that they could have petitioned online instead of taking out their anger in the cold."

The threat of a strike looms for the 2021-2022 academic year, as there still exist unsettled labour tensions between York University's administration and CUPE 3909. Labour negotiations occur around the time of expiry of teaching assistants' and professors' contracts. The expiry of their contracts mean their job security is jeopardized, and as a result, funding protection is not guaranteed for teaching assistants. Provincial legislation, the *Urgent Priorities Act*, was enacted during the 2018 strike, and ordered the University to continue its operations without affecting students' learning. Despite this provincial legislation ordering the continued operations of teaching, many students have been forced to stay at York for an additional year of study to fulfill degree requirements. The effects of this strike are therefore still being felt by fourth-year students today. What remains most troubling is the fact that students' tuition will not be deferred or reduced during labour negotiations, even if faculty is refusing to mark assignments.

Reddit user 'Obi-kobe' estimates that teaching assistants will not mark or



Photo par Steve Russell

teach, and that the provincial back-to-work legislation enacted by Premier Ford in 2018 will mean the duration of this year's potential strike will only last a month or two.

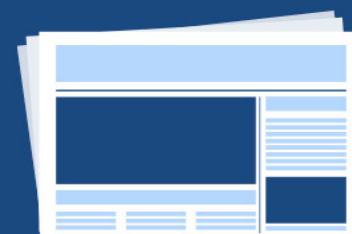
Incidents of violence have occurred at all three strikes, most prominently during the 2018 protest, when a student physically assaulted a teaching assistant.

Labour disputes for the end of current contracts remain unsettled at this time. What should be actively happening are negotiations toward a consensual, mutually beneficial agreement that is long-term and secure between all stakeholders. Is there a risk of another strike in the near future? Only time will tell.

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The Amadou

Zipporah Davis
Contributor

I will tell you how this world burns.

And you hesitate to listen for what won't be the final time. You've heard it all before, between intervals of anger — these eras you acknowledge for only a month.

I'm aware of your guilt. You attempt to self-reason, recalling the moments you've indulged in these eras. Adrenaline, perhaps. (Though you know yourself better than that.) You needed to prove something. *Anything* to show that you are not like your predecessors.

And though you tire of hearing it, you look at me, lights fluttering and sound attuned. Of course, you want to record it. A moment like this must be shared. You'll ask questions afterward — make them seem genuine. But for now, you're silent because you need to show them — the people of this burning world — that, yes, you've listened. And that *that* was the best you could do.

Our world burns from the surface. An inbound motion that is linear rather than cyclical. It has a beginning as well as an end. You have a hard time accepting this. (I don't know why. It's not your first time hearing it.)

You refused to acknowledge the smoke from the start. Now, you try to tell me of molten cores — (How rich. You promised to only listen.)

The roiling of iron and nickel. Forest fires started from carelessness. Dry earth meets desert heat. Even lightning, veins of electricity descending onto our world, can set things ablaze. And I, like many of the Amadou before me, tell you that the geology and sciences behind conflagration have nothing to do with it. Our world's surface burns from centuries of denial.

You grow pale, eyes widening as shame tells you you've only helped kindle the flames.

(And you have, but I am not direct about it).

It was the Amadou who were the tinder. They still are, but laws dictate that they should not be. Yet they are constantly struck by hatred and denial, sparks that burst into fires across the earth.

You tell yourself not to worry — they are vocal enough. Besides, the Amadou are an abundant group, supple, albeit retrospective.

But the past is best kept in the past, you say.

(Again, you'd rather talk than listen.)

These people — my people — who have been displaced, scourged, enslaved, forgotten, and demonized, will still tell you the story of how this world burns because you had promised to listen when the fire fulminates. But when the friction of denial is against our skin in these very current times, you do not smell the smoke until we tell you how much it burns.

Because, in your world, murder is a recordable event; incarceration only happens to those who deserve it; war is not something you lose sleep over; and slavery has long been abolished. The Amadous live in fear of one, if not all of these in their lifetime.

By now, you have a distant look in your eyes. I cannot tell what you are thinking, but I have an idea of what you will say.

Your words will meander around feelings of remorse.

You will promise change — some improvement to these institutions of ruin. Already, you have forgotten your short attention span (which is laughable, really) — you only heed these eras of anger for a mere month. If even that long.

You cannot fathom the paradox of being an Amadou. To be despised yet fetishized at the same time. To have your ways torn from you — *sold* as staples. *Aesthetic*, we've heard you call it. Trends are drained from our shapes and



Photo par David-von-Diemar

colors — our movements and mannerisms.

And oh, the irony. How the Amadou were long taught not to enjoy these features. It was what made us undesirable after all. We are a supple people, remember? We grow at your feet — between the same trees you cut down for vanity. We've learned to mold ourselves for your approval. Ah, but let the past stay in the past, as you say.

