



“And then I said ...”

The Best of Your Working Girl

Memoir and Essays on Politics, Charity, Media and Sports

Gail Picco

And then I said ...

THE BEST OF YOUR WORKING GIRL

Gail Picco

And Then I Said: The Best Of Your Working Girl
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Dedication

To Your Working Girl's Gentle Readers, of course!

Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Memoir	3
Chapter 1: To have (been) loved and lost	4
Chapter 2: Farley Mowat and his Love Affair with the “Noble Savage”	7
Chapter 3: 20,000 songs in her pocket	10
Chapter 4: Happy Canada Day. Condolences on Memorial Day.	13
Chapter 5: They Are Trying To Kill My Boy	16
Politics	20
Chapter 1: Ten Things Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders Have In Common	21
Chapter 2: He Shall Not Be Moved	24
Chapter 3: Mean Girls – How Opposition Politicians Love to Attack Sophie Gregoire Trudeau	27
Chapter 4: The Man Beneath the Veil	29
Chapter 5: These days, it’s tough to keep it light	31
Chapter 6: It’s only rock and roll	34
Chapter 7: “If 1,000 monkeys typed for 100 years, one would pen Othello.”	36
Charity	39
Chapter 1: The Goodwill Scandal—What the Hell Happened and What it all Means	40
Chapter 2: Ten Reasons Why the 15% Charity Overhead Myth Prevents Any Social Change	43
Chapter 3: Listen up, fundraisers!	45
Chapter 4: The Most Bone-headed Campaign Stunt Award of 2014 goes to	47
Chapter 5: Unconventional philanthropist dies at 87	50
Chapter 6: Pathways to where are we headed exactly?	52
Chapter 7: Do you believe it?	56
Chapter 8: You don’t have to dig too deep	59
Media	64
Chapter 1: Who in the world is Jesse Brown?	65
Chapter 2: Why the attacks on Jian Ghomeshi are of no help to abused women	68
Chapter 3: Look who’s talking	72
Chapter 4: I choose Gawker	74
Sports	77
Chapter 1: Good morning Blue Jays’ Fans! Advice to Young Wives From an Old Mistress	78
Chapter 2: Chief Wahoo Takes Over the Toronto Blue Jays	80
Chapter 3: The Game of October 14th	82
Chapter 4: What it feels like when your home team is winning	83
Chapter 5: What happens to your mind when baseball season is over?	85
Chapter 6: 108 Stitches	87
Chapter 7: No experience necessary: Your Working Girl’s Guide to What Happened during the 2014 F1 Racing Season	89
Chapter 8: Welcome to your 2015 F1 Season: Your armchair guide to the good stuff	95
About Your Working Girl	101

Introduction

Your Working Girl is an identity inspired by Darryl, the alter ego of Ignatius J. Reilly, the corpulent and gassy protagonist of John Kennedy Toole's masterpiece, *A Confederacy of Dunces*, and the diary, *Journal of A Working Boy*, he kept during in the novel when he actually had a real job. Mr. Reilly is the ground zero slacktivist. What better role model could I find for being a blogger?

"When I am whole once again," Ignatius J. Reilly writes in *Journal of A Working Boy*, "I shall visit those factory people; I have deep and abiding convictions concerning social action. I am certain that I can perhaps do something to aid these factory folk. I cannot abide those who would act cowardly in the face of a social justice. I believe in bold and shattering commitment to the problems of our times ...

Until later,
Darryl, Your Working Boy

Your Working Girl issued her first post in 2010 and expanded the site in 2013.

Fun fact—if you googled “your working girl” when the blog started in 2010, you’d get that Melanie Griffith film, *Working Girl*. Now, well, modesty prevents me from saying it too loudly, but now, if you google “your working girl,” you don’t get the Melanie Griffith film. That must mean something. Exactly what, I can’t say.

Some posts went viral, especially when I wrote about Jian Ghomeshi. But mostly, the blog settled in with a nice regular appreciative audience—people who work in the nonprofit sector, media or like baseball. I also began to write about Newfoundland, my home. The conversations with readers were excellent.

“You – like the rest of us – have no basis for a position on this story.”

“Careful what you say about Jesse Brown. He might block you.”

“Best thing I’ve read on this subject. Huge admiration.”

“Your entire piece is so filled with logical fallacies I could barely make it to the end.”

The blogs chosen for this e-book were written between 2013 and 2016. Most of them are written in third person, the voice of Your Working Girl. It was a technique I adhered to exclusively when I first started blogging but eventually, when the subject matter required it or if I was writing something I anticipated would have a reach beyond my usual audience, I’d use first person.

I love the archness of using third person, of being able to take the highest of dudgeon and of separating the writing from my own ego, of not have to use the pronoun “I” so much, something drilled into me from a spare, but effective Newfoundland primary education at Brinton Memorial in St. John’s.

I’ve included what I think are Your Working Girl’s best pieces, and divided them into Memoir, Politics, Charity, Media and Sports. Joan Didion sums up the reason for the blog nicely.

“I write entirely to find out what I’m thinking, what I’m looking at, what I see and what it means; what I want and what I fear.”

Memoir

The relationship between place and identity is explored under the auspices of geography. Have grown up in a place where the land and sea were decidedly the boss of everyone, this section on memoir is like an assignment in human geography.

Chapter 1

To have (been) loved and lost

Originally published on May 1, 2013



Happy International Workers' Day! Happy May Day! Today is the day when much of the world celebrates their workers.

Today Your Working Girl would like to take the opportunity to honour a particularly hard worker of her acquaintance — her own dear father.

Parents these days are judged on a range of criteria and some do a lot of studying up on the matter. Some are even said to hover like helicopters.

The upshot of Your Working Girl's own experience of being parented is that the results were pretty good overall, at least in her own mind. She left her island home at a tender age feeling she could rule the world; if not the whole world, at least her own.

Her Pillsbury apple turnovers were the best her father had ever seen. Her report card, regardless of the B minuses that occasionally crept in made her the smartest girl. Her birthday, one day after his, made her the best present ever.

So enraptured was she by his account of life in the Merchant Marines, she contemplated a life in the Coast Guard. St. Thomas, St. Kitts, St. Croix, St. Lucia, Trinidad, and Tobago ... he'd recite the names midway through a story about sailing in the Caribbean, like a bit of poetry thrown in for timing. (He didn't talk as much about his life on a minesweeper during the war, however, other than mentioning that they'd once let off a depth charge to get fresh fish for dinner.)

After decades of self-employment, he went back to work on the boats — first mate on the ferry that runs from Portugal Cove to Bell Island.

But it all came to a bad end.

Your Working Girl received the call in the middle of the night. There was a storm in Conception Bay. The wind was high. The rain was coming down in sheets. People hadn't seen such a storm in years.

The news was bad. There had been an accident. Her father had fallen overboard. They weren't able to get him in time. The water was so cold. Hypothermia set in. He drowned.

Young Working Girl doesn't mind telling her Gentle Readers that she was slayed, absolutely slayed, by the news. She had heard those words many times before in Newfoundland, a gruesome recitation on the cause of death, but never in relation to someone so close to her. And the news had come on the heels of her dear mother's passing just four months earlier from breast cancer. [Your Working Girl often wonders what she would think of the carnival atmosphere surrounding the disease today. Thankfully, her mother passed with her dignity fully intact.]

Your Working Girl's mother played a huge role in her rearing, of course. Her patient intelligence and calm expectation ensured Your Working Girl's confidence was backed up by capacity to execute. No small task.

The news from home got worse. The storm had taken the lives of two other men that night — a fisherman and his nephew, both named Max. They had been setting their lobster pots when their boat capsized.

The scene at the funeral home was, at peak visiting hours, pandemonium. Three men from the same community lost in one night. And three bodies. Not always the case in circumstances like this. It got hard to move around. Condolences were offered with clasped hands.

"Sorry for your troubles," said one visitor shaking her head and tearing up.

"All hands go this way," another offered by way of comfort. We all die.

The wife of the young fisherman who had drowned along with his uncle sat motionless at the head of her husband's casket. Her long brown hair partly hid her face. Her eyes were open, head bowed and hands clasped in her lap. Your Working Girl, being about the same age and a fellow traveller in the deep valley of grief sat down beside her hoping to be able to offer some comfort. The young woman made no response. She didn't cry. She didn't rage. She sat perfectly still with her young husband was laid out beside her. Your Working Girl walked away. Grief is a lonely place.

Weeks later, back in Toronto, Your Working Girl knew the time had come to make her first tentative steps into a world where the sun still shone and people went about their everyday business. The occasion was a get-together with her gang of fine friends to watch the airing of *The Final Offer*, a superbly crafted documentary about the Canadian autoworkers breakaway from the United Auto Workers Union (UAW) in 1984. Led by Bob White, then head of the UAW Canadian section, the showdown changed the Canadian labour movement forever.

The suspense, the collective bargaining action coverage, the courage and charisma of a labour leader doing the right thing broke through Your Working Girl's wall of grief.

It showed her that speaking truth to power, standing up for what you believe in while singing a few songs and having a bit of fun was something that could be done and that a body could possibly make a living at it. It gave her hope and inspiration, something to replace the emptiness she felt in her heart.

It also made her proud of people like her father, people who work hard to the end, like he did when he tied the life-saving rope tossed to him around his own wrists before he succumbed to the frigid Atlantic waters. People who do the fishing, the mining, the manufacturing to provide us the things we need and want.

Your Working Girl is not the only person in Canada to have suffered the loss of a loved one on the job certainly. The North Atlantic alone has claimed many more lives since it claimed her father.

Last year, 750 workers in Canada died from work. April 28th is the annual the Day of Mourning when we honour them. Your Working Girl remembers this somewhat obscure dedication because April 28th is, coincidentally, her father's birthday.

Yet, these days you can't pick up a paper without seeing unionized workers — or any worker for that matter — being slashed and trashed. The private sector is cutting wages and slashing benefits, companies are up and moving to where labour is cheaper. The public service is the object of a "crack-down" on wages and benefits.

Profit-focused men and women, whose job entails, buying stuff cheap and selling it for more money, have placed a price on a worker's heads; for them the cheaper the better. Just witness the recent results of the disregard workers are shown in Bangladesh as the poorly constructed factory fell down around them.

Your Working Girl's father gave her a great many great gifts, as fathers all over the world give their daughters. Your Working Girl is not alone in her desire to ensure her parents are treated with the dignity and respect they deserve.

So when Canadian companies mistreat their workers, many of who are parents, whether here or abroad, they must be held accountable for their actions. When Canadian charities and nonprofits hold their own institutional interests above the interests of vulnerable people, they too must be held accountable.

The Canadian Auto Workers (CAW) was formed when a diligent few went up against the status quo in their own labour movement. They took a position different from their colleagues and friends. That's not an easy choice. You know this if you've ever had to make it yourself.

Yet, it is necessary.

The Canadian Auto Workers union has gone on to be the most successful labour union in Canada. In a funny twist of fate, the fisherman of Newfoundland and Labrador joined the CAW, as did Canadian air traffic controllers. The former prompted the response "autoworkers" when a Newfoundland fisherman's union official was asked to name the appropriate term to denote people who fish for a living.

So today and this week, think about a worker you love or one who loves you.

XO

Chapter 2

Farley Mowat and his Love Affair with the “Noble Savage”

Originally published on May 14, 2014

That Farley Mowat’s death and a beached whale in Newfoundland made national headlines at the same time last week caused Your Working Girl to sit up and take notice.

She admits to being in a bit of a mood lately.

Living in a city governed by a petulant junkie mayor, watching the most progressive provincial budget in ages go down the drain because the “people’s party” just can’t bring themselves to support it, observing the federal government peddling the blackest of irony with its “Fair Elections” Act and bearing witness to the apparent intervention-free kidnapping of more than 300 Nigerian teenage girls makes her want to turn her face to the wall.

But the coincidence of the death Farley Mowat, one of Canada’s most celebrated writers, and the story of a huge and deceased blue whale that had washed up on the beach at Trout River (and was threatening to explode, as sometimes happens with whales) broke through the ambient noise simply because of its symmetry.

Indeed, it was the treatment of a beached whale that turned this beloved Canadian writer against the ‘noble savages’ of Burgeo, Newfoundland—the savages he once exalted—and drove him from its shores forever. Your Working Girl remembers hearing the stories as a child—there was this mainlander, a famous one, who went to live with the people on the south coast. Then he wrote a book about them saying how bad they were, calling them savages – calling *us* savages.

Your Working Girl realizes now in her well-examined life that commentary such as Mowat’s, although not solely Mowat’s, contributed to the well-polished chip that crawls up on her shoulder every now and then. It’s the reason she’s ready to put up her dukes when she perceives anyone



turning up their noses at, not only Newfoundlanders, but at anyone who may not have had the benefit of an upbringing which included the knowledge that Brie cheese is served at room temperature.

For a time, though, it was a love story.

Mowat and his wife, Claire, arrived in Burgeo, a remote fishing community more than 300 km southwest of Port aux Basques, in 1962 seeking an escape from what he called the “bitch goddess of Progress.”

No fear of Progress in Burgeo in 1962, “bitch goddess” or otherwise.

Diesel-powered electricity had just arrived that year. Water and sewer were still years away, a process that wasn’t complete until 1980. There were no roads only coastal boats to serve the community.

Yet Burgeo had had its experiences with occasional celebrity guests. In 1520, the Portuguese explorer Joaz Fagundez first discovered the Burgeo Archipelago. In 1583, Sir Humphrey Gilbert lost one of his ships just after it passed through. In 1796, Captain James Cook witnessed an eclipse of the sun as he was, sensibly, mapping the area. At the time of Farley Mowat’s arrival, in 1962, the population was roughly 1,500.

The people of Burgeo, he wrote with love’s first glow, had “a remarkable tolerance for other human beings, together with qualities of generosity towards one another and towards strangers in their midst which had surpassed anything I’d ever known before except, perhaps, among the Eskimos.”

“They are an Antean people, adamantine, indomitable and profoundly certain of themselves ... among the last inhabitants of this planet who still appear to possess the answer to that nagging question ‘who am I.’”

Through their years in Burgeo, the Mowats engaged in community life.

The first road link appeared in Burgeo when the Mowats were residents. According to *The History of Burgeo* by Dion Dicks, it came in the form of a bridge to Small Island in 1967 because of “a request [made] by a famous writer to the Premier of the province at the time, Joey Smallwood. The writer was Farley Mowat.

Mowat caused a stir in other ways too. According to Newfoundland writer, Harold Horwood, Mowat alarmed local fisherman when he paraded around wearing nothing but boots.

But, as with all great infatuations or, perhaps, the inevitable result of parading around wearing nothing but your boots, the bloom began to fall from the rose.

The History of Burgeo indicates that in 1967:

“Dr. Mike and Ann Calder and Mr. Farley and Claire Mowat were all on the old library board along with Jauanita Stone, Harriet Cossar, and Ephriam Matthews. The Mowats walked off the board when a decision on the design for the new library was made. Mr. Mowat submitted a design for the new library that was much the same design as the old library. Dr. Ann Calder submitted a design that was chosen and is the design of the current library. Mr. Mowat did not like the fact that his design was not chosen and left the board. The first library was replaced with the new one because it was far too small and was in disrepair. It was about 1/3 of the size of the current library and it was only one room.”

Martina Seifert writes in her book that “after living in outport reality for a while ... [Mowat’s] hymns changed into a lament for the vanishing outport culture. Calling the noble characteristics ascribed to Newfoundlanders

“an illusion,” Mowat concluded that he had failed to “glimpse the heart of darkness beating black within the present hour.”

Then the relationship was over. Finished.

“Mowat’s love affair with the hardy people of Newfoundland, whom he had once described as the “last primordial human beings left in our part of the world,” shattered after the primordial instincts of some fisherman took over when killing a trapped whale in a tidal pond near Burgeo,” Seifert writes.

There are versions of what happened to the whale in Burgeo in 1967, but the last word is Mowat’s best-selling novel, *A Whale for the Killing*. Casting himself in the role of savior and his neighbours in the role of barbarians, Goodreads describes the book as a “plea for the end of commercial hunting of the whale [that] blends all the tension of the life-and-death struggle for one animal’s survival with the drama of man’s wanton destruction of life-bearing creatures and the environment itself.”

Martina Seifert responds by quoting Newfoundland professor, Patrick O’Flaherty.

“Looking at Mowat’s presumptive posture ... one is almost inclined to agree with Patrick O’Flaherty’s biting remarks that this author seems to travel the world looking for an ‘image of himself as a hairy primitive combatting mechanization and technology, and that all of [his] books are ultimately about himself as he cannot seem to get beyond the pleasures of his own uniqueness.’”

An excerpt from *The History of Burgeo* by Dion Dicks of Burgeo speaks more plainly:

The writer ... Farley Mowat wrote several pieces during his stay at Burgeo about the people and the land. One such piece did not please the citizens of the community. A Whale for the Killing was a story that Mowat published after a few of the residents of Burgeo killed a whale that was trapped in a gut near the town. The citizens of Burgeo were extremely angry over this unwelcomed publicity and Farley Mowat felt it would be best if he left Burgeo, so he did.”

Chapter 3

20,000 songs in her pocket



Bruce Springsteen and Patti Scialfa on the Tunnel of Love Tour during the summer of 1986.

Originally published August 23, 2013

Your Working Girl is going on holiday (hurrah) and has been spending the better part of this week thinking about what music she'd like to take with her. That set her off thinking about the magic of being able to even consider taking her music with her. If only for the iPod alone, Steve Jobs should probably be beatified. And Your Working Girl is more surprised than anyone about how it all panned out.

To tell you the truth, she can was a late adapter to the CD. It took Bruce Springsteen's *Tunnel of Love* album released in 1987 to make her to give up the vinyl ghost and buy a CD player. She had to. Sam's was selling the CD for \$16.99 and the vinyl "commemorative" album for \$45.

She bought the CD for \$16.99 and hotfooted it up the street to buy a CD player for \$99.99. A bag in each hand, she went home and listened to *Tunnel of Love* like she did any record – from beginning to end, again and again.

And while Your Working Girl missed having to turn over the album at the mid point (How was one expected to have a favourite side?), she loved that album the same as she loved every Springsteen album—a lot.

Your Working Girl particularly remembers the scorching video of Springsteen singing *Tougher than the Rest*, one of the albums singles with his then back-up singer Patti Scialfa. They stared each other down as if to say I'm daring you as they performed one of the most hardscrabble love songs of all time. No guessing necessary why Springsteen and his first wife, Julianne Philips, announced their separation during that tour. Bruce was not going to live out the rocker, Hollywood starlet trope. He was going home with a Jersey Girl.

Your Working Girl took a look at the *Tougher than the Rest* video for the first time in a long time last night, and discovered it is still one of her favourites. If you are in love, out of love or haven't seen love in a long time that you're not sure if you'd recognize it if you did see it, then this song is your song. Believe it.

But what makes *Tougher than the Rest* such a great song is the rest of the album. It wasn't just a love song. It lived alongside *Brilliant Disguise*, a visceral break-up song about a marriage soul destroying on the rocks: *So tell me what I see when I look in your eyes/Is that you baby or just a brilliant disguise*.