So, I shall stick with the present for the sake of your convenience. (Your convenience, of course, always held priority). The Amadou are a people still aflame from constant friction. We are an incendiary group, chipped away into what some of you wish would be nothing, but believe me when I say that we are not the cause of these fires. It is your denial that will leave our world to burn for eras to come. You may not notice how the earth's surface withers and darkens with ash. You may ignore the fumes and thickened skies of gray.

But for the Amadou — this world's tinder — such a luxury (such *ignorance*) is unaffordable.

The Game

Sonia Said
Contributor

WARNING: the game you are about to discover is very addictive.

Let's play a game.

One that exists, has existed, and hopefully will continue existing. Let me explain it to you. Basically, the very first thing you need to know is that this is a multiplayer game; it does not rely simply on one person, it requires all of us (but I am sure you want to be the one who wins!). This game is not based on wealth, health, or strength. I promise; it is free, simple, and easy. And it can effectively help you make the world a better place. Because of course, YOU can do that; you can play and change the world. *But before continuing, you need to decide; do you want to be part of the game? (That is fully up to you...)*

Now, if you are still here... Congratulations! You have passed the introductory level. Welcome! Follow attentively the most important part; the explanation of the mysterious concept. This game relies on a mysterious concept. The mysterious concept relies on a truth. The truth is

that there is already so much pressure on our shoulders in our everyday lives; all kinds of hardships, trials, and tribulations. Therefore, it is important to share our burdens and show compassion to one another. It is very likely that you would understand the pain in someone else's watery eyes. It is very likely that you may know the suffering hidden in someone else's frustration. It is very likely that at some point, you felt that way too.

Let's make this earth the place where we can be there for each other; independent of race, religion, gender, and beliefs. Sorry, I was not very good at science, but I am sure we all have a **heart** in common. I am certain that just this one beautiful thing that we have in common is enough to show respect, appreciation, and love to one another. And I swear, even though some people don't wear their heart on their sleeve, they have one, too.

And that leads us to the only requirement of the game. Because this game has only one rule: to be played wholeheartedly with pure intentions. Now, I know that's asking a lot. There is a part of me that is certain that everyone won't, or can't, get on board. Honestly, I know that it's impossible to convince each and every person to play. And I get that this kind of game is not everyone's cup of tea, but I swear it is worth it.

Finally, let's get down to the serious stuff... So



Photo par Andrey-Metelev

you are probably asking: Sonia, tell us, WHAT IS THIS GAME? The game is simple: **just be there... be present... close to the heart of people you meet.** Be the one who shows that the mysterious concept commonly known as **love**, is making a comeback. But please, don't share any kind of love. Let love be genuine, safe and tender; don't ask anything in return, don't complain, don't show off about it, don't pretend, don't use it for your own agenda. Be the one who hides a kind message in a book, the one who gives a smile, the one who offers time, the one who shares someone else's burden, or be the one who simply mentions someone else in your prayers.

Comet — Part 2

Elton Campbell
Layout Designer

“Are you okay, Comet? What happened?” Blossom asked with her serenading raspy voice. She mysteriously emerged in front of Comet and sat beside him in a red dress that complimented her curvy Coca-Cola bottle shape. Comet was dumbstruck. It was Rick’s girlfriend who is also their former highschoolmate. Rick and Blossom had been dating during the latter parts of high school. “Your injuries aren’t as bad as Rick told me on the phone. He called me a few minutes ago and asked me to check up on you.”

Comet looked at her, puzzled, “I thought that Boss of the Bullies hates me,” Comet responded.

She looked at him. “He hates you more than anything in the world. He despises sodomites but because I have flawless light skin, a perfect body, and such a big heart, it was easy convincing the man of my dreams to show some tolerance towards you,” Blossom said while hugging Comet closely. Her flowing, exquisite, Brazilian hair itched Comet’s face.

She then whispered in his ears, “Remember, I secretly betrayed the bullies and liberated myself from peer pressure to protect you. I was the one who told you about the rumours of the bullies planning to dump sewage on you during high school graduation.” She picked up the bloody knife with a napkin and placed it in her handbag. “No need to take this to the police or report anything because they definitely will beat you up for being a fish. For your safety, I will drive you home in my car.”

Comet smiled despite having an excruciating headache. He was happy that at least one person in the world cared about him.

A week later, Comet received a text from Blossom asking him to meet Rick at the West Riverbank to return his white shirt at 2pm on Saturday. Comet hand-washed Rick’s shirt until it was blinding white. He planned on wearing it to meet him to provoke his bully because he believed Blossom’s friendship could be used as leverage to influence Rick to show him respect.

Comet sat close to the edge of the West Riverbank, watching his reflection in the serene teal river water. “Yow scales! Why are you here?” Rick’s deep voice abruptly bellowed above Comet’s head. A startled Comet almost fell into the river. Rick caught him by his wrist and pulled him in towards safety. “Seems like I saved your

fin again. You never made it to my car because your attackers knocked you out and stabbed you and I saved you. Gays love man things, so I’ll let you keep my shirt.” Comet roared like a lion then grabbed Rick’s neck tightly and started to squeeze it with all his might. His seemingly violent attack had no impact on Rick. Rick chuckled and shouted, “Easy yuhself freak! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Yuh love choke man!”

“Tek this!” Comet shouted while swiftly kicking Rick in the groin.

“Rahtid!!!” Rick yelled in agony. The water crackled as Rick fell ten feet from the riverbank headway into the river. Comet froze. He placed his hands over his mouth. Rick disappeared only leaving ripples of fading circular waves. Comet was no longer the bold lion but a timid kitten that feared water. “Oh my, I can’t save Rick and he could be dead because of me.” Comet muttered as he peed his navy-blue jeans. Three minutes passed and Rick was nowhere in sight.

The thought of being a murderer haunted him like a ghost, instantly causing a burst of adrenaline to kick in. He valiantly jumped into the river to save Rick but as his body greeted the cool water, he remembered that he does not know how to swim. He became a wild kicking, braying donkey. Creating lots of commotion.

“Easy yuhself! Relax before yuh drown yuhself. I thought every fish could swim?” Rick said humorously while holding Comet’s chest towards his. Comet became



Photo par Joshua Mcknight

calm as soon as he realized that his lifetime of embarrassing panicking in the river was simply less than a minute. Comet innocuously wrapped his legs around Rick’s waist that was submerged in the water.

“You are the only swimmer here! Right!?” Comet yelled, then frowned. Rick’s hazel eyes glowed in the sunlight as they worshiped Comet’s cherry-coloured lips. Comet gently removed a few tiny green leaves from Rick’s hair, trying as best as possible to avoid eye contact. The universe paused. Slowly their eyes dimmed simultaneously as their lips aligned harmoniously. They both hyperventilated as they kissed passionately. A temporary seize fire be-

tween Comet and Rick.

The universe resumed when they heard a branch snap. “You heard that?” Comet whispered to Rick. “Do not turn around. Look at me and hold your breath.” Rick replied with a low commanding voice. In the blink of an eye, Rick’s fingers gripped Comet’s body like the teeth of a starving dog securing its bone. He plunged their bodies underneath the surface of the water milliseconds before echoing gunshots rained towards them.

To be continued in Pro Tem’s 60th volume, Issue 1.

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EN FRANÇAIS À
EDITOR@PROTEMGLENDON.COM

How the Book Industry's #OwnVoices Movement Is Harmful to the LGBTQ+ Community

Brianna Carrasco
Section Editor - Arts & Entertainment, Expressions

Young adult literature has been a safe haven for me since I was a pre-teen. There's something powerful about teenagers in literature finding their voice, going on adventures, and developing their identity. The identity-development aspect of young adult literature is most likely the main reason why I am so attached to this literary genre. As someone who has struggled with coming to terms with different aspects of my identity growing up, I feel connected to books about teenagers who undergo a dramatic, life-altering event through which they learn something new about themselves.

Up until fairly recently, the young adult genre carried a bad reputation. Many people viewed young adult novels as cheesy stories about dramatic teenagers, love triangles, and raging hormones. And honestly, there are a lot of books like that that I was ashamed of admitting that I enjoyed. But one thing is certain about young adult novels that were being released just a few years ago — they got old very quickly. The same white, straight main characters — the quiet and timid girl and her mysterious and witty love interest — dominated the pages of nearly every young adult novel. Over the past few years, though, due to the pressure for more diverse stories, young adult publishing companies have taken it upon themselves to start bringing more books to shelves that represent diverse populations. One of the things I love about supporters of the young adult genre is the constant pressure they put on the book industry to promote and encourage diverse stories.

The pressure for more diverse stories increased tenfold in 2015 when young adult author, Corinne Duyvis, coined the term #OwnVoices. #OwnVoices started as a hashtag movement on Twitter. On September 6, 2015, Duyvis, an LGBTQ+ author and advocate for people with disabilities, posted on Twitter: "How about a hashtag? #ownvoices, to recommend kid-lit



Photo par Freepik

about diverse characters written by authors from that same diverse group."

Duyvis brought up an excellent point: it is not enough to just have diverse characters. We must also support books that are written by authors who come from the group that is being written about. For example, if there should be a book written about a person with Autism Spectrum Disorder, then the author should have Autism Spectrum Disorder themselves. If an author is going to write a book with a transgender protagonist, then the author should be transgender, as well. This allows for a more accurate and authentic story, and also ensures readers are supporting authors who come from marginalized communities.