Or the song *Spare Parts* whose romantic opening line is *Bobby didn't pull out, Bobby stayed in/Janey got pregnant, wasn't that a sin*. It was about a teenage girl who got pregnant and her boyfriend Bobby who skipped out. It continued:

As he [her son] lay sleeping in her bed Janey took a look around at everything/Went to a drawer in her bureau and got out her old engagement ring/Took out her wedding dress tied that ring up in it's sash/Went straight down to the pawn shop man and walked out with some good/Cold cash

In the context of the album, *Tougher than the Rest* was love song that declares love to be unglamorous, tough and full of hard bargaining, but worth putting yourself out there for anyway:

Some girls they want a handsome Dan or a good looking Joe/Some girls want a sweet talking Romeo/Well around here baby/You learn you get what you can get/So if you're rough enough for love/Honey I'm tougher than the rest.

Your Working Girl can dig up her feelings about that song like it was yesterday. It ended up not mattering to Your Working Girl that it came on a CD or vinyl. It was an orchestrated, visceral and sustaining experience either way.

So Your Working went blissfully along, buying and playing CDs for 14 years. She even started appreciating how little room they took up compared to albums.

Then ka-boom.

Steve Jobs launched the iPod in 2001 with the declaration that you could put 1000 songs in your pocket.

Forget the record distribution companies (who stubbornly refused to acknowledge the reality of this new technology), album covers, jewel cases and liner notes. Forget spending weeks deciding on your next album purchase. Buy a song for 99¢, load it onto your computer and then copy it onto a storage device that slid smoothly, but with satisfying heft, into your jean's pocket. Also forget milk carton containers for album storage or tallboy IKEA CD towers.

No thanks. Don't need those anymore either. And while we're at it, forget the album. Why do we need to buy the album? Just download the good songs and ignore the filler.

Your Working Girl is guilty on all counts. Despite her love affair with the album, she dropped it like the hottest of potatoes in favour of a shiny new iPod as soon as it hit the stores.

She'll tell you she's got her reasons.

Like the fact that prior to the iPod, she was fond of the mixed tape, compilations friends made for each other with themes like *Sunday Afternoon*, *Tunes to Study By* or the promising, *Night Music*. John Cusak in *High Fidelity* was Your Working Girl's kind of guy. He loved the mixed tape. She loved the mixed tape.

And what's an iPod if not mixed tape heaven. It's just not called a mixed tape. It's called a Playlist. And what used to take an evening of sitting down with your CDs or records and loading each one up to capture a song could now be done in a few minutes sitting in front of your computer. And burn it so a CD for your buddy. What's not to love, right?

So after she uploaded her CDs into her iTunes and stored the CDs away in a box, she started buying her music 99¢ at a time. She bought songs, not albums. And the hits, as hits do, just kept on coming. And they haven't stopped.

A few months ago, she downloaded some Black Keys, three great songs from the *El Camino* album – *Lonely Boy*, *Gold on the Ceiling* and *Little Black Submarines*. Take a look at the videos on YouTube if you want to see how great these songs are.

But now, Your Working Girl is feeling bad. She feels like she's missing out. If these three songs by the Black Keys for example are so great, imagine the album—one song playing after the other, in order. She's thinking now she should have bought the whole album. And that maybe she'll start buying albums again instead of just songs.

Over the next few weeks, Your Working Girl will be visiting a few cities in Europe and aiming to spend time being your non-Working Girl on a beach in Greece. So believe her, Gentle Reader, when she tells you she's grateful to be able to take 20,000 songs in her pocket. But maybe she'll sort her playlists into albums. And listen to them too.

That's what holidays are for, right?

Happy rest of August. See you in September.

Chapter 4

Happy Canada Day. Condolences on Memorial Day.



A re-furbished War Memorial in Portugal Cove, Newfoundland.

Originally published on July 1, 2015

It will not come as a surprise to anyone who sees and hears TV or radio that the island of Newfoundland, and a chunk of Labrador, is in a time zone of its own — Newfoundland Standard Time. The island is three and a half hours from Coordinated Universal Time (CTU) or what used to be called Greenwich Mean Time. That means time is a half an hour earlier on the rock, and only one example of how things are a bit different in the land of this writer's birth.

Sometimes things in Newfoundland are also the opposite of what they seem and people say the opposite of what they mean.

So if someone said, "sure, Billy Peevie, he wouldn't drink a thimble full," it actually means that Billy Peevie would indeed drink a thimble full and, most likely, the whole bottle if the top were left off.

Every Canada Day another, more poignant, difference emerges. And no matter how many red maple leaves I see flying around me, I can never shake the feelings of mourning and loss on this day.

On July 1, 1916 the Newfoundland Regiment was nearly wiped out at the Battle of the Somme – 90% of the 800 men in the 1st Newfoundland Regiment were wounded or killed. The battle lasted less than half an hour for the Newfoundlanders. The total Allied casualties on the first day of the battle were 57,470 of which 19,240 were fatal.

July 1. Memorial Day. Every year.

In the Newfoundland of this writer's childhood, there was no joyful celebration.

It was a day when her dear father dug out his World War II medals, put on a blue blazer and joined his friends from the Legion — war veterans. They marched or shuffled, depending on their age, up and down the hills of Portugal Cove with rifles on their shoulders on the way to the war memorial, a cleared out little space up the hill in the cove.

The War Memorial is a landmark.

"He lives up by the War Memorial."

"The car ran out of gas by the War Memorial."

"I saw them holding hands up by the War Memorial."

The name Ralph Picco is on the memorial. He was lost at sea when his ship, the *S.S. Empire Bison*, while under the command of the British Ministry of War Transport, was torpedoed and sunk by U-boat 124 on November 1 1940. He also fought in World War I, but came home from that excursion. He was my father's father. His youngest child, Mary, who was just a baby when he drowned, never knew him at all.

Every July 1st, my sister or I had the job of worming our way through the assembled crowd to lay a wreath at the foot of the war memorial. The carnations, mums and daisies poked out of a mushy circle of moss wrapped in green plastic, squishy and heavy. I remember heaving it up to the piece of stone and laying it there. Then, head down, I'd push my way back through the crowd to take up my post next to Mom and reflect on the idea that I wouldn't exist if my father had died in the war.

Memorial Day was commemorated in Newfoundland from the First World War on, well before it joined Canada in 1949. The rest of Canada celebrated Dominion Day.

In 1982, Dominion Day was re-Christened Canada Day and the serious fireworks and celebrations that are now universally held across the country, and sponsored by all levels of government, began to take hold.

One year, I spent Canada Day on Parliament Hill in Ottawa and have never seen such fire works lighting the sky against a backdrop of the historical Parliament buildings. Another Canada Day was spent driving through Northern Ontario, spellbound by the lakes, trees and winding path of the Trans-Canada Highway. Yet another in downtown Toronto sitting on the front step with my children and a bowl of popcorn, waving little Canadian flags along with the neighbours, the majority of whom were not born in this country.

This writer loves the natural beauty and potential of our country, and every day feels grateful for having won the lucky draw of fate to have been born here.

Yet I also feel the pull of a place and time in Newfoundland.

Like Mole in *The Wind in the Willows* who, when he gets a scent of his former home, feels an indescribable longing for a place where he feels a familiar and shared history. My longing this Canada Day/Memorial Day is

to be with those who share the part of my DNA that is rooted in the remembrance of young men and women who died in a horrible war so long ago.

My heart breaks at the memory of my father, along with the other men wearing their musty Legion jackets, carrying rifles on their soldiers and shuffling around Portugal Cove, and little girls laying wreaths to grandfathers they've never met.

The one solace is the idea that these men must surely rest a little easier, take a little comfort and maybe even smile a little smile to know their terrible sacrifice has helped make our lives so much easier than theirs. *Surely they would feel that, wouldn't they?*

May they rest in eternal peace and may we, in our words *and* deeds, show their same selfless love.

Because however you mark this day, whether Canada Day or Memorial Day or both, we have to know that we didn't get here by ourselves.

Our entire generation and everyone that has come since is hoisted up on the shoulders of cooks, captains, mess hands and able seaman. We owe them our unrelenting gratitude and love, this day and everyday.



*My children in front of the
Portugal Cove War Memorial in
1994.*

Chapter 5

They Are Trying To Kill My Boy



Mina Justice with a screen shot of her conversation with her son, Eddie, as he lay trapped in the bathroom at Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Florida.

Originally published June 19, 2016

It's been seven days since a man armed with military-styled weaponry walked into a gay club in Orlando and open fired, killing 49 people and wounding dozens more. But I just haven't been able to move on. My son is a young gay man and I admit to a certain empathetic vulnerability.

News reports cover killings like this in great detail, and there's one detail that's shot like an arrow into my heart and I can't pull it out.

It's the story of Mina Justice hunched over her phone texting with her son, Eddie, who is trapped in the nightclub bathroom with the gunman.

Eddie texted Mina when things start going badly. The fact that he only gets into the details of his situation after telling her he loves her affects me.

At 2:05 am, he texts, "Mommy, I love you" and "In club they shooting"

Mina is wide-awake now. At 2:07, she immediately texts him back with the question uppermost on her mind.

"U ok."

"Trapp in bathroom," comes the urgent reply.

She's still trying to figure it out and has to get the detailed information from him. "What club," she texts.

And then, "for 44 minutes, she sat in the dark, staring at her phone, watching the attack unfold in increasingly terrified texts from her son," according to the Washington Post.

"Call police," he texts.

"Calling them now," she replies.

"Call them mommy. Now," he says.

"Calling them now," she replies. "U still there?"

"Answer your phone."

"Call me."

"Call me," she begs him.

It's no good. She receives his last text.

"Hes coming"

"Im going to die"

And Eddie Justice did die that morning as he was texting his mother the details of his entrapment.

My children are among my very few text buddies. My son and I text. And we both agreed in event of a horror like Mina and Eddie experienced, we'd likely be texting.

Texting my children feels like I'm holding a fishing line, an invisible, infinite reel of catgut that you can cast out as far as forever and reel in whatever is on the other end. It's a stand-in for the long obsolete umbilical cord and the possibility of pumping life force through cyberspace.

And I think I can feel Mina experiencing that in the wee hours of last Sunday morning.

Keep texting, she's thinking. Get him on the phone. That will keep him safe. She couldn't, of course. Her anguish, I know, must be great. And I'm so sorry her Eddie is gone.

Rearing a gay child, and I speak only from my own limited personal experience, didn't make me look at my child any differently. My son is, after all, the one with the beautiful eyes and wide smile, the one with the sense of humour I totally get, the one with a loving heart and a clever mind.

Having a child who is a gay didn't change my view of my child so much as it made me look at other people differently.

My son went to an alternative high school, one created for LGBTQ youth. When his father and I made an appointment at the school to talk about him becoming a student there, the teacher told us that in the more than 20 years of its operation, it was the first time both parents of a child had ever come into the school.

During the years of my son being a student at that school, my home became a way station for his classmates. My dinner table expanded with two, three, four or five children almost every weeknight, who replied with an enthusiastic “Yes, if that’s okay!” when I called out,

“Can you guys stay for dinner?”

Permission calls were rarely necessary.

Potential suitors of my son had to ideally undergo parental vetting. And in addition to the usual suitor criteria of needing to be able to string a sentence or two together and being able to look you straight in the eye, it was important for my son’s father and I to know if the boy was out, if he was happy with his sexuality and if his parents were onside.

Because an answer of “no” to any one of those questions meant that our son might be exposed to a negative environment that could range from shame to hate. In the fashion of 21st century parenting, we wanted to create a “bubble of safety” around both our children.

Homophobia, like chicken pox, had to be kept at a safe distance.

My son is an adult now and there’s no safe distance anymore.

It’s one thing for a mad gunman in a gun-crazed culture, where even little children are fair game, to shoot up a nightclub. It is something else entirely when members of the Baptist faith, such as Pastor Roger Jimenez from Verity Baptist Church in Sacramento say that “Christians shouldn’t be mourning the death of 50 sodomites” and that “the tragedy is that more of them didn’t die.”



I’m kind of upset that he didn’t finish the job!” preaches Jimenez.

Furthermore, as part of a sermon the church posted on its website under the title “The Christian response to the Orlando murders,” Christ’s representative on earth says:

“I wish the government would round them all up, put them against a firing wall, put a firing squad in front of them and blow their brains out.”

The video has been taken down because it was seen to have violated YouTube’s hate speech policy.

The idea that anyone has a hate on for your child is an anathema for most mothers. And the biological imperative makes me want to claw the face off Roger Jimenez from Verity Baptist Church in Sacramento.

But we’re looking for ways forward today.

The hope I see—and I understand that hope is a privilege people not in the direct line of fire can enjoy—is in the power of the LGBTQ movement.

It's a mighty chorus that already has a rejoinder to death and hate.

When AIDS was killing gay people by the thousands, they took their cause to the media, the government, and to rich and famous people who could fund their efforts. They took to the *streets* to *demand* medical treatment and respect. And they continue to do that work today.

The LGBTQ movement's response to hate has been to hold PRIDE marches to celebrate their lives.

My son's life, and the lives of other mothers' adult sons, daughters or wherever their children fall on the gender spectrum, has passed beyond what we, as mothers, can influence.

We now have to turn the issue of our LGBTQ children's safety over to people in the LGBTQ movement, with the request that you please continue the fight to wherever it takes you, to raise the alarm whenever it needs to be raised, to say what needs to be said and continue to put love before hate.

And we will be here—I will be here—to support you in that work, with all the pride and love I can muster.

Politics

The themes emerging from the political blogs Your Working Girl has published over the last three years include commentary on the racist and grudge issues gaining more strength in electoral politics. The idea of politics as the art of the possible is out of vogue; replaced by factions independently fueled by grievance. The recent U.S. and Canadian election campaigns were demonstrations of both.

And Lynton Crosby, who is profiled as a dark arts political strategist, acts as a stand-in for many such strategists at work all over the world today.

Then there's the essay "If 1,000 monkeys typed for 100 years, one would pen Othello" that explores the current state of polling as it tries to grasp demographic changes and how citizens engage with media and technology and which, arguably, is not doing a very good job.

Chapter 1

Ten Things Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders Have In Common



Originally published July 31, 2016

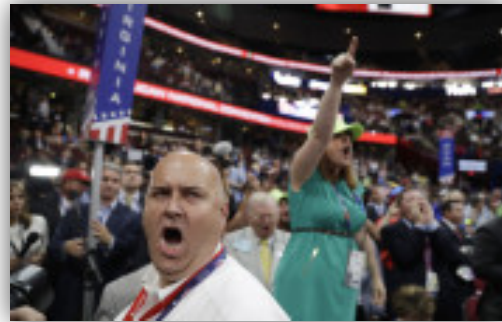
Looking back over the last two weeks of political conventioning, and having watched both the Republican and Democratic conventions pretty well gavel-to-gavel, one of my takeaways is that, despite the wide divide in some policy areas, the number of similarities between Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders is quite marked. And, judging by the language and the issues some of Bernie Sanders' delegates chose to trumpet, many would have been more in their element at the Republican National Convention. It is no surprise then that the Bernie or Bust holdouts don't fear Donald Trump or that some will vote for him. In some ways, he will feel as comfortable as an old pair of slippers.

The Match List

1. Both are white men born in the 1940s.
2. Both men are party "outsiders." Neither is a longtime card-carrying Republican or Democrat. *PolitiFact* reported that Sanders tantalizingly cut himself off in mid-sentence, when he declared his candidacy. He said was running as an independent who is going to be working with the—. In November, Sanders did announce he was full-fledged Democrat. In September CNN reported that

Donald Trump had to sign a loyalty pledge to “calm the nerves” of party brass that he would stick by the party if he lost.

3. Both Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders garnered support by claiming the “system is rigged.”
4. Both men are virulently anti-trade. CNN reports on the similarities as early as August 2015. The supporters of both men chose the Trans Pacific Pact (TPP) as the crucible for their most potent anti-trade stances, although anti-NAFTA sentiment also featured in both campaigns.
5. Both men led virtually identical attacks against Hillary Clinton. Trump with #CrookedHillary and Sanders’ repeated accusations that Clinton was “corrupt” “establishment” and “unqualified” formed an astonishing pile on against one woman that rained down day-after-day and culminated at both conventions. In addition to the “Lock Her Up!” chant that was debuted by raucous delegates at the Republican convention, other choice RNC Clinton slogans included *Trump That Bitch*, *KFC Hillary Special: 2 Fat Thighs, 2 Small Breasts, Left Wing*, and *Life’s A Bitch — Don’t Vote For One*.



Supporter for Sen. Bernie Sanders reacts during the first day of the Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia (AP Photo/John Locher)

And according to The Daily Beast, over at the Democratic Convention the following week, anti-Hillary, pro-Bernie protesters frequently chanted “Fuck Hillary, Fuck Trump!” “Lock Her Up!” and sported T-shirts reading “Hillary for Prison.”

6. The rhetoric of both men has mined seams of deep-seated anger and resentment, and inflamed supporters to heights that extend well beyond what could be called reasonable or factual. One Sanders’ supporter quoted by *Time* magazine said, “He sees the choice between Clinton and Trump as “four years of a buffoon vs. eight years of a genocidal warmonger.”
7. Neither leader takes responsibility for the anger their campaigns have stirred up. “I don’t think we’ve ever had control over our supporters nor have we ever tried,” Jane Sanders said in an NBC News interview on July 25, 2016. In March 2016 Trump said, “There’s no violence. It’s a media fabrication.”



Trump supporters at the Republican National Convention 2016.

8. Neither Donald Trump nor Bernie Sanders have had to incorporate ethno-racial inclusivity into their worldviews to become the public figures they are today. According to the 2010 U.S. census, Sanders’ state of Vermont had a population of 625,741. The number of people identifying themselves as Black in Vermont equaled 6,277 (1.0% of the population). The number of people identifying themselves as Hispanic equaled 9,208 (1.5% of the population). Compare that to the state of New York, which during her Senate career Hillary Clinton represented with one other U.S. senator, Chuck Schumer. In 2010, New York had population of 19.4 million—3,081,116 (15.8%) of the population identified themselves as Black and 3,410,543 (17.6%) of the population identified themselves as Hispanic. Like Trump, who never held political positions on these issues, Sanders did not, as representative of Vermont, have to

incorporate the reality of ethno-racial circumstance or division in his thinking or politics in order to be successful. He had no accountability to those demographics and his current prognostications on the issues are entirely theoretical.

9. The supporter base of both the Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders campaigns is largely made up of white voters. Trump, because of his white nationalist bent, appeals to disaffected and racist white voters. Bernie Sanders, by virtue of the state he represents, has never had to involve himself in issues of race (see #8) and was thus widely unknown among those demographics.
10. Neither man has gotten to where they are today by playing well with others. Bernie Sanders has served in Congress and Senate for 25 years as an independent, choosing when he wanted to caucus with the Democrats and when he didn't. He has been able to craft a 40-year political career without the benefit of compromise, an extraordinary feat in politics, a theatre that is, by definition, about compromise. It is a fact that goes a long way to explaining the compromise-phobic culture of some of his delegates. Donald Trump, as an egotistical billionaire, has always had the financial power not to have to compromise, at least publicly. Both candidates appear to hold the notion of compromise in disdain. Yet, most people have to compromise on some thing, some day.