Many people have different interpretations of the #OwnVoices movement, and the lines around what is considered #OwnVoices aren't clear. Is it okay for a white writer to write about a Black character if they have done respectful research and hired sensitivity readers for the editing process? Is it okay for a lesbian writer to write about a bisexual character? Can anyone write about anything anymore?!

There are many benefits to the #OwnVoices movement. I love the idea of supporting authors from marginalized communities who choose to write fiction stories of their own experiences. And I 100% think that stories about people from marginalized groups, that come from authors who are a part of that group, are more authentic and realistic than those that come from authors who aren't. But still, books like *The Song of Achilles* or *A Little Life* that star gay male leads but are written by straight female authors, are some of my favourite books of all time.

The #OwnVoices movement becomes problematic, though, when it leads to the gatekeeping of marginalized identities, especially identities that are not always visible, like the LGBTQ+ community. One of the most prominent examples that comes to mind is the author of *Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda*, Becky Albertalli. *Simon Vs.* is a 2015 young adult novel about a teenage boy named Simon who is ready to come out as gay. *Simon Vs.* is a well-known novel in the young adult genre, and has led to the movie *Love, Simon* and the Hulu show *Love, Victor*. There are also two companion novels to the Simonverse, one featuring a bisexual teenage girl. However, the author, Becky, has received lots of harsh criticism over the years for writing books about members of the LGBTQ+ community while not identifying with the community herself. Even though Becky has previously worked as a psychologist with LGBTQ+ youth, and her work has positively impacted many members of the LGBTQ+ community, the fact that she was a straight author writing about the LGBTQ+ experience led to hate comments over Twitter and TikTok. It wasn't until August 2020 when Becky was forced out of the closet before she was ready, and came out as bisexual, to prove to her readers that she was capable of writing stories about the LGBTQ+ community — as she is from the community, as well.

Although this example is more related to the film industry, the same scenario happened to actress Jameela Jamil. When it was announced that Jameela would be a judge on *Legendary*, a reality show about the ball culture of LGBTQ+ individuals, she received major backlash from people who

believed she should not be on the show if she isn't a member of the LGBTQ+ community. This led to Jameela coming out as queer to prove her membership in the community.

The #OwnVoices movement has great intentions, and I will not stop supporting #OwnVoices books. If I'm going to read a book about an oppressed community, then I would prefer if my support and money go towards that community, not an author who has no affiliation with the community at all. But that does not mean that I will stop reading books that are not #OwnVoices, especially when the community involved is the LGBTQ+ community. Authors should not be forced out of the closet to prove to their audience that they are capable of writing about the LGBTQ+ experience. It is no business of the readers whether the author of a book is gay, or transgender, or has a physical disability, or has a mental illness, or was raised in a lower-class household, or has experienced any sort of oppression in their life. Experiencing oppression is exhausting to talk about, and some people choose not to share their marginalized identities for their own safety, and we must accept that this might come at the cost of reading books that do not "seem" #OwnVoices on the surface.

All I want is more diverse stories from many different authors who come from many different backgrounds and life experiences. And I want these books to be written with care, respect, and love, so we can all learn from each other and see parts of our own unique experiences within these stories.

Welcome to Legality: Almost Famous, 21 Years Later

Michael Aquilino
Contributor

The other day, fed-up and stressed out with my coursework, I decided to take a break. I wanted to watch a movie, but I wasn't sure which one. I have a soft spot for 1980s coming-of-age and feel-good films (*Big*, *Dirty Dancing*, *Stand By Me*, to name a few). I had already exhausted most of my options on Netflix, surfed through every television channel twice over, and I even went through my extensive collection of DVDs. Currently, I am enrolled in a class at York titled "Italian Cinema, Literature and Society". For this course, students are granted access to a York-funded streaming service (in order to watch the classic Italian films, of course).

Naturally, I thought: "what if this website has other great movies?" After a few minutes, or hours (I'll never say), of sifting through many titles, I stumbled upon the movie *Almost Famous*. Long story short, my perspective on life has changed ever since.

Intrigued by the gorgeous Kate Hudson on the movie poster, I decided to watch the film. Written and directed by Cameron Crowe — who has worked on other popular films like *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*, *Jerry Maguire*, and *Say Anything* — *Almost Famous* premiered in 2000 at the Toronto International Film Festival. Starring Billy Crudup, Frances McDormand, Patrick Fugit and, of course, Kate Hudson, the film follows the adventures of a 15-year-old aspiring journalist (William Miller, played by Fugit).