I think it fair to say that both men have contributed to the level of anger and shocking depravity we are witnessing on the U.S. campaign trail today. And it is largely because the only party either one of these two men has ever been motivated to show up at is their own.

Chapter 2

He Shall Not Be Moved

Originally published June 13, 2016

The epithets flying around U.S. politics these days are startlingly injurious.

“War-monger.”

“Repugnant.”

“Legal and political nightmare.”

“Pathetic.”

And that’s got nothing to do with Donald Trump. These are the comments directed towards Hillary Clinton by feminists with a so-called “class analysis.”



Senator Bernie Sanders speaks at a rally on March 21, 2016 in Salt Lake City, Utah (AP Photo/John Locher)

Donald Trump has made his supporters a bunch of foul-mouthed thugs who don’t need any attachment to reality to spout off.

Bernie Saunders has done the same thing.

Similar in style to Trump supporters, Bernie’s people are happily re-writing history to suit their own sense of grievance. And Bernie is all too happy to let them have a go at it.

Bernie supporters have now graduated to calling anyone who supports Hilary Clinton, people such as Elizabeth Warren and Gloria Steinem, “outmoded,” “a disappointment,” or the aforementioned, “so lacking in class analysis.”

To date, 15,729,913 people voting in the Democratic primary have voted for Hilary Clinton and 12,009,562 people voting in the Democratic primary have voted for Bernie Sanders. The difference is a spread of 3.72 million, which has translated into the number of committed delegates Hilary Clinton needs to win the nomination.

Hilary Clinton is the nominee because more Democrats voted for her.

"California was stolen from Bernie."

Really?

Clinton won by over 423,000 votes in California.

In the 2008 Democratic primary, by contrast, the one in which Hilary Clinton conceded to Barack Obama, 18,857,501 (48%) people voted for her as opposed to the 17,584,692 (47.3%) people who voted for Barack Obama. But the delegate count didn't go Hilary Clinton's way. Obama had captured 2,286 of the delegates to Clinton's 1,973.

And what did Hilary Clinton do?

She swallowed what must have been a bitter political pill and *conceded* the nomination to Barack Obama. She did what women often do. She played nice. *And* she went on to fight for Barack Obama in the general election. Obama understands just what Hilary Clinton's support meant to him and now he's doing the right thing by her.



WARREN, MI – MARCH 05: Democratic presidential candidate Senator Bernie Sanders speaks to guests during a rally at Macomb Community College on March 5, 2016 in Warren, Michigan. (Photo by Scott Olson/Getty Images)

"The worse thing is that [Clinton] will have her finger on that button," says a Bernie Sanders' supporter.

Really? That's an accurate deduction you think you can make about Hilary Clinton? It sounds more like crazy talk.

Clinton's current lead in an average of compiled national polls is 14.4 percentage points, the widest it has been since mid-February, says FiveThirtyEight.

And what does Bernie Sanders do? He refuses to acknowledge Hilary Clinton. He refuses to concede and by the looks of it now, he will try to limp into the Convention with his campaign team and compromise-phobic delegates with the goal of doing heaven knows what. He calls for universal health care, a portfolio not exactly ignored by the previous administration. And we think Bernie Sanders will have better luck with Congress?

He also supports the NRA, although the campaign hasn't made such a big deal about that.

What Bernie Sanders' supporters are saying tells you a lot about Bernie Sanders.

They are vitriolically opposed to Hilary Clinton. "I *hate* Hilary Clinton."

They refuse to acknowledge this part of the election—the primary part—is over.

They question the legitimacy of the vote.

They denigrate Clinton's historical championing of women's rights.

They denigrate Hilary Clinton personally.

They demonize her.

They belittle her experience.

They blame her for her husband's flaws, going so far as to blame her for his behaviour.

They say she's not a "real" feminist.

They offer value-like alternatives iterated in short phrases. "Feel the Bern?"

And why do Bernie Sanders' supporters say all that. Because that's what Bernie Sanders says. The same reason Donald Trump supporters say the things they do. Because that's what leaders do. They lead the way.

Bernie Sanders opted to play the game he is in. No one forced him to get into the primary race. Presumably, he knew the rules going in. The fact that he's now refusing to play by them is indicative of the shaky moral ground he, and his supporters, continue to claim.

Old Bern has had a taste of real power. Now, he can't get himself off the drip.

Chapter 3

Mean Girls – How Opposition Politicians Love to Attack Sophie Gregoire Trudeau

Originally published on May 18, 2016

Sophie Gregoire Trudeau made the mistake of telling Quebec newspaper, *Le Soleil*, last week that she felt overwhelmed by the requests being made of her as the prime minister's wife and thought she needed help to meet the demands.

Every woman in Canada can take a lesson from the reaction provoked by her confession. Best to keep your pie hole shut. Because the knives will come out quicker than you can say the word hypocrite.



Niki Ashton, NDP MP, Churchill—Keewatinook Aski

Niki Ashton, NDP MP for Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, Manitoba, population 85,148, took out the long blade.

"The kind of statements we heard from the prime minister's wife, you know, speak to that disconnect with the reality that Canadian women face. So if we're going ... to talk about women feeling overwhelmed, let's talk about everyday Canadian women feeling overwhelmed."

Candace Bergen, CPC MP from Portage-Lisgar, Manitoba, population 91,019, and one of the more rabid dogs in the former Harper government, bared her well-used teeth, saying, as if to a four-year-old, that being in the family of the prime minister was a big job that comes with sacrifices.

"It really is the hypocrisy of Mr. Trudeau at this point always wanting more, always wanting more to do self-promotion, to do vanity trips, to do the things that he likes to do," Bergen said. "I think that's where the challenge is and where a lot of Canadians would question more."

So Sophie Gregoire-Trudeau, mother of three small children, supporter of the empowerment of girls for many years before her political life, who had a successful career that she put on hold to help her husband with his, got the jagged knife, not in the back but in a full frontal from two lady politicians.



Candace Bergen, CPC MP, Portage-Lisgar

Imagine the NDP and CPC communications brain trust smirking with satisfaction like Death Eaters around Lucius Malfoy's dining room table, political chops drooling in anticipation of a feast when they heard about Sophie Gregoire-Trudeau's admission. She walked right into that one. How clever we are! It's going to be a

good day. We can score a talking point—on the back of a woman. How clever we are! Our constituency loves to hate her. She can be the red meat we use to feed the base. How clever we are!

And two women—Niki Ashton and Candace Bergen-- were only happy to execute the day's media strategy delighted to ridicule another woman for the godawful gumption to say she felt she needed help. Elitist. Out of touch. Not willing to *sacrifice*. She personifies self-promotion.

They themselves, of course, have five, six or more Parliamentary and constituency staff to look after the interests of their Manitoba ridings, where I'm sure they are continually fending off requests to participate in all manners civic life and represent the good people of Churchill—Keewatinook Aski and Portage-Lisgar on the national and international stage.



Sophie Grégoire-Trudeau attended a "spousal program" with Michelle Obama in honour of girls' education around the world, an issue that is close to Grégoire-Trudeau's heart. (CLIFF OWEN/TORONTO STAR)

And what's the overarching message to women by the personal attack on Gregoire Trudeau? Don't complain, don't ask for help and keep it zipped. Talking about your needs is worthy of derision.

Ironically, it was left up to CBC's, Neil MacDonald, the unlikely Joan of Arc of the story, to defend Sophie Gregoire-Trudeau as he did in a column on May 14, 2016, *The hacking of tall poppy Sophie Grégoire Trudeau*. This, after he wrote a column in October, *Let's give Margaret Trudeau the respect she deserves*, apologizing in a moving and personal way for the way he and many other journalists wrote about Sophie Gregoire-Trudeau's mother-in-law when she was the wife of Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau.

There were more than 6,000 comments responding to MacDonald's column. The vast majority were ugly and reveal an underlying current of misogyny in this country that you don't have to scratch too hard to get at. Here's a sampling of what people said:

"This attention was not thrust upon Sophie. She chose to put herself out there in the limelight from day one."

"She should be given billions of dollars to flutter around, because, after all, she's better than the rest of us?"

"It's not like she is vain and poses for magazines or anything like that."

"What's next on her wish list? Glass slippers, horse drawn carriage? Give me a break."

"Sophie can get over herself and deal with the stress...she knew what she was getting into when she hooked up with the Trudeau's."

So the next time Niki f*cking Ashton wishes us a Happy International Women's Day or Candace Bergen, that foul-mouthed attack dog of the right, says anything about childcare, I might, like, retch, okay?

Because these people are mean people and will say anything to score a political point. They couldn't give two shits about the broader message it sends.

Even if its a message that eats away at the lives and credibility of girls and women. Don't dare ask for "too much."

Chapter 4

The Man Beneath the Veil



Lynton Crosby, Sketch: The Sunday Times, U.K.

Originally published October 4, 2015

Lynton Crosby. Most of us heard his name for the first time in early September.

He is a Lord Voldemort of political professionals, a master of the dark arts who specializes in ripping apart tenuous bonds between neighbours and there, in the vacuum, systematically works the “divide and conquer” algorithm until the big problem of resistance is broken down into bits that can be overcome.

He uses micro-targeting as the tool to get the job done, picking at the body politic until he finds a sore spot, aggravating it until it rises up, red, raw and painful. He usually works this hideous game towards the end of an election campaign, poking, poking, poking for new spots and infecting the existing ones before there is time for the rifts to heal, able to claim victory over his sickened opposition.

“We were fans of Lynton Crosby before many people knew who Lynton Crosby was,” Stephen Harper’s spokesperson, Kory Teneycke, told the *Guardian* in September 2015.

Harper introduced the “old stock” idea into his first debate. It was the call for the conservative base to wake up and gather around, as surely as if their tattooed arms had begun to glow with the Dark Mark. And Harper was ready with the red meat to rile them up and have the medicine that would save their angry souls:

- He stood his ground, even choking up a bit for the cameras, when a little boy’s body washed up on a beach in Turkey, galvanizing the world’s attention on the unprecedented refugee crisis, chastising Chancellor Angela Merkel when she opened Germany’s borders. That refugees are terrorists in disguise was the message.
- He sent Chris Alexander out to play hardball with Rosie Barton on *Power and Politics*. And while we were all thinking *wow, Rosie’s some great interviewer*, it was all part of the script. It didn’t matter if what Alexander said was true. He was living up to the completely false notion that the CBC was gunning for Harper’s Conservatives and has no respect for their supporters. It was time to circle the wagons.
- Harper challenged the *niquab* at the Federal Court of Appeal, creating a division where none existed because he knew this was a sore he could confidently pick at during the election, especially in Quebec.
- He had his lieutenant, Jason Kenney, respond to Calgary Mayor, Nahed Nenshi, who called the election tactics “disgusting” and “dangerous.” Kenney used very specific wording in his tweeted response. Mayor Nenshi and *people like him* were politicizing the issue. And now that his base was paying attention, awoken by the call of “old stock,” they were alert for the message.
- Another lieutenant, Kellie Lietch announced a tip line so people could turn in their neighbours for perceived Barbaric Cultural Practices, a borderline unforgivable curse, as a way to create Stasi-influenced citizen police forces that spy on their neighbours.
- Backbench devotees contribute to the unraveling of social cohesion. At an all candidates debate hosted by B’nai Brith, Joyce Bateman, Conservative MP from the hotly-contested riding of Winnipeg South Centre, read off “a list of names from the Liberal campaign—volunteers, paid staff workers and candidates alike—who had been identified by the Tories as ‘enemies’ of Israel,” according to the debate’s facilitator, Dan Lett. The list included retired lieutenant general, Andrew Leslie, who fought in Afghanistan and is running for the Liberals in Ottawa-Orleans. “But to be fair,” wrote Lett, “Bateman was only doing what she had been told to do. This was not an impetuous act; it was part of a carefully scripted strategy to use Israel as a wedge issue to capture majority support from Canadian Jews.”

In the meantime, the Bloc and Harper’s Conservative’s are picking up ground in Quebec, largely from the NDP, and pollsters expect a four-way split. Many of Ontario’s 905 ridings appear to be up for grabs, as are a chunk of ridings in B.C.

On the broadband, the NDP has started an aggressive radio campaign going after potential Liberal-leaning voters, accusing Trudeau of having bad judgment. Piggy-backing on Conservative ads, the NDP ads end with the tag line, “Justin Trudeau, he just lost my vote” using the same number of syllables and spoken in the same cadence as “Justin Trudeau, he’s just not ready.”

The new Liberal ads are taking aim at Harper himself, barely mention Mulcair and refer to “real change.”

And it doesn’t matter too much what Harper is saying on the broadband. You can be sure the actions of his party are grounded in the micro targeting that’s happening well beneath the veil.

There are 15 more days to Voting Day and so we are likely to see more of Mr. Crosby’s handiwork. But you are going to have to look for it. We’ll need Constant Vigilance, my friends.

Chapter 5

These days, it's tough to keep it light



Green Party Leader Elizabeth May plays the Welcome Back, Kotter theme song on her phone as Transport Minister Lisa Raitt intervenes and tries to persuade May to end her speech at Saturday's press gallery dinner. Photograph By FRED CHARTRAND, The Canadian Press - www.timescolonist.com

Originally published May 11, 2015

Prologue

Elizabeth May's intention in her speech to the Parliamentary Press Gallery dinner on the weekend was to run with some edgy humour. She's totally capable of it. She can be funny and she is smart. Sadly for Ms. May, it came across as all edge and no humour. She seemed tired and emotional. Your Working Girl can empathize with Ms. May. The distaste for what's going on in Ottawa these days is getting deeper and more visceral for many observers. It's hard to find anything about Parliament or its Press Gallery that's funny. On some days—the days Your Working Girl casts her eye on the nation's capital, at any rate—the f-word feels like her only friend.

I

The first time *Your Working Girl* got a standing ovation from a teacher was after she had read a book report out loud to the class in Grade 9. The book was *1984*, a dystopian piece of speculative fiction written by George Orwell in 1949 and not very funny. Of the concepts identified by the book—political parties seeking power for power's sake, the ruling elite being made up of 2% of the population and the omnipresent government surveillance (Big Brother)—it was the idea of doublespeak that had captured her junior high imagination.

The Ministry of Peace handled war. The Ministry of Plenty dealt with poverty, the Ministry of Love administered torture and the Ministry of Truth dealt with propaganda. As far as she remembers, her report focused on the black = white, white = black metaphor because, in her 14-year-old view, it was the doublespeak that allowed all the other indignities to prosper.

To lie is the grand manipulation. To doublespeak is a manipulation of an even grander sort.

This week, she noticed a Canada flag fluttering from the back window of the car in front of her on College Street, probably there because of something to do with hockey.

The benign nature of its two broad red stripes at the sides and a cheerful maple leaf in the middle used to leave her with a sense of being civilized and “tolerant,” one of the good guys on the planet. Sew it on your backpack, man. Who wouldn't want to be perceived as a Canadian? We had peacekeeping, universal health care, multiculturalism, and most Canadians, to their credit, she thought, turned their noses up at the hillbilly jingoism favoured by our neighbours to the south.

But seeing the flag fluttering in the wind the other day gave rise to an entirely different feeling in *Your Working Girl*.

In that moment, the piece of red and white fabric became a brazen symbol of a multitude of lies boiled down to their essence. In her mind, the Canadian flag had actually morphed into the personification of doublespeak. And she hasn't been able to shake the feeling since.

In terms of the specific lies, *Your Working Girl* hardly knows where to begin, but for you, Gentle Reader, she will attempt to order this sorrowful epiphany of hers in the faint hope that, somehow, something can be done to mitigate the treachery.

Canada is a country that works for peace.

1. Canada is currently dropping bombs on Iraq and Syria. Critics say Canada's participation in the Syrian war aids the position of tyrannical Syrian President, Bashar al-Assad, a far cry from “crushing ISIL.” The war has already killed 200,000 people and forced 11 million people from their homes. That is the equivalent of the population of Ontario being on the move. The premise of our involvement in the war is to “keep Canada safe.” (The doublespeak is that it's actually politically advantageous for Harper to keep Canada fearful.)
2. Canada is spending hundred of millions of dollars on its military involvement in the Ukraine and Stephen Harper will truculently denounce Vladimir Putin at any opportunity. The government says that Canada's involvement “is the best way to head off any future conflict with Russia.” Is that for real? That peace between Russia and the Ukraine depends on Canada? Or is it more about the western Ukrainian diaspora vote?
3. In January 2015, the Harper government stuck a \$15 billion deal to sell light armoured vehicles to Saudi Arabia. It is refusing to say if there was any guarantee in the deal, a guarantee required by federal export controls when arms are destined for countries with a “persistent record of serious violations of the human rights of their citizens,” such as Saudi Arabia.

Canada is a country that cares about the environment.

1. The government has threatened seven environmental organizations that it will strip their charitable status and is auditing many more.
2. Canada is falling short of meeting its own targets to cut emissions by 17 per cent from 2005 levels by 2020.
3. Canada is dead last among industrialized nations in a climate change performance index.

Canada is a country that protects human rights.

1. The number of inmates being holed up—and dying—in solitary confinement is skyrocketing. The Ministry of Corrections (Punishment?) says it's "tragic," but plans no change.
2. The Canadian government vindictively broke international conventions regarding child soldiers and still can't get over Alberta Court of Appeal Justice Myra Bielby freeing Omar Khadr on May 7th saying, "our government's priority in these matters is always to make sure—first and foremost—to keep in mind the protection and security of the Canadian population." Refusing help to a child soldier is keeping Canada safe?
3. The Harper Government is dismissing prison ombudsman Howard Sapers. According to the Globe and Mail, "Among a number of reports that have caused the Conservative government discomfort was Sapers' recommendation that Omar Khadr, the former child soldier and Guantanamo detainee, be given a lower security classification in light of his exemplary prison record. His most recent annual report, delivered last October, took the government to task for reducing parole options and freeing unprepared inmates without adequate supervision." Silencing critics is democracy in Canada today. (Black really does equal white.)

There are more examples in each category and Your Working Girl is sure you could add your own. The list is dismally long.

But let's get back to the novel, 1984, where the dystopian world is seen through the eyes of our hero, Winston, who works at the Ministry of Truth (Propaganda) and begins to have misgivings about how his society is working. He meets Julia who works in another department in the Ministry and who also has these thoughts. They fall in love, but are ultimately caught, tortured and betray each other, emphasizing the fruitlessness of opposition.

Throughout history, great literature has had a great knack of reflecting the mood of its time.

"Something is rotten in the state of Denmark," Marcellus says to Horatio in Hamlet. (Not "in Denmark," you'll notice. In "the state" of Denmark.)

"Heaven will direct it," replies Horatio, suggesting it was out of their hands, their opposition fruitless.

The way it looks to this working girl right now is that even if we see "something is rotten in the state," and if we believe opposition to it will be fruitful (two very big ifs in her mind), it will be a tough slog for Canadians to try to undo the damage that's been done by the lying and doublespeak of the last 10 years.

It is not only our infrastructure that's been worn down, the soul of our country has been deliberately starved, serving to divide us and to provide a more fertile garden for the politics of fear. And where is the cure for that?

Chapter 6

It's only rock and roll



Neil Young performing with Pearl Jam at Toronto's Air Canada Centre, September 12, 2011.

Originally published January 26, 2014

For the last 10 days, Neil Young has waged a blistering attack on the Alberta oil sands development. It's a thrashing that's left the Canadian oil industry and the governments that support it sputtering with indignation.

The Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers played the snooty card.

"Mr. Young may represent that rock stars don't need oil, but we would represent that Canadians very much do need oil," said the lobby group's president David Collyer.

Cenovus Energy took umbrage.

"Canadians should be angry about the way oil sands are being portrayed internationally as dirty oil," said CEO Brian Ferguson.

Shell gave us the old film, flam, flummox.

Stephanie Sterling, Shell's VP of Business Development for Heavy Oil said, "Oil sands producers have reduced CO2 intensity by 26% since the 1990s and the carbon capture and storage projects "will store CO2 each year equivalent to removing 175,000 cars from the road."

Huh? said Your Working Girl.

Fact checkers weighed in.

Young is on shaky ground claiming the oil sands projects produce as much carbon dioxide daily as "all the automobiles in Canada," said Andrew Leach, economist at the University of Alberta.

The truth is the oil sands produce *only half* the carbon dioxide as all the automobiles in Canada.

Politicians chimed in.

"Even the lifestyle of a rock star relies, to some degree, on the resources developed by thousands of hard-working Canadians every day," sniped the PMO.

Federal Natural Resources Minister Joe Oliver called Young's remarks insulting. Saskatchewan Premier Brad Wall called them ignorant.

Your Working Girl has three words to say to Mr. Neil Young—bring it on.

For a couple of weeks in January, rock and roll appeared to be back in the game.

Though Your Working Girl doesn't want to get her hopes up, for a moment, amid the fact checking and the spluttering, she thought she heard the sound of eyelids popping open, minds snapping to attention and lips moving to utter a word of protest.

Jimmy Fallon, who proved to be among the world's best fan/mimics, sang a condemnation of New Jersey Governor Chris Christie's actions to the tune of *Born to Run* with the real Springsteen at his side.

In case you've missed US cable news for the past couple of weeks, Chris Christie has been called to account for the accusations that several of his staff purposely shut down three lanes of traffic on the George Washington Bridge for three days. The closure added four or five hours to the commute and prevented emergency vehicles from reaching their destinations. The shutdown was allegedly payback for the Democratic Fort Lee mayor not endorsing the Republican Christie's successful gubernatorial campaign.

Sadly for Christie, he's one of The Boss's biggest fans and has to been to 129 Springsteen shows. Reportedly, he hasn't been able to bring himself to watch the critical clip.

Your Working Girl, herself, re-discovered the joy of *singing* back to the people who've been giving us the high hat for years.

It's emotional. It's basic. It's singing and it's dancing. It's about matters of the heart. It *is* only rock and roll. And for the last couple of weeks, it's only *been* rock and roll that's generated an accounting of the what's going on with the oil sands and sending Chris Christie a message he has not been able to ignore.

Your Working Girl can tell you, Gentle Reader, it's only rock and roll (but she likes it).

And if you'd like to see Pearl Jam with Neil Young doing *Rockin' in the Free World* in Toronto in 2011, pull it up on You Tube. Your Working Girl will be belting this one out all day.

Chapter 7

“If 1,000 monkeys typed for 100 years, one would pen Othello.”

Originally published July 3, 2013

Not 10 minutes ago, Your Working Girl received a phone call at home from one of Canada’s most well known polling companies. You hear this company quoted frequently, making confident pronouncements on the *vox populi*. The call was an automated survey on the issue of healthcare. And it tantalizingly held out the



possibility of winning \$500 in a draw. She pressed 1 to participate. After her language of choice was determined, the first question from the disembodied voice at the other end was “Do you work in the area of advertising, communications or media?”

Your Working Girl does not lie. And the truth of the matter is that no advertising agency or media outlet is paying for her time just now so she pressed 1 for no. No alarm went off and the automated caller continued. (Your Working Girl has people of her acquaintance who, without a pang,

routinely say no to this question when it is patently very *not* true.)

“How important is healthcare to you at the *federal* level?” came the question. Press 1 for not important and 7 for very important.”

The follow up was similar.

“How important is healthcare to you at the *provincial* level? Press 1 for not important and 7 for very important.”

Now as her Gentle Readers know, Your Working Girl feels healthcare is mighty important, whether federal or provincial.

She strongly believes that the money being doled out to the medical-industrial complex is atrocious compared to the paltry pennies dedicated to prevention. She believes that a national school lunch program should be mandatory given the research on how much healthier children are when they eat nutritious meals. She knows that strong measures to end violence against women would dramatically improve the health of hundreds of thousands of women throughout the country. So she pressed a hearty 6 on the importance scale for both questions.

But she's not sure that's the question they were asking.

Perhaps it was more related to wait times for hip replacement or more funding for hospitals or more money for cancer research or higher pay for doctors. Or the belief that as long as you've got your health, you've got everything.

The point is who the heck knows what they were asking?

And how can any meaning be derived from the answers?

At the end of the call, the nice man with the disembodied voice asked Your Working Girl if she would like to "join a new community that is being constituted to gather information on media usage habits."

"The community will help Canadian media companies who broadcast on the TV or radio," the auto-man said, "and you will be entered into a draw to win \$500."

Wow. Cool. Two draws in one day. Your Working Girl pressed 1 for yes.

"If 1,000 monkeys typed for 100 years, one would pen Othello."

This was former pollster, Allen Gregg's, response to the news that a Forum Poll™ correctly predicted a Liberal majority in the May upset election in BC.

Such is the polling industry these days that it makes news when a poll accurately predicts elections.

And such is Allan Gregg's frustration at the industry he helped to form in Canada.

The polling industry can be respected no more. Pollsters were made monkeys of in the Quebec election (pollsters had Jean Charest's Liberal losing their shirts – in reality it was very close). In Alberta, Danielle Smith of the Wild Rose Party was going to be the next premier. (Not even close.) The debacle in BC had the NDP's Adrian Dix ahead by eight points the day before the election. (The NDP was slaughtered.)

The pollster's favoured response to those clunkers?

"They just *pivoted*. The voters *pivoted*."

The fact is that the misleading antics of pollsters are having a terribly negative effect on the entire body politic by holding up a funhouse mirror.

Allen Gregg says "The dirty little secret of the polling business . . . is that our ability to yield results accurately from samples that reflect the total population has probably never been worse in the 30 to 35 years that the discipline has been active in Canada."

Today's polls are seriously skewed in a number of ways:

- To older and rural Canadians who answer the phone
- To people with landlines who (like Your Working Girl) are home at noon.
- To an over reliance on people who respond to surveys; people not unlike (a-hem) Your Working Girl who is now part of a "new community" that will provide Canada's media with their thoughts and perceptions. (And possibly win \$500!)
- Increasing automation eliminates interpretation

But perhaps the biggest skew is the pollster's questions – like the one Your Working Girl was asked today.

Several people she's talked polling with these days understand these new realities, but because of the industry's prior respectability have faith that "they weight the responses to account for that."

The fact is, as Mr. Gregg says, when you're wrong, you're wrong. And perhaps they might want to take a look at that.

Perhaps, when we're thinking about polls, it might be helpful to remember that polling companies don't make their money on political polling. They make it from the hundreds of corporations who want to know the kind of paint we use, the coffee we drink and the cars we drive.

Political polling gives pollsters the profile they need market to their real clients, the clients with money. Go to the websites of any polling company Forum Research, Ekos Research, Angus Reid, Ipsos Inc or Nanos Research to check out who's paying the freight.

Some firms conduct political polls to get in the news. News of the sort that shows Rob Ford's support holding fast, for example. And to be honest, whether they are right or wrong, political polling is what gets these pollster boys on TV. And YWG is afraid they are mostly all boys.

Charity

Having spent 25 years working in the charitable sector, Your Working Girl has a lot to say. That's why she's written a book on the subject, Cap in Hand: How Charities and Failing Canada and the World. The essays that follows turned out to be the beginnings of that book and made apparent the necessity of diving deeper beyond the hazy curtain of doing good.

Chapter 1

The Goodwill Scandal—What the Hell Happened and What it all Means



Heaps of goods were Left Outside The Richmond Street Goodwill After The Closure Of All 16 Toronto-Region Stores Was Announced. Fred Lum/The Globe And Mail

Originally published January 24, 2016

Retail is tough. The margins are narrow. Sales dip in January. Rents in Toronto are high. Donations are not what they used to be. Goodwill faced these problems and more. They tried to make it work, but couldn't. It's hard.

That could have been the tsk-tsk sad story we've been following this week. But it's not. Because what Goodwill did *after* they determined they were in the drink was, from any number of perspectives—management, communications, human resources or common decency—incomprehensible. So it's not sad. It's indefensible.

After spending \$29 million on \$28 million in revenue from grants, donations and sales last year, the Goodwill leadership pulled the plug, walked away and tried to cover their tracks, leaving their marginally employed



Micheal Levitt, Vice Chair

workers and discarded clients locked out, cold and disbelieving. Accountability has taken a holiday at Goodwill and no one is talking.

To guess at whether the finances were well or poorly managed is moot. They were clearly not managed at all. The board has much to answer for, including the question of whether they are just plain ignorant.

Former Board Chair, Michael Eubanks is Senior Vice President at the LCBO and, by all accounts, a capable man. The bio on the website of the Canadian Club Toronto, where he is a board member, boasts of his many accomplishments.

Former Vice Chair, Michael Levitt, is the Executive Director of Humber River Family Health and has had “a successful record in the not-for-profit sector since 2007,” according to his bio on the clinic’s website.

Former Treasurer, Mark Trachuk, is a partner at Osler law firm. His bio on the law firm’s site notes, somewhat ironically in light of recent events, that Mr.

Trachuk “has particular expertise in corporate governance matters, has written and spoken extensively on corporate governance issues, is an experienced public company director, holds the ICD.D designation from the Institute of Corporate Directors and is a Six Sigma Greenbelt (Shulich).”

CEO, Keiko Nakamura, who was fired from the Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC) by Rob Ford in 2011 and hired by Goodwill in 2012, is now, deservedly or not, holding the bag for the entire mess.

Decisions—callous decisions—were made and actions were taken. In addition to individual members of the board each deciding to jump ship in a time of crisis, the organization decided not to speak publicly about events, pulled down their website to impede scrutiny, hired a PR firm to keep a lid on the fiasco and locked up their stores with not so much as a minute’s notice.



Mark Trachuk, Treasurer

Those were all acts of commission. Who made them, and how, are not known.

But it’s the board of directors—the *entire* board of directors—who should be hanging their heads in shame over this injury to civil society. Their behavior, as it stands today, is shocking and cowardly. They owe anyone who is listening; especially the employees and clients of Goodwill, an abject apology, down-on-your-knees repent of their poor oversight.

Goodwill is, of course, not the only charity in Canada being poorly managed by boards made up of so-called leaders of the private and public sector, puffed up from the hubris of “giving back,” with no more comprehension of what’s needed to lift masses of people from poverty or cure other social ills than a tree stump.



Michael Eubanks, Chair

Many charities have lost sight of their missions entirely. They do not judge their success on their progress in ending poverty, curing cancer or whatever it is their mission, but on how much money they raise and how

they can keep expenses down in the hopes of getting a four-star rating from self-appointed charity rankers like Charity Intelligence who had their own charitable status revoked in 2012. It is a shortsighted strategy that entrenches poor management and the resulting poor mandate fulfillment.

Trust in charities is diminishing. The international NGO sector, with morale at its lowest and fundraising costs at their highest, and buffeted by reports like the American Red Cross's Haitian spending scandal exposé earlier this year, has citizens putting their resources into starting their own charities instead of supporting existing ones.

And it's not all about money.

Manipulation by charities is growing. Cancer charities and publicly-funded hospitals—which raise hundreds of millions of dollars a year in donations, despite having socked away hundreds of millions more in investment funds—find new ways to exploit people's intimate fears and make money from onsite donut franchises to fund complex research that holds only notional hope for a relatively few people instead of investing in the prevention programs they know will benefit many more.

The figures for cancer research worldwide are, at once, astounding and unknowable because no one can keep a tally. The U.S National Cancer Institute has received CAD \$35 billion in research funding from Washington over the last five years. A total of CAD \$498 million was invested in cancer research in Canada in 2013. Last year alone, one cancer research charity in the U.K. raised CAD \$1.2 billion.

The Goodwill fiasco—and the damage it has done to vulnerable people—is *one* demonstration of a widespread malaise of disconnection in the nonprofit and charitable sector, a sector that represents more than 8% of Canada's GDP and employs two million people.

Groups receiving public funding and private donations need to step up their game and be held accountable. Not just for their money, but in view of their missions.

And there will be plenty of opportunity in the months and years to come. Because the Goodwill story will not be the last story of poor leadership and disregard in the nonprofit sector—not by a long shot.

Chapter 2

Ten Reasons Why the 15% Charity Overhead Myth Prevents Any Social Change

Originally published August 27, 2015

Ask anyone on the street the one thing they know about what makes a deserving charity and they are likely to say it's the one is spending less on overhead, "like uh, 10 or 15 per cent or something like that."

Canadian charities are getting stuck with the number 15. A "good" charity doesn't spend any more than 15% of its revenue on administration and fundraising. "Bad" charities do.

Left unchallenged, the myth of the 15% means Canadian charities will lead the charge on absolutely nothing—not climate change, a cure for cancer or world hunger. And here are the ten reasons why:



1. **It makes board members stupid.** The cost of overhead is often the only number many members of Boards of Directors care about when they look at financial reports, ignoring numbers that could give them a sense of how effective the charity is at fulfilling its mission.
2. **It makes charities stupid.** Designing financial tools around measuring overhead and administration as priorities means you don't get the reports you need to actually see how you're doing in relation to your mission.
3. **It guarantees mismanagement among charities:** A 15% cap on administration means essential resources for effective management—program evaluation, professional development and evaluation, strategic planning, long-term goal setting, go by the wayside as "administration."
4. **It impedes progress on issues.** When the criteria of a "good" charity are keeping a 15% limit on your administration, what happens to your success in making the world a better place?

5. **It keeps the people who work in the sector among the poorest paid people in the country.** Fundraisers aside, the majority of people working in the nonprofit sector, like personal support workers, toil away at hourly rates of between \$14 and \$18. Not exactly McDonald's wages, but having someone's life in your hands is not exactly a Big Mac either.
6. **It makes charities liars.** Charities and auditors everywhere bend over backwards to make sure their admin expenses don't exceed the 15%, "hiding" perfectly justifiable expenses (in a sane world) in other line items so a charity doesn't see what it's actually spending money on.
7. **It institutionalizes inequity among organizations:** \$1 million is not always \$1 million in the charitable sector. If 80% of your organization's \$1 million is from government and 10% from the United Way, the amount of money you have to raise is \$100,000 and the resources you need to do that won't break the bank. But if you get no government funding and are not a member of a United Way, your \$1 million organization is dependent on a large number of small donations and the resources you need to generate that revenue are considerable, thus increasing "overhead."
8. **It institutionalizes inequity.** Period. When an organization has smaller number of large donors as opposed to a large number of small donors, the process of administrating that organization takes substantially less resources. So if you are friends with big government, big institutions and big money, your position of "good" charity is all but guaranteed. If not, then your designation as a "bad," administratively heavy, charity is also all but guaranteed.
9. **There is no threshold for risk.** Risk-taking and experimentation with the world's most intransigent problems should involve trying new things. Overhead caps prevent "wasting" money on things that may not work.
10. **It sets up the wrong criteria for project success.** Evaluative measures on charity projects are often transactional as opposed to taking a mission-oriented view, i.e. \$10,000 = # of workshops delivered, as opposed to \$10,000 = movement toward ending hunger.

What can be done?

Imagine Canada, which describes itself as "a national charity whose cause is Canadian charities" is now concerned enough about the problem it has issued a Narrative Tool Kit with talking points about overhead and, although they are not innocent bystanders in this whole 15% myth mess, you could give that a look. And Dan Palotta, author of the book *Uncharitable*, has been talking about this for years. Everyone in the sector should read this book.

You also must stop talking about money. You are on the earth to change the world. Talk about that.

And, while you are at it, stop pandering to self-styled overseers like Charity Intelligence who, may I remind newcomers to this space, had their charitable status revoked in 2012 for failing to file proper CRA returns. The status later was re-instated when they made the same filings everyone else in the sector has to make.

But if it were up to me ... a working girl who has a job to do and who sees this asinine scenario played out everyday ... if it were up to me ... you'd print out this blog and distribute it at your next board meeting. Call it a report from the front line.

Chapter 3

Listen up, fundraisers!

Originally published April 24, 2015

Please believe Your Working Girl when she says from the bottom of her heart that she is not trying to tell you what to do. She doesn't give out fundraising tips anymore.

She finds there are enough fundraising how-to books in print to choke a horse. In them, you will find the latest instructions on how to acquire and "steward" donors. There are an equivalent number of CRFEs (Certified Fund Raising Executives) to tell you whether or not you can accept that bottle of wine from the gentleman

who volunteered at your Bingo. Plus, annual congresses bring together the best and the brightest talent in the world for your learning pleasure. She knows you have it covered.



On balance, she finds an organization that tries to do big things is the one that raises big money, and that the doing of those big things is strictly outside the wheelhouse of the fundraiser anyway. Our job is simply to put fuel into the engine.

Yet, she is baffled.

Not two seconds ago, she put down the phone. The call was from a well-known international human rights organization and it was not for her. It was for a young man of her acquaintance, a civic minded young man who has been giving \$15 a month to the well known international human rights group since Grade 11. He's since graduated college and now, it seems, he is a *lapsed* monthly donor. The well-known international human rights organization has called five times in the last week or so and YWG has been home to take the call.

All five times, she's asked to take a message and for a number so the young man could call them back. All five times, they said there was no number to leave and they would try him again. Just now, she repeated the same message, but then had to ask the caller how in heaven's name did they ever expect to reach the young man if they wouldn't leave a message or a number he could call. She allowed that even she could not accomplish such a feat and she had the benefit of moral sway over the individual in question.

And there in lies the bafflement.

Your Working Girl has seen the fundraising books that yammer on about the "critical importance" of "donor stewardship," especially for those "valuable" monthly donors. She's walked down the hallways of conferences where fundraisers, some from this very well known international human rights organization, wax eloquently about percentages of donor "retention" and teaching other fundraisers how it's done.

But how about *being able to leave a message* so someone can call you back? Is that covered in the CFRE exam, in seminars on “donor stewardship” or “relationship fundraising?”