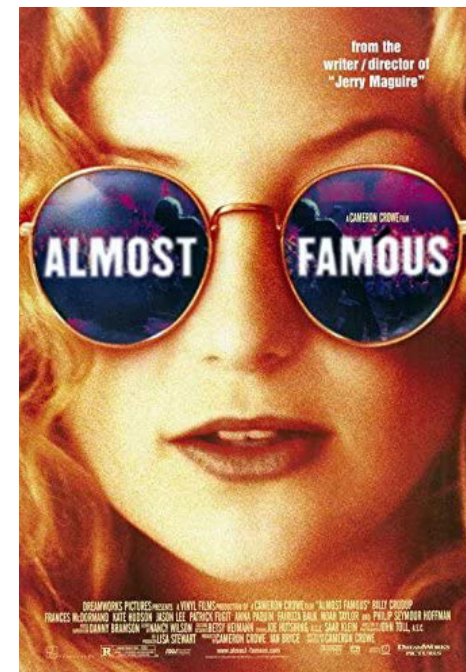
Set in the 1970s, at the height of what would later be considered the classic rock era, William travels alongside an up-and-coming, fictitious rock band who are experiencing many highs (quite literally), but also many lows. Defying his mother's conservative wishes, William hits the road, finding his love for life, women, and most importantly — rock and roll.

The film is beautifully shot, each scene evoking a strong sense of euphoria. Although it was released in the year 2000, watching the film truly transports the audience back to the 70s. The incredible and realistic acting performances, in conjunction with a familiar and heartwarming soundtrack, come together to form a mas-

terpiece that makes the viewer feel like the main character. You do not feel like you are watching the film. Instead, you feel as if you are right alongside William on the tour bus. The film holds a very distinctive care-free attitude, with the idea of personal freedom at the forefront. The characters follow their dreams and aspirations, disregarding any external forces that wish to prevent their progress.

Almost Famous is especially relevant to my life now, more than it ever would have been before. With the world in utter shambles, from the COVID-19 pandemic to many social injustices, we cannot help but feel trapped and confined within systemically corrupt structures. This film embodies the opposite. The characters are not afraid to take risks, to defy societal standards and expectations. They have only one goal in life: to be themselves. Imperfection is inevitable. No matter how hard we try, or for how long, not everything can go our way. Mistakes and failure come with experience and growth. This is essentially the film's message. It doesn't matter who you are, where you're from, or what you do, you are capable of anything — whether that be becoming a journalist, rock star, or the Prime Minister of Canada. No one should ever devalue your existence. We are all here for a purpose. What that purpose may be is up to the individual, and only the individual, to decide.

This year, 2021, is the twenty-first anniversary of the film's initial release — a figure also representing the age of legality in the United States. For those in Canada, the age of 18 represents this exciting transition into adulthood. Canadian teens can now vote at this age, sue someone (and be sued), get a (legal) tattoo, and purchase lottery tickets. As many of Canada's teens have had to learn the hard way, during a virus-tainted year, the "real-world" is not all fun and games. When all hope is lost and times are down-right tough, we must always remember to keep an open mind. We must look at the positive aspects of our lives, however minuscule they may be at the present moment, and not sulk in our own despair. At the end of the day, if a film with four Oscar nominations (including one win, for Best Original Screenplay), about the very universal trials and tribulations of everyday life, cannot inspire us to see the light at the end of the tunnel, then perhaps



today's society is almost doomed. I say "almost" because nothing is ever truly lost, until everyone stops searching for it.



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How Toronto Theatres Adapted Their 2020-2021 Seasons

Erica Thi
Contributor

When theatres closed down in Toronto, there was the question of what the 2020-2021 season would look like and how theatres would survive. This is how three theatres in Toronto adapted their usual, pre-pandemic show experience.

Buddies in Bad Times created a physical presentation of their annual Rhubarb Festival, which typically takes place in February. For 2021 they recreated the experience of a live performance festival as a sleek, textured, yellow book with the word "Rhubarb" underlined on the spine. This book was a limited edition publishing of 888 copies, which sold out. This is cer-

tainly an interesting piece of theatre history and memorabilia.

Theatre Passe Muraille presented *Speculation*, a digital presentation written, produced, and performed by Leslie Ting, which ran from March 17th to 20th. The theatre offered pay-what-you-can at \$5, \$25, and \$50 price points alongside regular ticket purchases. *Speculation* is a theatrical concert with an emphasis on visual design through projections, music, and collective performance, that explores Ting's career change from an optometrist to a professional violinist while her mother was slowly losing her vision.

On October 15th, 2020, the Obsidian Theatre Company announced that its 2020-2021 season would feature its first major project, *21 Black Futures*, under the art direction of Mumbi Tindyebwa Otu. 21 was a magic number, as Obsidian Theatre entered its 21st year of operation with a project that featured 21 playwrights and actors, and 21 visions of the future of Blackness. The playwrights listed include Peace Akin-tade, Keshia Cheesman, Lisa Codrington, Miali-Elise Coley-Sudlovenick, K.P. Dennis,



Photo par Getty Images

Cheryl Foggo, Shauntay Grant, Lawrence Hill, Kaie Kellough, Stephie Mazunya, Tawiah Ben M'Carthy, Motion, Omari Newton, Amanda Parris, Joseph Jomo Pierre, Donna-Michelle St. Bernard, Jacob Sampson, Djanet Sears, Luke Reece, Cherissa Richards, and Syrus Marcus Ware. *21 Black Futures* is an anthology series that comprises 3 seasons which were released throughout

Black History Month and are available for free on CBC Gem. Alongside Obsidian Theatre Company's digital approach when live performance was in jeopardy, Otu commented on the desire to support Black artists and consider Black futures during the global fight against racism and violence towards Black people.

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Les barrières de confinement

Sara Youssef
Contributor

La pensée de rester à la maison sans égard aux interactions sociales ni à mon caractère physionomique semblait un idéal qui ne pouvait se réaliser qu'après la retraite. Avant la COVID, je me sentais épuisée par le débordement aussi académique qu'émotionnel. Notamment, lors des deux derniers mois du deuxième trimestre qui sont la plupart du temps remplis d'évaluations et de présentations. L'année dernière, le confinement a réalisé mon rêve d'une possible relâche de toute responsabilité universitaire. Une situation soudaine telle que le confinement a eu, par contre, des répercussions sur ma santé physique et mentale dont je n'avais jamais songé auparavant.

La gamme des activités à l'université a été gravement amputée : c'est dur sur le moral. À un moment donné, quelqu'un comme moi qui utilisait peu son téléphone se défoule maintenant sur les réseaux sociaux. À force de ne pas pratiquer mes loisirs à temps plein, je me débrouillais comme je peux pour maintenir une certaine hygiène de vie et ne pas sombrer (avec plus ou moins de succès).

Je me suis rendue compte de l'importance de travailler en dehors de la maison puisque cela me permettait de prendre une pause et de me couper de ma routine quotidienne. Par conséquent, le confinement me présente l'avant-goût amer de la retraite. À moins d'aimer la monotonie ou d'avoir un tempérament casanier, nous n'abordons pas le choc du désœuvrement ni les conséquences de nous retrouver au nid douillet, du matin au soir, sept jours par semaine, à se demander sur ce que manger le soir. La pandémie nous a rappelé comment la retraite peut être plate et lourde si l'on n'a pas de plan. Il faut se ren-



Photo par Freepik

dre compte, cependant, que les consignes d'éloignement vont au-delà d'une retraite anticipée. Ils nous privent des contacts essentiels à l'équilibre mental de toute personne.

Le confinement peut nous rendre légèrement fous d'ennui, mais parfois c'est pendant un ennui profond que les meilleures idées naissent. Ces dernières soulignent nos intérêts personnels qui nous poussent vers quelque chose — un goût

marqué pour un genre d'activité. Quand nous n'avons plus l'occasion de nous concentrer tellement sur l'aspect « pratique » de notre vie ni sur le côté « superflu » de la vie, nous devons essayer d'entretenir des passions et des passe-temps pour nous aider à nous sentir mieux dans notre peau.

J'aimerais vous demander, ainsi, chers lecteurs : « Quels sont vos rêves secrets ? »

Allergy Season and COVID-19: A recipe for respiratory anxiety

Ameer Shash
Contributor

It's that time of the year again, when many Canadians are caught with the springtime sniffles. Coinciding with the COVID-19 global pandemic, what better way is there to be caught in fear than coming down with a case of the sniffles and a feeling of weakness in your body?

On the off-chance that my allergies flare up, I contemplate self-isolating, even though I have not set foot outside in months. "Could it have been a family member that brought it home", I ask repeatedly in my head. The fear of COVID-19 looms in our minds every time we feel under the weather.

The coinciding events of allergy season, cold season, and the global pandemic have, and still do, worry health experts. This situation can cause confusion and have people doubting themselves and their conditions, or assuming they have COVID-19. There are communities around us where education on health preservation and disease prevention are unfortunately not provided efficiently, and sometimes, does not stick well with others. For exam-

ple, community centers are safe havens for many newcomers to Canada. They help them to feel more comfortable and to find resources to help them adapt. It's been difficult for community centres to conduct outreach programs for immigrant and marginalized members of our city during the pandemic. They now often translate promotional media so that the message can be understood by everyone, regardless of what language they speak. This is important, since the pandemic affects everyone.