Is everyone losing their minds as well as their donors?

Your Working Girl allows the “just keeping calling” strategy might be working in a way that is not immediately apparent.

And although she thinks it might be more fruitful to be able to leave a message, maybe there is a complex calculation at play, one that is beyond her comprehension. Maybe when you factor in the number of calls to reach a donor, divided by the lifetime value of a donor, multiplied by the average monthly gift, divided by the number of months on the donor base, minus the net expenses over 28 months, it all adds up somehow.

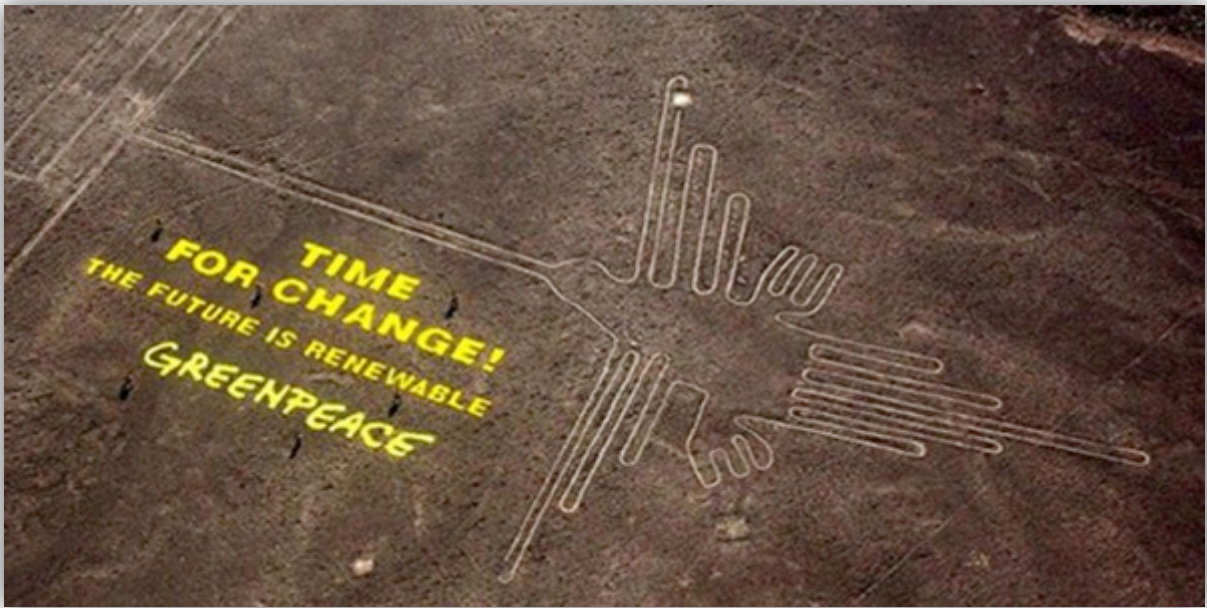
If so, Your Working Girl looks forward to the next workshop on the topic. Perhaps it will be called *Pissing into the Wind*.

Chapter 4

The Most Bone-headed Campaign Stunt Award of 2014 goes to ...

Originally published December 30, 2014

... Greenpeace



Peruvian Nazca Line with Greenpeace protest.

In an effort to bring attention to climate change at a U.N. conference on that topic held in Lima, Peru from December 1st to the 14th, a contingent of Greenpeace campaigners trampled through the Nazca Lines, a United Nations World Heritage Site, causing potentially irreparable damage to the ancient and vulnerable archeological location. The purpose of their hike was to display large yellow plastic letters over the Greenpeace logo trumpeting, "Time for change! The future is renewable."

"As many as 20 people entered the site without authorization last week to place a sign next to one of the geoglyphs, leaving a trail of footprints that may be impossible to remove. We are not sure it will ever recover," Deputy Minister for Cultural Heritage Luis Jaime Castillo said after the incident.

The Nazca Lines are one of South America's most famous archaeological wonders and depict mysterious animals, plants and imaginary beings. They were made 1,500 to 2,000 years ago and can only be fully seen from high altitude. Spread out over about 450 square kilometres of desert in southern Peru, there are many theories about how ancient cultures could possibly have made them and why. UNESCO, which placed the lines on its World Heritage List in 1994, says they "are among archaeology's greatest enigmas because of their quantity, nature, size and continuity."



Video provided to the Wall Street Journal and PBS News Hour show several people in Greenpeace t-shirts and running shoes tramping through the site with backpacks, laying down the lettering, apparently using some type of brick to keep the yellow plastic letters from blowing away.

The Peruvian government controls access to the vulnerable archeological site. It can only be viewed from an airplane or five designated viewing points—three natural and two towers built for tourists.

Yet, the delicate nature of their destination appeared to be of no concern to Greenpeace campaigners.

Peruvian President Ollanta Humala lashed out at Greenpeace, saying their stunt ... showed a "lack of respect."

"We have been able to appreciate two messages, one explicit but there was another bigger implicit one," Humala told the daily *El Comercio*. "The lack of respect for our cultural heritage and Peruvian laws."

"We fully understand that this looks bad," said Greenpeace Executive Director, Kumi Naidoo, who is South African and travelled to Peru to apologize. "We came across as careless and crass."

According to Greenpeace, members from Spain, Italy, Germany, Austria, Brazil, Argentina and Chile took part in the protest and they all left Peru after the stunt.

The New York Times reported that Peru is conducting a preliminary investigation into potential charges against Argentine activist Mauro Fernandez, who coordinates the organization's Andean Climate and Energy Campaign.

How can such a thing happen with a well-resourced environmental organization that proclaims its expertise on a range of environmental issues? What would the fly on the wall have to say about prep meetings for the Nazca Lines action? And what priorities were articulated during those meetings? That Greenpeace traipses the world with campaign-cum-busker activities designed more for headlines and fundraising than community engagement is not news to many people. But maybe now we can all officially be wary of the Greenpeace drive-by.

In her letter of apology, Greenpeace U.S. Executive Director, Annie Leonard seems to have some understanding of the damage the incident caused.

"The decision to engage in this activity shows a complete disregard for the culture of Peru and the importance of protecting sacred sites everywhere. There is no apology sufficient enough to make up for this serious lack of judgment."

Call it what you like—arrogant, misguided, patronizing, oblivious, colonial, entitled—whatever works for you. The message on social media is plain and you can check out *that* vibe at #fuckyougreenpeace on Twitter.

Chapter 5

Unconventional philanthropist dies at 87



Retired hedge-fund titan Robert Wilson died after committing suicide. He was 87-years-old.

Photo: Roy Zipstein/Bernstein & Andriulli via Bloomberg

Originally published January 29, 2014

It's sad to meet and fall in love with a man when you are in the process of reading his obituary.

So it was for Your Working Girl and Robert W. Wilson, a gay, atheist, short-sell specialist, and well-known known for his philanthropy. A masterful mass of contradiction, Mr. Wilson contributed an estimated \$600 million to charity during his lifetime, to environmental and civil rights causes and—unique among atheists—the Roman Catholic school system. (He felt it was more efficient.)

He loved opera and chaired the New York City Opera board for 12 years. He always took the subway, saying that the worst thing you could do with money was to spend it.

What was once an unheard of practice in the fundraising world, he used his donations to leverage more.

“Mr. Wilson attached one major condition to almost all his contributions — namely, that the money be used to spur matching contributions from others,” *The New York Times* wrote in his obituary.

“In most cases, the check was delivered only after the other donors had been lined up. Mr. Wilson began using the technique in the late 1980s, before matching gifts were common in the fund-raising world.”

Mr. Wilson suffered one stroke in June and, reportedly, another about five months later. He leapt to his death from his 16th floor Central Park West apartment in December and was found in an inner courtyard. It was a building that had housed Bono, Steven Spielberg, Tiger Woods and Bruce Willis at one time or another.

In an approach consistent with how he lived his life, the manner of Mr. Wilson’s passing was definitive and direct. The note he left behind reported the cause of death and, according to *The New York Post*, said ‘I had a rewarding life. Thank you and goodbye to all my friends. Please make sure you cancel all my plans. Tell everyone what I did. I’m not ashamed of killing myself. Sell all my stuff.’

He left one brother, William, who is 88. And one smitten Working Girl.

Mr. Wilson’s full obituary can be found in the *New York Times*.

Chapter 6

Pathways to where are we headed exactly?

Originally published November 4, 2013

Since Pathways to Education is advertising for a new CEO, Your Working Girl reckons it's as good a time as any to look at the rapid trajectory of an organization that originated in the housing projects of Toronto's Regent Park in 2001. After 12 years of incredible growth, she wanted to see what's what, who's who and where the dust has settled, as it were.

When Pathways hung up its shingle, it was a dark time in Regent Park. Drugs, violence, poverty, joblessness and their constant companion, alienation, ruled the day. The nasty hand of poverty held the people of Regent Park, especially youth, firmly in its grip. High school drop out rates were twice the city's average. There were nine murders in Regent Park in 2001.



The Pathways' founders were armed with nothing more than a few thousand dollars and the idea that a combination of tutoring, monetary reward and parent support would make a dent in the high school drop out rate. The first year the program was offered to a small group of Regent Park youth. From there, it grew... and grew.

Between then and now, the Pathways narrative has become the stuff of legend. After the first six years, the Boston Consulting Group (BCG), a global management organization, measured Pathways' outcomes and found them to be outstanding. Dropout rates had fallen by 70%. Accolades poured in. Carolyn Acker, Pathways

founder and CEO until 2009 when David Hughes took over, was awarded the Order of Canada and a honorary degree from the University of New Brunswick. She was recognized for being a “Canadian pioneer in poverty reduction.”

Money also poured into Pathways from government and the private sector. According to annual reports, it had revenue of \$6 million in 2010, \$10.6 million in 2011 and \$21 million in 2012. Yet Pathways has even bigger hopes and dreams. In 2012, it launched *Graduation Nation*, a \$170 million national campaign to “close the achievement gap in low income communities” and bring “Pathways to 16 sites in 7 provinces.

Have we found a cure for poverty? Is Pathways to Education it?

Well, Your Working Girl can assure her Gentle Readers that poverty has, at least, been eradicated from the Pathways’ front office. Her hairnet pretty nearly popped off her curls when she checked out Ontario’s Sunshine List of public sector employees earning more than \$100,000 and saw that Pathways CEO, David Hughes, and his five top fundraising and financial lieutenants, were paid a total of \$999,961.74 of compensation 2012, not including taxable benefits. If they had been paid \$ 38.26 more, they’d have made the million-dollar mark. That’s an average top management salary of \$166,660. (Your Working Girl is, happily, not overly superstitious.)

The biggest earners were Chief Executive Officer, David Hughes and Chief Development Officer, Cathy Yanosik, who topped the chart with salaries of \$268,865 and \$221,935 respectively

“Ooooo-eeeeee,” as Burma Jones, the janitor of the Night of Joy in John Kennedy Toole’s *Confederacy of Dunces* (and a favourite of Your Working Girl) would say if he weren’t a fictional character

But while poking around the Sunshine List, Your Working Girl found a fly in that hairnet of hers. While David Hughes replaced Carolyn Acker as CEO in 2009, she continued to be paid as “Founder” \$150,000 a year for two more years. Is there anything we need to know here? Your Working Girl understands there could be many reasons why a Founder might continue to draw a salary for two years after she stops her work as a CEO. She’d just like to know what they are.

On the community side of the coin, and in keeping with plans to export its model, Pathways launched a program with some fanfare in the north end of Winnipeg last year, where, according to a Pathways backgrounder, there is:

- A higher than average dropout rate
- Lack of early childhood education
- A high incidence of parents with mental health issues
- A high number of children with long-term disabilities.

Disabled children with no early childhood education and parents with mental health issues. These little ones, do not, as they say, have an easy row to hoe. So Your Working Girl supposes they must feel pretty happy that help is on the way. She imagines they are grateful in their own little way that Pathways to Education, founded by a well-paid “Canadian pioneer in poverty reduction” and led by a million-dollar leadership team, are in the house.

Pathways to Education doesn’t deliver the actual day-to-day programming, however. Their job is to supply the successful model. There is a community partner that actually executes on the ground. In North Winnipeg, that community partner is the Community Education Development Association (CEDA).

A visit to CEDA’s website told Your Working Girl it was “formed in 1979 when seven inner city parent councils agreed ... to build a voice for inner city parents and residents to more effectively address education and community improvement concerns and issues.”

Your Working Girl has a real soft spot for community organizations like CEDA. Those people are living testament to the adage, one step forward, and two steps back. They spend year after dogged year, with little fanfare and a lot of agro, seeing a lot of failure in their communities along with a few well-earned successes. And Your Working Girl can tell you, because she knows, that these people are not in it for the money. The total amount of money spent on compensation for the entire 61 full and part time members of CEDA's staff in 2013 was \$1.28 million, not much more than the \$1 million taken in by Pathways' top six staff. The CERA average salary is about \$21,000

That lets you know whose side of the bread is buttered, as Your Working Girl's dear father used to say.

But forget the highly paid executives at Pathways for a moment. The Pathways' model is the thing, right? It's that magic combination of tutoring, mentoring, monetary reward and parent support that slays disadvantage and produces the results that are good enough to lead a press release. In fact, the Boston Consulting Group (BCG) reports:

- Every \$1 invested generates \$24 through decreased social spending and increased tax rates
- 70% decline in drop out rates
- 300% increase in students going to college and university
- 2X graduation rates

But you don't have to take BCG's word for it. Pathways' 2012 Annual Report quotes other experts such as:

- **McKinsey & Company's** report on student retention and success in Quebec calls Pathways one of four programs most likely to succeed
- **Monitor Group** partner of *Forces for Good* author Heather McLeod Grant says she's "never before seen such impressive results"
- **United Nations** independent expert on minority issues, Gay McDougall calls Pathways one of the most outstanding educational models she saw on her 2009 trip to Canada.

The issue with those endorsements is that neither McKinsey, Monitor Group, Grant or the United Nations had conducted independent research into Pathways programs. They appear to be commenting on the same BCG report. The full McKinsey report is available online.

And it would be a stretch to call the BCG report independent

According to Pathways' 2007/2008 Annual Report, the late David Pecaut, a Senior Partner in BCG and a Pathways board member at the time, led the study and BCG provided it *pro bono*. A later study reported in the 2010/2011 Annual Report was also provided *pro bono* by BCG and re-affirmed the original claims

This information trail reminds Your Working Girl of the debacle caused by the now-disgraced *New York Times* reporter, Judith Miller who, boasting impeccable sources, consistently reported the existence of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs) in Saddam Hussein's Iraq. Other reporters trusted her and her sources so much (after all, it was the *New York Times*); they based their reporting on her reporting, not on independently verifiable facts. In the aftermath, salon.com wrote, "Our WMD expectations, such as they were, largely grew out of Miller's stories."

Sadly, as it turned out for the people of Iraq and many others, Miller's reports turned out to be false. While we're not talking about WMDs here, we are talking about people's lives, especially the lives of the terribly disadvantaged children living in communities that Pathways has been given millions of dollars to serve.

A recent study by Jensen Kettle-Verleyen of the University of Ottawa looked at the evaluation practices of Pathways to Education. *Is Pathways To Education An Effective Program?* Is well worth reading in its entirety and concludes:

“Due to its positive results, Pathways to Education is attracting funding from governmental, private, and charitable contributors. The existing evaluations of Pathways to Education are conducted internally, and by the BCG, which is a paid consulting group. These reports are not objective, reliable, replicable, or generalizable and so it is imperative to question the existing evaluations. This is important to determine whether scarce resources are best allocated to Pathways to Education.”

It's a lot for any new CEO to think about. But much time will they have to do it? Some of the new CEO's priorities as outlined in the job posting are:

- Consistently drive improved results in fundraising
- On an annual basis, present to the Board for approval an assessment of each member of the management team
- Continually seek out new funding opportunities for the organization
- Proactively seek out opportunities to raise the profile and support of the organization among new constituencies
- Ensure brand and campaign alignment with new Strategic Direction

Your Working Girl has worked and volunteered alongside Pathways' Parent Support Workers, managers and graduates, and counts them among her friends and colleagues. She has seen the program up close in Regent Park and knows great work being done there by front line staff. But after two months of research and one unhappy surprise after another, Your Working Girl finds the motivations of Pathways current leadership baffling and the course it is charting troubling.

The lessons Pathways is putting out there—lessons that include a keen demonstration and propagation of inequity, overreach of effectiveness claims, and the commercialization of community organizing—may not be the ones it is intending to teach.

Epilogue

For three years running (2009, 2010 and 2011), Charity Intelligence Canada named Pathways to Education a recommended charity, recognizing it for “excellence in addressing a social issue, cost efficiency and track record of producing outstanding results for Canadians in need.” In 2012, Charity Intelligence had its charitable status revoked for failing to file its T-3010. Charitable status was reinstated in 2013 and Charity Intelligence continues to rank charities on their effectiveness.

Chapter 7

Do you believe it?



Photo: Princess Margaret Cancer Foundation

Originally published June 21, 2013

Princess Margaret Hospital is in the throes of a \$1 billion fundraising campaign called *Believe It*, an increasingly ironic moniker in light of recent events.

On June 18th in Toronto, it held a self-described “media event” to announce a “major breakthrough” in the development of “sharpshooter” cancer drugs. (Your Working Girl notices the language of armed conflict now permeates cancer fundraising. So naturally the “war on cancer” would beget a “sharpshooter” drug.)

The headline on the hospital press release read *Long-Term Donor Support Helps Fund Cancer Breakthrough*.

And there, in front of a *Believe It* backdrop, was the singular Dr. Tak Mak, a scientist known the world over for his work on the human T cell antigen receptor. Accompanied by the equally brilliant Herceptin founder, Dr.

Dennis Slamon. Dr. Mak, apparently fundraiser-in-chief for the day, sang for his supper as he thanked “the donors who believe in our vision and have generously helped to finance our critical work.”

“I have had the pleasure of attending several events for The Shoppers Drug Mart Weekend To End Women’s Cancers,” added Dr. Slamon in a statement, brilliantly performing the call-and-response researchers must perfect if they want to get on with their work.

“While addressing the crowds, I have witnessed the passion of the walker community.”

The *Toronto Star*, bless its heart, ran a breathless editorial on June 20th that could understandably be mistaken for direct mail letter copy:

“If anyone ever doubted their cash donation to fight cancer — or their run, walk, or cycle for a cure — actually made a difference they should check with Tak Mak and Dennis Slamon,” crooned Canada’s largest daily (weekday circulation 346,340).

“The two superstar cancer researchers revealed an experimental new “sharpshooter” drug, targeting several variants of this disease, in Toronto on Tuesday. And they credited a variety of fundraising drives, donors and grant-issuing organizations for the breakthrough. These sources together, without direct government support, raised \$40 million to pioneer this first in a new class of cancer drugs.”

“I can assure walkers, donors and funders that they will continue to see direct impact on the revolution that is occurring in Personalized Cancer Medicine,” assured the genial Dr. Bob Bell, the CEO of the University Health Network.