Given how new this strain of the coronavirus is, new methods and medicines are constantly being developed to combat it. We could turn to anxiety and spread fear, but if you want to spread anything right now, let it be education — and not the virus, please! Try to teach and encourage your friends and family to take care of their health, whether a cold, allergies, or COVID-19, and remind them that we must all work together to fight this!



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Adaptive Change After the Pandemic

John DeJesus
Contributor

Change is not always good. Pandemic haircuts are a case in point. But when we feel it is time for change, how do we *know* if the change we have in mind is actually right for us?

Merriam-Webster defines change as “to make different, to replace.” However, when people talk about change on a day-to-day basis, they tend to imply change that is self-directed and for the better. That is, making modifications to their lifestyle to achieve a happier and more fulfilling life.

Philosophers have dedicated lifetimes to study in archaic libraries, reading obscure scrolls by candle to help us determine the best way to live life. The hedonists prefer a life of pleasure, whereas the ascetics practice self-discipline and abstinence. The nihilists — the life of the party — believe life is meaningless. My personal perspective is pluralistic: I think it’s up to the individual to decide what life is best for them.

Change doesn’t have to be grandiose. It can be as simple as changing the language and keyboard settings on your iPhone from English to French, or vice versa, to pass ESL or FSL. It can be as drastic as changing majors halfway through your degree after realizing your true academic passion.

Cognitive dissonance is a phenomenon that “occurs when a person holds contradictory beliefs, ideas, or values, and is typically experienced as psychological stress when they participate in an action that goes against one or more of them.” In other words, your mind and body will signal that it may be time to change when you feel conflicted. Psychologists Dr. Miller and Dr. Rollnick developed a counselling approach called “Motivational Interviewing” based on cognitive dissonance. The first half of this approach is to help you recognize cognitive dissonance, validating that experience, and determining through a cost-benefit analysis (e.g. a pros-and-cons list) that *something* must be changed. Essentially, listen to your gut when it’s telling you something is up and when it’s time to change.

We sometimes feel vague desires for change and want to take action, but may not know where to start. Values are a helpful starting point. Values, according to Dr. Russ Harris, are “your heart’s deepest desires for how you want to behave as a human being. Values are not about what

you want to get or achieve; they are about how you want to behave or act on an ongoing basis; how you want to treat yourself, others, the world around you.” They can be powerful fuel to drive our behaviour. You can find a list of values by googling, “ACT Values”.

To quote Socrates, “The unexamined life is not worth living.” Reflective questions can help you identify values we deem important in life. Asking yourself “Are you happy right now?”, “Where do you see yourself in five years?”, “Is this what you want to do for the rest of your life?” are platitudes for a reason. They help return your focus to everyday behaviours, in order to help you achieve long-term goals. If you find some of your values have changed from a few years ago, that’s normal. It’s also common to revive values that have been discarded, or revitalize forgotten ones.

Some examples of values are compassion, connection, and creativity. These values shape our paths, and from them we can readily define precise behaviour aligned with our values. For example, if we value compassion, we may choose to volunteer at blood banks or hospices. To foster connection, we can make more of an effort to reconnect with distant loved ones. To express our creativity, we may pick up our half-finished art project again.

Even if we determine that it is time for change, it aligns with our values, and we have an idea of what action we want to take... What system can we follow to ensure a greater degree of success in achieving adaptive change? Some of us fall for the traps of flashy marketing, ex-



pensive membership programs, and trendy products. The truth is, there is snake oil everywhere selling you change, and social movements that promise everlasting happiness. We want it all, and we want it now in this age of instant gratification.

If you ask what any successful athlete, entrepreneur, or writer does to find success, they will likely tell you something you already know: persistence. If we improved in an area of our lives by one percent - yes, just one percent - each day, over the course of 365 days, this would be a 37.78% increase from where we were at the beginning. Compound interest, my friend!

Unfortunately, habits do not form over the course of 21 days as pop psychology would have us believe. How long it takes to develop a habit depends on the action itself and how actively engaged we are in the habit each day. Further, some habits we would like to form can logistically only be practiced every other day, or once a week. The good news is that there are evidence-based strategies that were specifically made to methodologically help us build habits.

Dr. Oettingen developed WOOP (Wish, Outcome, Obstacle, Plan), a “science-based mental strategy that people can use to find and fulfill their wishes, set preferences, and change their habits.” Earlier, we discussed how to determine when it is time for change, if it aligns with our values, and the benefits of systematically following through with action. All this talk amounts to only the “wish” of the WOOP strategy. The second step, imagining the Outcome, taps into the power of visual imagery that Olympic athletes and concert musicians often cite. The third step, anticipating the Obstacle, is often our downfall and the nemesis of a New Year’s resolution. We make promises to go to the gym thrice a week, but somehow forget where our membership card went, or make an excuse to skip tonight and do double next time. And finally, developing a specific Plan, where we make a concrete plan to help us follow through with change. Now you have a glorious arsenal of evidence-based psychological methods and strategies to take back your year as things return to (relative) normalcy.