So keep those cards and letters coming folks he might have added. Your walking, running, cycling and lottery buying really does work!! Believe it.

So, why is Princess Margaret pulling hard-working reporters away from their sadly busy beats at city hall, the courts, police stations and international news feeds? Are the Foundation’s thank-you notes now being sent through editorials and stories by the country’s largest news agencies?

Perhaps the fundraising campaign needs a little boost before the summer hols? Maybe the Ride to Conquer Cancer pledges needs a nudge? A couple of major donors need some encouragement? Lottery sales are down?

The problem is, as health reporter Andre Picard points out in his *Globe and Mail* column today, *Take news of cancer ‘breakthrough’ with a big grain of salt*, this idea of a “breakthrough” is misleading. On the contrary, he says:

The drug has “not been tested on a single person.”

And despite articles being submitted, it has “yet to be published in a peer-reviewed medical journal let alone replicated by others.”

As Mr. Picard, who was honoured as Canada’s top newspaper columnist by the National Newspaper Awards in 2010, points out “If the compound works as hoped in humans, doesn’t cause any grave side effects, can be produced in a form and at a cost that is marketable, and is not overtaken by newer, more promising approaches – a new cancer drug is at least a decade away.”

Whatever it is, the “medical breakthrough” announced this week, does not appear to be a “breakthrough” in the normal sense of the word.

And calling a medical breakthrough a medical breakthrough when it's not really a medical breakthrough has two casualties in addition to the truth.

It raises hope in people with cancer where the hope is not real, a truly dastardly deed, in and of itself.

Plus... pseudo medical news takes up a lot of oxygen for other organizations trying to raise money for less resourced, but urgent causes nonetheless — organizations trying to help abused children cope, assaulted women fleeing to safety or one million souls displaced by civil war.

Believe it.

Post Script

While we're at it, Your Working Girl would like to remind her Gentle Readers that "at least one-third of all cancer cases are preventable," according to the World Health Organization, "and prevention offers the most cost-effective long-term strategy for the control of cancer."

The prescription says WHOM? Don't smoke. Don't drink alcohol. Exercise. Eat well.

They also point out the matter of cancers arising from infections like Hep B and C, environmental pollution, occupational carcinogens and radiation.

But Your Working Girl realizes there's not much money to be made in dealing with that.

Chapter 8

You don't have to dig too deep



Originally published April 16, 2013

Prologue

As the freezing rain beat against the windows of her 15th floor apartment, Your Working Girl was thinking on the brouhaha surrounding World Vision, Plan Canada, World University Services of Canada and their \$7.7 million deal with Barrick Gold, IAM GOLD, Rio Tinto and CIDA (heaven rest its soul). For a sector that has expressed apprehension about the optics of an affiliation with the Canadian military, some of them have no such qualms about slow dancing with the Canadian mining industry. And, as Your Working Girl sees it, their activities overseas take place with a good deal less eyeballing and a great deal more strife.

Let's put the facts on the table.

Canada is the biggest player in mining operations and financing in the world — by a country mile. Ninety per cent of all the financing of the world's mineral equity happens on the Toronto Stock Exchange and the TSX Venture Exchange, making up nearly 40 per cent of the world's mining capital, says iPolitics.

But the ewww factor is big.

Canadian mining companies are among the worst corporate human rights and environmental offenders in the world. IPolitics reports “hundreds of the projects financed in Canada experience local backlash that sometimes leads to violent clashes, costing money — sometimes lives.”

Just last week, CP reported that a Chilean court ordered Barrick Gold to “suspend their work at the Pascua-Lima gold mine after indigenous communities complained that the project is threatening their water supply and polluting glaciers.”

In a special to the CBC, Santiago Ortega Arango, a Colombian engineer and freelance journalist, reported “thousands of Colombians took to the streets of Bucaramanga on March 18, 2013 to defend their water supply from Canadian-owned Eco Oro Minerals Corp.”

On March 9, 10,000 Greeks “protested in Thessaloniki against several gold mining projects owned by Vancouver-based Eldorado Gold. On March 21, Catholic priests marched with 5,000 locals in Matagalpa, Nicaragua, against a project owned by Vancouver-based B2Gold Corp.”

According to Arango, Canadian companies have also been targeted in Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Dominican Republic, Slovakia, Romania and Israel.

Why are Canadian international NGOs hanging out in the messy, deadly juke joints of the mining sector? And how deep does it go? Was it only the big three who were cut in on the CIDA deal? Clearly, more investigation is required.

I

Let’s pick up the trail with a letter sent from the mining industry’s chief lobby group to Prime Minister Stephen Harper in March of this year.

“On behalf of the members of the Mining Association of Canada (MAC),” CEO Pierre Gratton writes, “I am writing to reiterate our support for the [government’s CSR] Strategy and to encourage support for its key components. In particular, I would like to commend the government for the reappointment of Dr. Marketa Evans as the Extractive Sector CSR Counsellor, and to share with you our thoughts on the important role this office is playing.”

Your Working Girl sat back in her chair. She thought some more. The rain continued to pelt on the window and questions raced through her mind as quickly as the wind whipped around her weather vane. Who is the intriguingly named **Dr. Marketa Evans**? Why does the mining industry love her so much? What in the holy hot tamale is the Office of the Extractive Sector CSR Counsellor? What ‘important role’ is it playing?

Here’s what quick surf around the World Wide Web turned up. The Extractive Sector is named that way because it refers to a sector that *extracts* material from under the earth’s surface, materials like minerals, oil and gas. The **Office of the Extractive Sector CSR Counsellor** was set up in 2009 to probe complaints about Canadian mining company abuses in developing countries. And, on an optimistic note, to introduce the idea of Corporate Social Responsibility — CSR for short — to mining companies. Supposedly. But what did mining companies like about it? It just didn’t add up.

Your Working Girl did a quick 411 on MAC CEO, **Pierre Gratton**. A balding man of average height, Gratton seems to favour business suits and ties. He has a practiced smile, the kind of grin people use when they want you to think they like you. He looks like he’s spent his life above



Pierre Gratton, CEO Mining Association of Canada

ground. He cut his chops at doing 'mining association' work on the west coast.

He says he thinks the Office of the Extractive Sector CSR Counsellor "contributed to a broader and deeper understanding of the expectations of the standards to which the Government of Canada expects the mining industry to conform" and "to an appreciation of the value of grievance and dispute resolution mechanisms."

Whatever that means thought Your Working Girl.

Murray Klippenstein is a city lawyer with a neat trimmed beard and a bit of a haunted look. When he gets worked up, he's like a dog with a bone. The words Ipperwash and G20 are like please and thank-you to him. He has a reputation around town. *Torontoist* voted him a city hero in 2007.

Over the winter he was back in the papers, suing **HudBay Minerals Inc.** on behalf of the widow of a dead Guatemalan man and 11 women who say they were gang-raped by mine security personnel in Guatemala.

Klippenstein didn't mince his words when he told the CBC, "The office is basically a whitewash. ... It's a bogus PR job, as a cover for business as usual."

The **United Steelworkers** went on record as not being impressed. They are calling for penalties on Canadian companies who commit human and labour rights abuses abroad.



Lawyer, Murray Klippenstein

Here are a few facts: The Office of the Extractive Sector CSR Counsellor has never processed a full complaint. In the three cases they started, the mining companies named refused to participate. And get this. They don't have to if they don't want to.

The CBC reported that "the first complaint landed on the desk of ... Marketa Evans, in April 2011 when a Mexican mining union and mine workers accused a Canadian company of human rights violations. Within six months ... the office's investigation into allegations against Vancouver-based Excellon Resources Inc.'s La Platosa mine project was closed when the company refused to participate any further in the process."



Dr. Marketa Evans, The Office of the Extractive Sector CSR Counsellor

That can't be good. But it still didn't explain what kind of attraction the mining companies had to NGOs.

Maybe the woman in the picture could provide a clue? This Dr. Marketa Evans? Who was she? What was her story?

With a little more digging, Your Working Girl discovered she has a PhD in political science from University of Toronto, which explains the doctor part of Marketa Evans. She went to a Harvard Negotiation program. Queen's University taught her the Basics of Geology, Mining and Metallurgy. She has blonde shoulder-length hair and a smiling face. She looks like she'd be at home at a peewee hockey practice.

But here was a woman who could definitely skate in any rink. For a decade, she ran the Munk Centre for International Studies at University of Toronto for **Peter Munk**, Chairman and Founder of **Barrick Gold**.

More recently, she was Director, Strategic Partnerships, at **Plan International Canada**, one of the big three in the CIDA deal.

According to her bio, Evans also founded The Devonshire Initiative. A glance at the member section of their website showed a couple of dozen logos that fell into one of two groups — one group was mining companies. The other looked familiar to Your Working Girl. It was a veritable treasure trove of the most well known international development organizations in Canada – from AMREF to World Vision. Your Working Girl had never seen them all together like that before.

But why were they all members of the Devonshire Institute?

“Enhancing in-country capacity to allow communities, regions and countries to more visibly realize the benefits of Canadian mining investments,” according to the website.

And there were benefits to being part of the “DI.” Number one benefit for NGOs — “evidence that working with the private sector positively impacts our constituent communities on the ground.”



Barrick Gold Chairman, Peter Munk

The “DI” is ‘industry funded’, according to sources, although that’s not apparent from the website.

At a “DI” CEO Summit held in September, 2011, the now disgraced, but then Honourable Beverley J. Oda, Minister of International Cooperation, announced four new projects to “help developing countries in Africa and South America manage their natural resources.”

No kidding.

So, Your Working Girl thought, is this where Marketa Evans made the introductions? Maybe between the times she was working for Peter Munk and Plan Canada and The Office of the Extractive Sector CSR Counsellor?

Your Working Girl has been around the block enough times to know some non-profits are kind of naive. They take money from heaven-knows-who because they are happy somebody cares. They feel special when they get to hang out with people who have power or money, or both. They don’t understand what kind of a message it sends or get the optics of the situation.



World Vision CEO, Dave Toyce

But **Dave Toyce** of World Vision, **Rosemary McCarney** of Plan Canada and Chris Eaton of World University Services of Canada know exactly what they’re doing. They have a combined 50+ years in the sector, have travelled to scores of the poorest countries in the world many times, and run organizations that generated combined revenue of \$579.7 million in 2012. Dave Toyce has his own Prayer Team for heaven’s sake.

They know that the people of South America and Africa, people who live outside Canada, are in the streets trying to save their countries from environmental devastation and their people from human rights abuses.

So how do they reconcile that while playing PR footsie with the mining industry? Do they think they are going to change the practices of an industry whose sole raison d’être is to return money to their shareholders? Are they choosing to put reality aside in an effort to form an amiable “partnership” with a wooly purpose?

But perhaps mining companies and the international NGOs who have climbed into the sack with them have more in common than meets the eye.

They both workshop at the altar of charity, but they fear social justice.

Both are in the hunt for investors — call them donors, if you like — right here, at home, in Canada. That is, as marketing people say, their primary audience. They both have machines to feed. And they're both looking for people with money to feed it, especially now since the fundraising industry has a tracker beam on so-called 'major gifts'. It's just business.

And it is the most disenfranchised citizens of other countries, the targets of their plans that are paying the price.

Your Working Girl heard the clock softly chime and looked out the window. The bewitching hour had passed but the rain had now turned to snow. It had been a long winter ... and she's afraid it's not over yet.

Media

Lots can be said about media and the media loves nothing more than talking about itself. In Your Working Girl's view, nothing was bigger than the Ghomeshi scandal in how media reported on itself. Ghomeshi also gave media critic, Jesse Brown, his big opportunity to shine.

And, as the white noise always in the back, the lack of women's voices, not entirely unrelated to the above. Then there's Gawker, the gossip website just thrust into bankruptcy by law suit brought by Hulk Hogan and financed by Peter Thiel, a Silicon Valley venture capitalist who founded PayPal. He was also a featured speaker at the 2016 Republican National Convention.

Chapter 1

Who in the world is Jesse Brown?

Originally published January 18, 2015

In the 1989 movie, *Blaze*, starring Paul Newman as Earl Long, the “finest governor of the great state of Louisiana” introduced the incredible Lolita Davidovitch as the burlesque-dancing love of his life, Blaze Starr (not her real name). There’s a scene in which Blaze’s mother imparted a few words of wisdom to her daughter just as Blaze prepared to leave home.

“Never trust a man who says trust me,” she said, holding a baby in her arms.

Later, mindful of her mother’s advice as she stood onstage in fur coat and smoked a cigarette in a long holder, Blaze asked a wooing Governor Long, “can I trust ya?”

“Hello no!” replied Paul Newman as Long.

“What a wonderful thing to say,” Blaze murmured as she fluttered her eyes knowing the governor, at the very least, was not trying to pull the wool over them.

Life lessons come in all shapes and sizes. And now that we are dealing with the matter of who in the world is Jesse Brown, I’m hearing the words of Blaze Starr’s mama in my head.

Jesse Brown wants us to trust him in his self-appointed role as overseer of a “cozy” Canadian media. Brown made his name on the Ghomeshi scandal. That’s the first time I’d ever heard of him, anyway. Not having had the pleasure of listening to his CBC show, *The Contrarians*, or knowingly read any of his print work in *Toronto Life*, the *National Post* and others, I was, as they say, “in the dark,” about Jesse Brown.

Yet, despite what I saw as an off-putting smacking of the lips when he talked about young women, sex and Jian Ghomeshi, I asked myself if he could really be an emerging muckraking hero, a sunny avenger of abused women and those who seek to cover up abuse of all sorts?

Heaven knows we could sure use a sharp pencil here in Canada, one with a smart critique of media and social issues, a critique based on careful research, a broadminded outlook and unassailable accusations. Of course, a sense of humour and some humility would be a bonus, but that’s a tall order.



Jesse Brown

Is Jesse Brown that person?

Media specialist Simon Houpt wrote what I thought was an enlightening column in the Globe's online edition on Saturday, one that dug a little bit deeper into how Brown works.

Houpt wrote about Brown positioning himself as "a lone wolf, a fearless David taking on the Goliath of Canadian corporate media" and detailed Brown's accusations of incestuous booking practices in Canada's major media, his track record of "playing fast and lose with the facts" and his reluctance to correct his errors.

Journalist Jesse Brown is quick to expose the failures of Canadian media. But what about his own?

A visit to Brown's website, Canadaland Show feels like being dropped into a photo shoot of *The 70s Show* or maybe into a surrealistic Swedish portal, an impression largely resulting from a generous use of the colour yellow.

Most recent stories are listed down the middle of the page—today's offerings included *The Time I "Faked" a CBC Scene* (Brown's response to Houpt's piece), *The CBC's Kathy Tomlinson Speaks on the Record About Amanda Lang, Is the CBC Lying to Us or is Amanda Lang Lying to the CBC?*

He's recently done podcast interviews with Susan Delacourt (sponsored by Freshbooks), Andrew Coyne (sponsored by The Whiskey Cabinet, by Mark Bylok) and Linden McIntyre (sponsored by Audible.com). The site's advertising is similar to the way advertising is worked into the announcer's copy for baseball radio broadcasts. He will soon have his advertising policy published on the site, he says, after he gets feedback from his readers about how that advertising should look. Apparently, he's crowded-sourced to the tune of \$9,000 a month.

And while it was the Ghomeshi story that catapulted Brown from the blogosphere to the stratosphere and is partly what's keeping him there, the site's other big story, written by Sean Craig, is that Amanda Lang took speaking fees from companies that were covered by her show and influenced content because of it.

The issue of journalists taking speaking fees has been a bit of a hobbyhorse for Brown since he first reported that Peter Mansbridge, anchor of CBC's *The National*, was paid to speak at the Canadian Petroleum Producers Association in Calgary in February 2014. Because of Mansbridge's profile, the story was covered widely and, in hindsight, was a piece that involved minimal research for maximum coverage.

Brown was quoted in the *Huffington Post* as saying, "I think that just sort of saying 'I'm a journalist, trust me, I'm not going to do anything that will influence my journalism' as Peter Mansbridge has said, that's not how conflict of interest works."

The speaking circuit is a ready source of income for people who have enough of a profile to draw an audience. Speakers' bureaus such as Speakers Spotlight or the National Speakers Bureau can hook you up with an array of bright lights. In addition to Amanda Lang, you could hire journalists like Wendy Mesley (CBC), Steve Pakin (TVO), Chantal Hébert (*Toronto Star*) and Paul Wells (*Maclean's*).

But it's not just journalists that can be hired to speak. By paying *at least* one month's of an average Canadian's salary, probably closer to two, you can hire social activist and author Naomi Klein, her husband Avi Lewis, her father-in-law, Stephen Lewis or mother-in-law, Michele Landsburg.

All these people are willing to speak to you for money and have hired representation to make sure you know that.

To be clear, I have no issue with how people make their living. I am a Working Girl myself and I understand how expensive it is to raise and educate children and keep a roof over your head, especially when you have no expectation of inherited wealth or a pension. I get that. We all have to do what we have to do. Although, truth

be told, I get stressed out when people who call themselves “social” or “anti-poverty” activists charge \$10,000 or more for a speaking engagement. There’s something off-kilter about that.

But, of course, you can also hire Jesse Brown, if you’d like to. He is represented by the same speakers’ bureau as Amanda Lang. Isn’t that a funny coincidence?

According to Speakers Spotlight, “technology and media expert,” Jesse Brown, will explain “the challenging shifts ahead, and how to stay on top of them.”

But did Jesse Brown happen to mention that he was also a member of the paid speaking circuit when he was “breaking” the Mansbridge story? Or the same firm as Amanda Lang represented that he when that story broke, the firm of Speakers Spotlight?

In the *Huffington Post* story where Brown spoke so vigorously about how Peter Mansbridge was not able to identify conflict of interest, he said how he might handle his own conflict. “The way I’ve handled this to date is if I feel that there is any possible relationship between who has paid me for some work and who I’m covering, I just disclose.”

Okay, Jesse, start disclosing.

Because until you get a grip on your own moral centre, you’ll be in a bad spot to question other people on theirs. Because if you and the way you work are not credible, what you say isn’t credible. Because your lack of self-awareness does an enormous disservice to the cause of believable critique in this country. Because what you do is increasingly disappointing.

Chapter 2

Why the attacks on Jian Ghomeshi are of no help to abused women



*Workers remove a giant photo of Jian Ghomeshi from the CBC's Toronto offices on Oct. 27, 2014.
Photo: CP /Chris Young*

Originally published October 28, 2014

So far this week, Elizabeth May, leader of Canada's Green Party, apologized for supporting Jian Ghomeshi, apparently in response to the threat that 'no woman in Canada would vote for her.'

Judy Rebick, publisher of rabble.ca, Q media panelist and all-round hell raiser removed a post from her Facebook. The post, the link to an article by her media co-panelist on Q, Jonathan Kay, *Whatever Jian Ghomeshi did with women, his show was a stunning accomplishment* turned out to be so offensive, she *apologized* for originally posting it.

Two of Canada's most formidable feminists are in retreat.

I think we can safely say that Jian Ghomeshi is now a certified pariah. He is such a pariah, in fact, that anyone hinting at a suggestion of supporting him is accused of condoning woman abuse. His shunning is unparalleled. To utter a passing 'hold on, wait a minute here' is tantamount to not believing women when they say they've

been assaulted, which quite suddenly, is a serious crime, in and of, itself. Such is the power of this suggestion that even people who've benefitted from being on his show refuse to have their heads turned.

At the same time, on this very day, thousands of women with thousands of scars and many more stories have visited courtrooms, police stations, emergency rooms and lawyers' offices from one end of the country to the other. They've sat in splintered wooden chairs or on plastic chairs bolted to the floor, some with their children crawling over their lap, some with a support person, lots of them alone.

They are waiting for peace bonds, restraining orders, rape kits to be collected, custody of their children or, perhaps, a court order allowing them to go back to their homes to collect their belongings. Many don't speak English as a first language and many are poor. All are threatened by the violence done to them and scared of the violence that could still be done. They are afraid for their children. They feel unsafe, are looking for protection and, possibly, justice. Some have nowhere to go and so return to their abusers in the hope that things will change.

I can pretty well guarantee you that very few are thinking about tweets, Facebook friends or the blogosphere. And it's just as well. The idea that you must be believed on social media in order to be safe and validated is both ridiculous and dangerous. That sadistic jungle, as is well documented, eats vulnerable people for breakfast.

In the 25 years I have worked on the issue of violence against women, we have argued, fought and lobbied hard for judges, lawyers, police officers, social workers and medical professionals to *believe women when they said they'd been assaulted*. Though we still have a ways to go, awareness of violence against women among the so-called helping professions has much improved.

What we *didn't* argue, fight and lobby for was the idea any woman anywhere could make any claim in the media about any one and have it, *ipso facto*, taken as gospel. And I don't know why anyone believes that to be the ultimate feminist creed on the issue of violence against women. It's like they read page one of the manifesto and chucked the rest.

In whose interest would blanket acceptance of any claim made by a woman through the media, social or otherwise, be? It's certainly not in every woman's interest, especially a marginalized woman's interest, since access to media is something that's in direct correlation to privilege and power.

The women's movement in this country has fought long and hard for women's equality *under the law*—not the right to make any claim in the media about any one at any time and be believed because you are a woman. This is not a judgment on the women in the Ghomeshi case (in which we are actually being asked to believe Kevin Donovan, Jesse Brown and Michael Cooke).

It is the women's movement staking a claim to equal treatment *under the law*. The *under the law* part is important.

Because the idea that media access means you don't have to line up in front of a Justice of the Peace like all those other battered women schmucks, who don't have reporters writing down their every word, is as offensive as all get out.

By extension, blanket acceptance of a woman's claims on social or other media could, hypothetically, result in homophobic women claiming verbal, physical or sexual abuse by Premier Kathleen Wynne prior to the next election and have Ms. Wynne automatically removed from political office.

Or a group of women elders making the claim on social media or through a TV station that their daughter-in-law hit them could justifiably get her banished from the house.

Or in the same week as terrorist attack on Parliament by a so-called radical Muslim, a prominent Muslim broadcaster could be fired because his employer had heard a claim he'd assaulted women.

Oh wait ... hold on ... that last one was actually true.

But surely to heavens there's no connection between the CBC deciding that their popular Muslim host was more trouble than he was worth the very same week as a radical Muslim attack in Ottawa. (Sorry, you don't even get to ask that question. It's ridiculous and you're blaming women.)

But I do have to confess, however, that if I had been a well-recognized Muslim man of colour who had been accused of sexual violence last week, I would have high-tailed it over to Navigator at the very first opportunity (and probably changed the locks on my door).

The law is often a clumsy instrument, but it is the tool we have to protect women, minorities and those of us who are marginalized. Women have fought hard for a Charter of Rights and Freedoms that guarantees our rights and the courts deliver that justice, not social media. And you can't change that by typing in capital letters.

Abuse of women is outrageous. And, clearly, many people, men and women alike are suddenly so outraged they will slaughter anyone who makes the slightest suggestion of due process—equal treatment *under the law*. Yet, I was at a women's shelter this afternoon, as I am on many days, and there was no influx of donations, no one tweeting about the great work, no one asking if help was needed. I made a couple of calls and found the same lack of interest to be true in other shelters too. It the same old, same old—one new Twitter follower a day and 100 bucks a week from the local church group.

Is this how we create a safer environment for abused women?

Take it from someone who knows—the answer is a categorical no. The *urgent* and most pressing issue facing those working in the area of violence against women is the resources available to help the women who are reporting.

In the province of Ontario, population 10,000,000, there are 2,000 shelter beds (for women and children). Shelters are always full and there's always a waiting list. Most towns do not have a rape crisis centre or a hospital unit that specializes in sexual assault.

What's going on in the Internet right now is a version of the boorish and high-horsed slackativism that many mistake for making the world a better place. It's a world where people think the revolution is about re-tweeting or liking something on Facebook or yelling at people who offer the slightest divergence from your viewpoint. Or that the point you're yelling about is really the only point because it's the only piece of the issue you know.

The events of the past week have done nothing to help women who are abused or sexually assaulted.

It bears no relation to a fight for women's equality or safety.

It has only served to whip up an emotional diversion from the real issues facing abused women and made people afraid to speak their minds on the issue; apparently, a shockingly easy thing to do.

This ridiculous stand, supposedly in support of abused women has blinded us—including, God forgive me for saying, people who I think should know better—to what we really need to help women facing violence and, to me, the unbelievably racist undertones of this whole episode.

I am, to tell you the God's truth, shocked.

And I have one more thing to say before I go. I am no Margaret Wente or Ann Coulter or any other name you might use to slag me. I am a woman who has worked for on this issue for 25 years, including on the frontline

in a shelter for women and children. I have made it my life's work to ensure that resources are available to help women. I have seen the government interest in the issue wane and the public interest flag.

And I don't appreciate a bunch of social media know-it-alls showing up like cops, bossing everyone around with nothing to offer except a demand to see the issue through their own, particularly narrow lens, and for reducing this issue to one man—a celebrity who, if he was found guilty in a court of law would receive, given it was a first offence, court-mandated participation in a men's group for which he would be on a long wait list, given there are very few of those groups available.

Chapter 3

Look who's talking



Originally published August 9, 2013

Your Working Girl wants to take a peek stateside this week to see how her sisters are fairing in the land of the free. Since the Republican gains in the mid-term elections in 2010, individual states have been cutting funding to women's clinics, forcing women to watch ultrasounds prior to having an abortion and generally causing terror in the minds of millions of women by chipping away at their access to contraception. She has to confess to her Gentle Readers that she is concerned.

Although the story has not been widely or consistently reported by most news agencies, Rachel Maddow has been closely following it in all its horrifying detail for the past year on her top-rated prime time show on MSNBC.

- Texas cut state funding to Planned Parenthood, resulting in the closure of more than 50 clinics and shutting off access to health care for 130,000 women.
- Because of strict new laws, the only abortion clinic in Toledo, Ohio – the state's most populated city — may be forced to close this month.
- North Carolina's governor signed a controversial, restrictive abortion bill into law this week, forcing the state's last remaining abortion clinic to lose its licensing.
- In June, the Texas legislature was voted on a bill to further restrict access to abortion. That's when the world heard of Texas State Senator Wendy Davis. She filibustered the vote when she spoke for 11 straight hours — no eating, no bathroom breaks and no straying off topic, live streamed and watched by hundreds of thousands.

According to Salon.com "in the first half of 2013, lawmakers enacted 43 pieces of legislation restricting abortion access—as many as were enacted during all of 2012."

Jeffrey Toobin, the only talking head left on CNN with a bit of sense in his head, weighed in on the battle with a *New Yorker* piece this week, *Daughters of Texas*. The article included an interesting portrait of Cecile Richards, the president of Planned Parenthood of America and the daughter of former Texas governor, Ann Richards.

But the most riveting angle in his story was how Republican politicians are building their Conservative *bona fides*, growing their political *cojones* on the backs of women's reproductive rights. (Irony takes no prisoners.)

This pretty picture has been brought to you courtesy of the redistricting that has happened in Republican-governed state legislatures, resulting in whole districts, or ridings as we say in Canada, that are almost entirely Republican. That means the political battles waged among Republicans are in the primary stage (party nomination stage in Canada) not during the actual elections, since these districts are perceived to be sure Republican wins.

That means they have to out do each other on the scramble to occupy the rightest of wings in order to secure their base—a base skewed to older, rural religious white males. Anti-abortion and contraception talk gets them all jacked up. They back the guy that shouts the loudest about legislating barriers to women's health care. Heaven knows why, but it's likely pretty creepy.

So where are the women in this political landscape? There must be more women besides Cecile Richards and Rachel Maddow in on the front lines of this campaign. Where are they?

Not being sourced by the media it appears.

In a study by the 4th Estate, a US company that monitors media sources, women are not well represented in political media.

Between November 2011 and May 2012, they found:

- 81% of quotes about abortion were by men.
- 75% of quotes about birth control were by men.
- 67% of quotes about Planned Parenthood were by men.
- 52% of quotes about women's rights were attributed to men, 17% to associations and groups and 31% to women.

In general, 87% of the quotes in print media election stories were attributed to men and 84% of those quoted on the television news were men.

Op/Ed stats are no better. A study of *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *the Los Angeles Times* and *The Wall Street Journal* over three months in 2011 revealed that:

- Men wrote 80% of the opinion/editorials.
- Men wrote 89% of economic commentaries.
- Men wrote 87% of columns on international politics.
- Men wrote 86% of those on social justice.
- Men wrote 84% of those on national security.
- Men wrote 47% of those on 'women's issues'.

Would a Gentle Reader please call 911?

Surely what we have here is an equity in media emergency.

Chapter 4

I choose Gawker



Originally published May 23, 2013

Your Working Girl has fallen gracefully to her dainty knees as she beseechingly asks what in the name of Holy Mary, Mother of God do our elected politicians have in store to punish us with this day. To get up in the morning this week is to have a case of news-induced vertigo descend as swiftly as the dementor's curse.

And now, she's afraid she has lost her patience entirely.

Jon Stewart's disturbing, brilliant, eight-minute, un-funny piece on Rob Ford's alleged crack use coupled with the mealy-mouthed excuse for a news conference delivered by the mayor's brother on Wednesday afternoon has simply driven Your Working Girl to utter distraction.

This must stop, she thought, reaching for her epi-pen of hypocrisy, a sprightly new iPad with matching keyboard. She went straight to gawker.com to contribute the maximum contribution she could manage on her modest budget.

And now, she is encouraging her Gentle Readers to do the same.

If a videotape showing the mayor smoking the rock with two apparent drug dealers is true, we seem to have a bully of a mayor whose drug of choice is an inner-city scourge. And crack hasn't really left the poor neighbourhoods from whence it came in the 1980s. Which is it why it appears the mayor had to go to Kipling and Dixon Road to buy and smoke his fix. Just up the street, three young men have been murdered this year, quite possibly drug-related.

Yet the mayor mocks the very young people he allegedly turns to for a fix, young people who rightly need a reprieve from the violence that permeates their lives, instead of a new customer.

The mayor habitually uses his office as a made-to-order bully pulpit. After a Toronto shooting in July 2012 that left two dead and 23 people injured, the mayor spoke derisively about community grant programs that assist youth.

"I don't believe in those programs," he said, "I call them hug-a-thug programs."

The man is, of course, a legend—in his own mind, that is.

"No one helps youth more than I do," he told Global News after reprimanding the reporter for asking why he voted against funding for anti-gang and community grants,

"I put more of my time and my own money helping these kids more than anyone does."

He was referring his coaching position for a high school football team, the Don Bosco Eagles, a post he has just been relieved of by Toronto Catholic District School Board.

"He said if it weren't for him, his players would be dead or on drugs and we thought that was over the top," Judy Collins, treasurer of the school's parent council, told a *Globe and Mail* reporter. "It was as if he believed the parents had no control or responsibility over their kids at all, that their fates were in the hands of Rob Ford alone."

Yet, there is a wall of reticence among Canada's brain trust to potentially expose the truth because the people who were allegedly in the room with Ford and took the video are so-called drug dealers and they are asking for money to release it. They are saying they want to get out of Dodge and start their lives over.

But in the battle of exposing a morally bankrupt mayoralty versus giving a couple of drug dealers in the projects money, protecting the powerful wins out. Giving supposed drug dealers money? Offensive really. It would be ... well ... just wrong. That's something Americans do. And what would those people do with the money? Buy drugs or something? Good heavens, it would be the beginning of a slippery slope.

Your Working Girl is *ad nauseum* at the number of times she heard some version of those sentiments.

Robyn Urback of *The National Post* opines that of "the utter offensiveness of publicly rewarding a pair of drug players with a rich reward for having the savvy to hit 'record' on their cell phone" should be enough to get people to stop contributing [to gawker.com]."

In their best-selling book *Freakonomics: A Rogue Economist Explores the Hidden Side of Everything*, authors Steven D. Levitt and Stephen J. Dubner write about an extensive four-year study of dealers in the crack boom of the 1990s.

The question? Why drug dealers live with their moms

The answer? "If you had a job paying \$3.30 an hour, you'd be bunking at home too."

The popular and respected authors tell us:

"A crack gang works pretty much like the standard capitalist enterprise: You have to be near the top of the pyramid to make a big wage. But selling crack is a lot more dangerous than most menial labor. Anyone who was a member of the gang ... stood a 1-in-4 chance of being killed. That's more than five times as deadly as being a timber cutter, which the Bureau of Labor Statistics calls the most dangerous job in the United States."

On the bright side, the Toronto debacle makes Your Working Girl think fondly of her dear friend, community organizer, Saul Alinsky, a man who was terribly impatient with people who did not take action on the basis of principle.

"He who sacrifices the mass good for his personal conscience has a peculiar conception of 'personal salvation'; he doesn't care enough for people to 'be corrupted' for them," he said in *Rules for Radicals* published in 1971.

Mr. Alinsky thought that the morality of action had to be weighed against the morality of inaction. And, for better or worse, Your Working Girl is throwing her lot in with him and choosing action.

And to be perfectly honest, it feels great. No one's blood was shed in clicking the Donate Now button. Sadly, the same cannot be said for the deals that go down in Canada's poorest neighbourhoods.

Epilogue

Despite the news the Kipling Road videographers have appear to have gone to ground, Your Working Girl still feels great about her contribution to the Crackstarter Campaign. John Cook of Gawker.com is being transparent and straightforward about the nature of the deal. Life is not in black and white. In his Rob Ford Crackstarter Update, John Cook is, at least, defining the gray area. There is honour in that.

Sports

When I say sports, it's only two sports.

Meeting baseball was part of the joy of moving to a city with a major league ball team and learning about the sport from people who knew a lot about it. The instant attraction was supplemented by reading many of the beautiful books written about baseball in the off-season.

Formula 1 racing, which I remember watching with my older brothers as a child on ABC Wide World of Sports, riveted by the cars whizzing around the track driven by sprite like men with names like Jackie Stewart, Niki Lauda, Jody Scheckter, James Hunt, Nelson Piquet and Mario Andretti.

Chapter 1

Good morning Blue Jays' Fans! Advice to Young Wives From an Old Mistress

Originally published October 8, 2015

Winning at baseball is intoxicating—a dizzying pleasure like that of being spun across the dance floor by a partner so handsome and light on his feet that it makes you feel more attractive just by being in his arms.

Yet, without mindful orientation, the moment the first pitch is thrown, our infatuation could quickly be dashed by the harsh reality of the game.

In today's column, I am offering a few tidbits I've learned over the years that I hope will help get you through the rollercoaster ride of the next few weeks and, with any luck at all, you will come out at the other end even more in love than you are now, whatever the numbers on the scoreboard.



One. Relax. Take the first few innings to enjoy the fact we are all here watching great baseball in October. Appreciate the skill of the other team. Take pleasure in the feeling of being united in support of our team and their ability to be able to play well against such skilled opposition. Appreciation of the other team lends itself to a deeper appreciation of your own.

Two. Take the opportunity to learn more about the game. Find friends who've been watching baseball for a while and hang out with them for a couple of games. They will be pleased to tell you everything they know and appreciate your enthusiasm. If you're watching games with people who make you feel bad or lord their two cents over you, tell them you'll see them after the play-offs. Find other baseball friends. Read the sports pages. *Sports Illustrated* has the Jays on the cover. Pick it up at the newsstand.

Three. Take one game and just watch what the pitchers do. Watch how they deal with getting hit, how they react when the defense saves them a run. Notice their relationship to the catcher. The late-great Yogi Berra said, "90% of baseball is a mental, the other half is physical." This is especially true of pitchers.

Four. Pick your favourite thing about the game—home runs, double plays or hitless innings—and look up the stats on that one thing. Even if you don't want to get into the stats long term, it will give you an

appreciation of how much statistical information is available. Understand how you can either collect wine or baseball stats because there's not room enough in the human brain for both.

Five. Don't be too hasty to judge at this stage, despite a natural and compelling urge to do so, in particular about when a manager is pulling a pitcher. Heads can be slapped at any boned-headed errors in the infield, however, because that's just how it is.

Six. If you are serious about watching baseball, don't get drunk. You might think it's great, but it's not and you certainly won't last nine innings. It's a waste of championship baseball.

Seven. Now is a good time to wear what everyone else is wearing. Get out your Blue Jays hat or t-shirt and put it on. We beat the Yankees, after all, and it really does bring us together, something we all need from time to time.

Eight. Do what generations of people have done before you. Even if you're not at the ballpark, pick up a few hotdogs, hotdog buns and mustard, and make a few at home. Baseball and hot dogs. They're good whether you win or lose.

Nine. Understand that baseball is like life. It's cruel. Sometimes you can be flying along looking at a winning game and, boom, the other team scores three runs in the bottom of the 9th and it's over. On the other side of the coin, nothing can be going your way, then you get a little rally going with two out and you're victorious. This is as an important life lesson as you can get.

Ten. Manage your regret. Should things go south, be sad for a while, but stand tall. It's very hard to win at baseball. And no team wins every game. The joy is in the trying.

Chapter 2

Chief Wahoo Takes Over the Toronto Blue Jays

Originally published October 30, 2015



Mark Shapiro's hat for 24 years.

Mark Shapiro will become the President and CEO of the Toronto Blue Jays on Monday, November 3rd, taking over from longtime President and CEO, Paul Beeston, an old-school baseball guy, whose soft spot for the fans I have personally experienced more than one time.

Shapiro, apparently pronounced sha-PIE-row, is coming to Toronto after 24 years of working with the Cleveland Indians. He started as an assistant to baseball operations with Cleveland in 1992 when he was 25 years old and stayed in a variety of roles that culminated in him becoming President in 2010. They call themselves the Tribe down there in Cleveland and baseball analysts say Mr. Shapiro will very likely bring in his own people to execute his vision.