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York Professor Holds Student in Myanmar Responsible for Military Coup

Anonymous

Have you ever been 'Yorked' so hard that your professor held you responsible for a coup in your home country and accused you of lying about it? Probably not, right? For an international student attending York University from Burma, this has unfortunately been the case. To clarify, Myanmar will be referred to as Burma, since the citizens who do not support the military coup refer to the country as Burma.

Recently, an international student asked for a deferral from his math professor at Keele campus, Emanoil Theodorescu. The reason behind this request was that in his home country of Burma, the military regime intended to shut off all internet and communication in the country. The professor replied, "Even the internet came down with CoViD19?" in a mocking, condescending tone. The professor then told the student that he has no perception of reality and that he is doomed to fail the class. A quick Google search of this professor, and you will see the laundry list of his terrible reviews. Holding a 1.6 rating on Rate My Prof, Theodorescu stands as one of York University's most disliked professors.

The screenshots of the email were sent to @spottedatYork on Instagram, the popular meme page of York University. This post gained a lot of traction, provoking anger and outrage from fellow students. The screenshots were posted on Twitter and Reddit, where they went viral, and the incident has now garnered even more attention. People began spamming the professor's email, contacting his department, and reporting him to the President of York University, Rhonda Lenton. But it did not stop there! Students took it even further by contacting The Star, CBC, BlogTo, CityTV, CP24 and Vice, all of which published news articles about the incident and took the time to contact Theodorescu's students to discuss their experience with him via interview. "He called me an idiot in class," a Reddit user explained. "He made me cry in front of everyone after humiliating me," she continued. A few students reported that they had contacted NDP leaders, some of them York alumni, in the hopes that they can ensure York fires this professor. As of

this morning, the story has reached The UK, Singapore, and Australia. Many have noted that Theodorescu is Romanian, and should therefore feel sympathy toward the student in Burma; after all, Romanian civilians were shot for protesting. Yet, Theodorescu claims that people do not get shot just for protesting. Odd.

Those who do not attend York may question why students feel the need to take this issue to third parties, like the local news and the NDP. There is a simple answer to this: students do not trust York's administration to handle this properly. York students are well aware of the fact that the institution has continually failed to hold abusers, rapists and malicious professors accountable. York students have had enough. This student is not only hiding from the violence occurring within their nation, but also battling anxiety about his school exams. This student's helpless situation has brought many York students to their defense.

As of the morning of March 19th, 2021, York University confirmed that they had gotten in contact with the student and removed Theodorescu from teaching for

the remainder of the semester. Until "further investigation" has been conducted, York will not declare its final solution to this issue. Many students hope that Theodorescu will be let go; after many years of verbal abuse, students want him off our campuses.

So what is the main takeaway from this incident? It is that to make change, we must rock the boat. We must not be afraid to let our voices be heard. York will continue to handle future situations in the same way if we do not make more noise. I, for one, am proud of the students who have gone to great lengths to defend their peer. We, as a community, can make a difference on our campus if we all make a scene. As a student body, we are powerful. It only took one student to share the email screenshots, and it only takes five minutes to send an email to relevant parties. Never be afraid to stand up for what is right. Don't assume that someone else will do it! You have the power to make change. I encourage readers to reach out to the emails below to help bring justice to this situation. I also request that members of the Glendon College Student Union (GCSU) share this incident on



social media and email these contacts as well. Your silence on this matter has not gone unnoticed. The York Federation of Students (YFS) and other student unions have shared this incident. This is not just an issue of student rights, but one of human rights.

Student Email Sources:
GoPublic@CBC.ca
torontotips@cbc.ca
sciadfac@yorku.ca
scidean@yorku.ca

DESIGN JUSTICE: PRACTICES FOR RESHAPING THE FUTURE

Please join us for a discussion with scholars and practitioners at the forefront of design justice, a set of practices and initiatives committed to community-led design for social justice.

Sasha Costanza-Chock
Wesley Taylor
Denise Shanté Brown

TO REGISTER: [HTTPS://TINYURL.COM/2FJ42M2P](https://tinyurl.com/2fj42m2p)

Check out the link above for registration

April 9th, 2021 | 3PM via ZOOM

Presented in English with ASL interpretation

The DJN network —made up of designers, advocates, educators, and researchers— is dedicated to reshaping existing practices and fostering community-led initiatives that address digital design injustices based on race, class, gender, and ability.

AN OPEN ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION WITH DESIGN JUSTICE NETWORK CO-PRESENTED WITH THE WENDY MICHENER MEMORIAL LECTURE AND DESIGN JUSTICE DIALOGUE SERIES

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