My question is this. What sort of vision does a man who has had one employer his entire MLB career, and who has been surrounded by the most racist mascot in all of major league baseball for 24 years, have exactly? I can't imagine it's very pretty.

For one thing, that awful Cleveland mascot, dubbed "Chief Wahoo", was subject of a resolution in the Ohio State Legislature last year, suggesting, the "Indians' nickname and logo are "an affront to Native Americans" and should be replaced with ones "free of racial insensitivity."

Mark Shapiro's response? "Chief Wahoo's not going anywhere."

For another, fan favourite, General Manager and architect of the current team, Montrealer, Alex Anthopoulos, is not sticking around to find out about Mark Shapiro's vision, leaving us to conclude that he doesn't like whatever he's seen.

Given his longtime support for racist icons, how will Mr. Shapiro feel in Toronto, the most multi-cultural city in the world that resides in a country with two (count 'em ... two) official languages? And how does 24 years of

work for a small market team with a payroll of no more than \$76 million prepare him for dealing with a Blue Jays payroll of more than \$136 million and whose fan base is an entire country?

What is Mark Shapiro doing here?

Could it be a new villain has just strolled into town?

Chapter 3

The Game of October 14th



Jose Bautista's famous bat flip on October 14 in a game against the Texas Rangers.

Originally published October 15, 2015

It was fifty thousand fans who were yelling on their feet
The accidental go-ahead run is nothing but a cheat!
When it comes to the pride of country, we know we gotta fight.
When it comes to the pride of baseball, forget the bromide "polite."

Last night, twas the fans, not the team, who put fear in the Ranger's face,
But the team, buoyed upon their wings, determined the ultimate pace.
Three errors and a rolling ball set the stage for what was in store.
And Joey Bats, Mr. Bautista, did all that was needed to score.

So Royals, or Cubbies or Mets please note, that when you come to town
The Blue Jays fans are ardent fans who know how to lay it down.
Call them sulky, cussed or surly. They can be truculent too.
But we're out to win the World Series, and what's in the way is you.

Chapter 4

What it feels like when your home team is winning



Josh Donaldson's hit his 35th homer of the season that, per StatCast, traveled 454 feet, in a game against the Detroit Tigers on August 28, 2015.

Originally published August 29, 2015

Baseball has its many charms whether your home team is winning or not.

For the baseball fan, the season starts in April and ends in October, and during that time, someone's home team somewhere is winning and, what with television and the Internet being what it is today, you can actually see the great teams play, even if yours is having a "building" year. There is a no-hitter being pitched somewhere in baseball, a player will be hitting for the cycle and you might even see that rarest of birds—the triple play.

But when the big show, after lumbering through the great towns of America, decides to park itself in your home town, in your ball park, even temporarily, well ... things get a bit giddy, the noise level in the ball park goes up, and your heart beats a little faster, doesn't it?

Because we know—it's kind of obvious from seeing them play—what's happening now with the Toronto Blue Jays is not an 11-game win streak in May. It's game after game of stellar pitching (Hello David Price! Welcome to T.O.). It's one great defensive play after another. It's home run after home run. It's third baseman, Josh Donaldson, leading *all of baseball* in RBIs and Runs. You can see one of them by pulling up a YouTube CBS video clip entitled *Josh Donaldson knocks bejeezus out of oncoming baseball*.

I could throw in more video clips, but you really are better off just watching a game. A blue-jay force field is being built. It looks like opposing teams may be getting into a tiny bit of overthink when facing Blue Jay batters, making the force field stronger and—holy shit—on top of all that, it's the end of August. (Remarkably for the month of August, after a sweep of the Detroit Tigers, the Toronto Blue Jays have gone 21-5 and scored 718 runs, the most in the major leagues.)

But then ... you also have to think ... even with all that talent, even with all those balls flying over the outfield, even with the big show parking in your town for five minutes, the Blue Jays, as of today, have won precisely .563% of the games they've played. Division rivals, the *New York Yankees* have won .551% of their games and are 1.5 games in back of the Jays. The St. Louis Cardinals—those beautiful Redbirds—sit on top of both leagues with a winning percentage of .641.

SUPERSTITION ALERT: For those who worry about jinxing the team, please stop reading now because we are going to talk about the future.

If the Jays keep playing the way they are playing, they *will* widen the gap in the AL East and win the division. Their reward (and ours) will be—assuming the American League standings stay the same, as they are today—a play-off between Toronto, Kansas City and Houston. If they come out on top of that, they will likely take on the Cardinals in a World Series for the Birds.™

Please don't mistake my musings for a bit of the old rah-rah-rah. My purpose—like many fans who've been around a time or two—is to heighten the appreciation of today's game by making sure everyone in my little universe understands just how *hard* it is to win at baseball. [1]

It is the cruelest of sports. It is a sport where the law of averages, which brought your team to life, and got you through the year, can go (pardon the expression) tits up late in the playoffs.

The hope of most fans, when the baseball season starts in April, is that your team will play a respectable .500 ball. In August, you need them to be playing high .500 or .600 ball, like the Cardinals are doing right now. For some perspective, I went into the history books to find out which teams, if any, in baseball had ever played .700 ball.

When I blew the dust of the records, I discovered that, since 1886, 14 teams had an over .700 season (much shorter seasons, it must be said). The most recent was the New York Yankees in 1998. (I hadn't realized it because I went on a baseball strike for a few years.)

But guess what else I found out that will blow your mind?

Only 5 of the 14 teams that played .700 ball in the past 129 years went on to win the World Series. How about that? A .700 win-loss record and a nickel ...

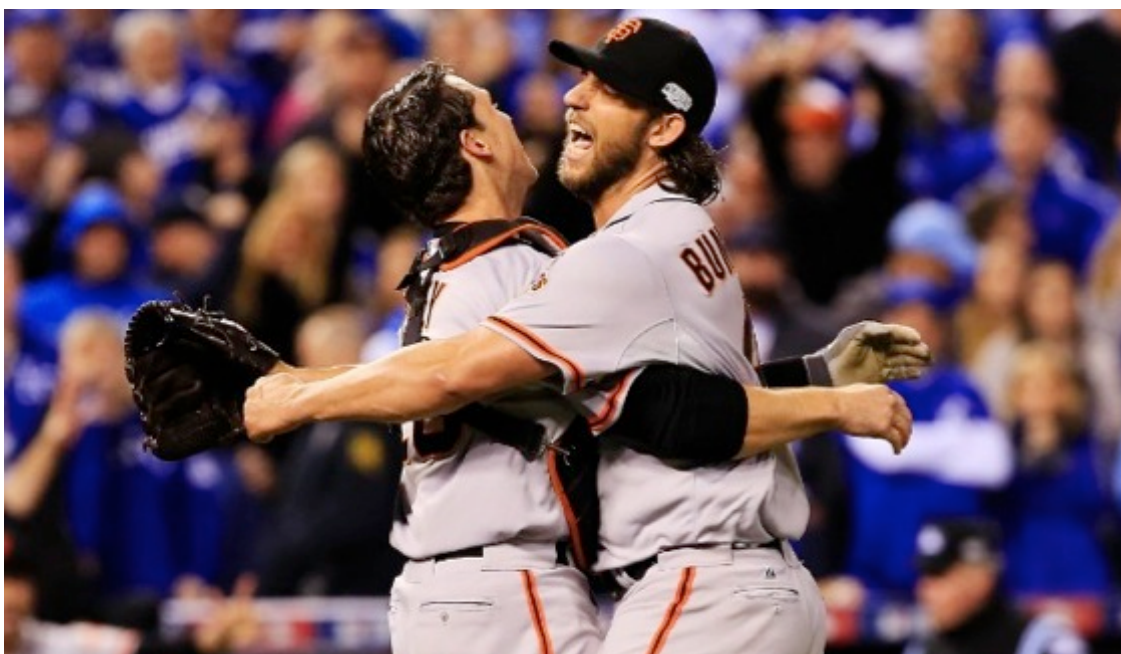
So you never know in baseball.

But baseball fans are a creative lot and besides the play on the field, winning gives rise to incredible little gifts like a video showing all 173 of the Blue Jays home runs up to August 26th set to the music of Johnny Cash singing *God is Going to Cut you Down*. Good job Jays.

[1] Hockey fans: Please pipe down. You are currently out-of-season.

Chapter 5

What happens to your mind when baseball season is over?



San Francisco Giants players Buster Posey, left, and Madison Bumgarner celebrate after defeating the Kansas City Royals. Photo: Jamie Squire/Getty Images

Originally published November 5, 2014

Since the World Series ended one week ago yesterday, things haven't been the same.

The Republicans just won a majority in the U.S. Senate, guaranteeing, at the very least, political paralysis in the world's biggest economy. On Sunday, our Armed Forces dropped two laser-guided GBU-12, 500-pound bombs "in the vicinity of Fallujah." The time change means it's lights out at 5:00 pm. The only real bright spot in an otherwise bleak landscape is that Canada has discovered the source of violence against women and is going about settling the score.

In the midst of this maelstrom, the purveyor of the medicine that eases our mortal suffering has closed up shop—baseball season is over. No baseball until the spring. It's a well-deserved rest for the players, heaven knows. A season comprised of 162 regular games proves the sheer endurance of its 1200 iron men.

In hindsight, I indulge these boys of summer with fondness. The shortstop bungling that ball in the infield wasn't so bad. It was kind of funny in a way. The base runner getting called out stealing second when there was no way he was

going to beat the throw just happens sometimes; everyone knows that. The \$6 million hitter whiffing on a pitch that was a mile outside the plate ... well, *you* try hitting a spherical object coming towards you at 90 miles an hour with a toothpick, then come back and tell me you're ticked off.

I promise I won't yell so much next year.

Hockey is not for me. (See distraction from worldly problems and violence mentioned in opening paragraph.) Ditto football. Basketball? Love #wethenorth, but no. F1 Racing? Since I was a girl, watching fast cars going around a track alongside my two heroic older brothers, I've enjoyed the thrill. *And* I remember James Hunt and Niki Lauda their first time around the paddock. But there's only two races left on this year's calendar—Brazil and Abu Dhabi. Then, nothing until March.

My heart belongs to baseball. Baseball provides respite from my weariness of the world.

The trajectory is the same every year—the promise of April, the dream's twilight by June, the injuries in July, the dog days of August and the wildcard race of September, the thrill of the play-offs and the climax of the World Series. Then ... poof ... there went 162 games, plus the post-season. You can't say baseball is not generous.

In another few weeks, I know I will feel like I can move on again and, if history repeats itself, I will dip into the vast canon of great baseball literature, reveling in the knowledge that no other sport can compare. Does baseball imitate life or is it the other way around? Does it matter?

Baseball is poetic—all that symmetry, those angles and the cruelty of Mighty Casey striking out.

Hall of Famer and former Yankee shortstop, Phil Rizzuto, was a Yankee broadcaster for 40 years and is one of baseball's most famous spoken word poets. Not that he knew it, of course. About 20 years ago, excerpts from his on-air coverage were put together in a book called *O Holy Cow!* edited by Tom Peyer and Hart Seely.

Looking for distraction in a tumultuous time, I opened *O Holy Cow!* at random this morning, intending to read whatever page I'd landed on. Page 66 coughed up what Phil Ruzzuto had to say about what has become known as "The Pine Tar Game" between the Kansas City Royals and the New York Yankees at Yankee Stadium in 1983:

*"Well, I tell ya,
There's a rule,
A definite rule in the rule book
That the pine tar can only be a certain height,
And now they're trying to get rid of the bat,
And Gaylord Perry was out there,
He's gonna get fined,
He's in a tug of war with the umpire."*

I smiled. And I'll be damned if I didn't feel a little better. Crazy that. Baseball.

If you're a visual person, go to YouTube and type in The Pine Tar Game. It doesn't have Phil Rizzuto, but shows a side of George Brett you may not have yet seen.

Chapter 6

108 Stitches

Originally published April 7, 2013

The promise of a new baseball season is upon us. All things are possible now. In Toronto, we are wild with excitement: R.J. Dickie, Jose Bautista, Jose Reyes, Mark Buehrle, Melky Cabrera, the whole darn gang are just so full of potential. Surely, we are contenders. But win *or* lose, watching these million dollar players bounce around the Rogers Centre will be a wonder to behold even as baseball *savant*, Alex Anthopoulos, works it all out on paper.



And after a winter of snow squalls, freezing temperatures, the Norwalk virus and a run of the mill head cold that just won't quit, this baseball fan is looking to be born again, resurrected upon the wings of the boys of summer. The line of a pitch, the crack of the bat, the thump, thump of a double play, the oooohh of the crowd as the ball heads towards the outfield wall, not yet deemed fair or foul.

One's heart aches for it, doesn't it?

More than any other major league sport, baseball appeals to the female soul. According to ESPN, 46% of major league baseball fans are women -- almost half, compared to 35% for major league hockey, for example.

A fellow baseball fan and my friend, Mary Jane Wood, says she's pumped about the Blue Jays this year.

"I'm so excited about the upcoming season because of the new lineup! I can't wait for tonight's game," she said. "I've been reading all the baseball columns in the *Globe and Mail* and the *Star* to get the lowdown on the new players.

"I'm especially excited about R.J. Dickey and Jose Reyes.

"The only sad note is that Ricky Romero didn't make it," she told me in an email, referring to the Jays pitcher getting optioned to Dunedin. "Poor guy."

Like men, women come to the game in many ways. Some know the middle name of every player on the home team, but couldn't name a player in the opposing team. Some are interested in the business of sport, the trades, and the salaries, the marketing. Some follow sport-transcending players like a Joe Namath or a Wayne Gretzky. Some, like me, enjoy the numbers, the mythology and the friendly pace of the game.

Baseball is a companion throughout the many phases of one's life. As you're washing up a few dishes after supper, the radio announcers share their smart patter with a mix of game details, and player stories and statistics, like so many recipe cards. Each player has his own ingredients, making the outcome reasonably predictable, but not always.

When children came into the picture, the arrival of baseball season was an early sign the school year would soon be mercifully over. Worn out lunch boxes, the anxiety of getting the kids to school on time and the torture of homework would be soon wiped away. Hooray!

I have fond personal memories of having just arrived in Toronto and being one among a gang of young men and women, happy to sit in a \$4 bleacher seat at Exhibition Stadium. Our lives, like the beginning of a baseball season, were full of potential and sunny days, as we studied the science of baseball as fervently as we did the politics of the day.

My friend, Mary Jane, remembers also the good old days too.

"When the Blue Jays were in the World Series I was going crazy. I have goose bumps just thinking about it. I couldn't sit still and watch the game. I had to pace around I was so nervous! I lived in Florida with my family from 1988--1997.

"I missed Toronto and the Blue Jays so much. In the fall of 1993, I had to go to New Orleans for a conference right in the middle of the World Series. I watched games in my hotel room, but the night of game six, I was at a colleague's house with others from the conference. I had to ask them if they would please put the baseball game on the TV. So I saw Joe Carter's home run! OMG. That was amazing, but I was still so jealous of people who were actually at the game!

"A couple of years later, Joe Carter came to a sports store in Fort Lauderdale to sign autographs and my whole family went-- my husband, my daughter and two sons. That ball is still in a special spot."

Winning in baseball is, of course, also part of the charm.



Epilogue

After a very short battle with lung cancer, my dear baseball friend, Mary Jane Wood, passed away on September 4, 2015. Here we are at the Rogers Centre where the Blue Jays were playing the Detroit Tigers in June 2014.

Chapter 7

No experience necessary: Your Working Girl's Guide to What Happened during the 2014 F1 Racing Season

Originally published November 27, 2014

I am one of the first people to get it. I understand completely. Being a Formula 1 race fan is a nerdy-slash-incomprehensible pastime with a dash of “trying too hard” if you’re a woman, who, in this case, applies—the woman part, I mean, not the trying too hard part. But like gamer convention and Comic Con devotees, Your Working Girl leads a happy life already predisposed to a diverse group of people simply because they are fans of a sport that no one else within in hearing range seems to care about.

While on a crowded bus heading to a racetrack in Europe, I was one of a group of strangers who had gathered around a demure, professorial-looking Englishman. Traveling with his wife, he had just modestly confessed to having had a letter to the editor printed in *Motorsport* magazine. The letter was about tire strategy or, as they say in *Motorsport* magazine, *tyre* strategy. A few of the lads on the bus clapped him on the back admiringly while the rest of us nodded our heads in appreciation. The professor was among people who understood the entirety of his accomplishment.

For the uninitiated, a Formula 1 race is a three-day event. Because of the time difference and my own schedule, I tape Friday practice, Saturday qualifying (or *quali* if you’re talking to someone who knows what that means) and then, finally, the race on Sunday. There were 19 race events on this year’s calendar, which started in March in Australia and ended this past Sunday.



Winner of the 2014 F1 drivers' championship, Lewis Hamilton, embraces his girlfriend, former Pussycat Dolls singer, Nicole Scherzinger.

The live race comes on television early Sunday morning and I usually try to watch my recording of it *sometime* on Sunday because I cannot go online, check Twitter, Facebook or watch television until I do. I usually watch the race alone. If that sounds sad, it's not meant to. I do have people all over the world I can talk to about racing, so it's not likely I feel any lonelier than they do. In talking to my brothers on the East coast, the phone call just needs to start with "have you have a chance watch the race yet?" The answer to that question determines the parameters of the conversation that follows.

I have held off writing about F1 in this space. My typical blog fare features hypocrisy, rampant capitalism and women's issues, deadly serious matters, including the recent Ghomeshi scandal, with the occasional baseball column thrown in for relief, which my readers say they like—at least when they're not arguing with each other in the comments section. And I'm not saying that F1 couldn't necessarily fall into one of my three traditional niches, but everyone has to have a bit of fun.

And fun—or my idea of it—is what brings me to today's humble offering, a wrap-up of the 2014 Formula 1 season. Hip, hip hoor-ray, already.

Believe me, for those new to the sport, you don't need to know anything about F1 to continue reading. And to my F1 compatriots, I offer this wrap-up with a big wallop of humility. You will notice all the things I *didn't* include. Feel free to comment.

The biggest shift in 2014 was that all F1 cars had to be powered with hybrid engines, using 30% less fuel. Teams have been working on the hybrid package for years.

Ultimately, they made the fuel conservation possible because a significant amount of the excess energy produced by the movement and heat generated in the operation of the regular internal combustion engine, which is fuelled by the same gas you pump into your car, is *collected* by a highly finessed energy recovery system. That *collected* energy is then re-directed to a turbo-charger, which compresses air to make the internal combustion engine more powerful and to a battery that powers an electric motor, which then, in turn, directs the electrical power back to the internal combustion engine. An occasionally fickle set of electronics organizes this beautiful circular waltz of energy spent and reclaimed.

That's pretty neat to me, but why should it matter to you?

In the movie, *The Devil Wears Prada*, Meryl Streep, as Miranda Priestly, editor of *Runway* magazine, describes the trickle-down theory of high fashion to the skeptical, and somewhat smug, Anne Hathaway character. And I think you can pretty well use it to describe why what happens in F1 matters to the car-buying public:

"You think [fashion] has nothing to do with you," says Miranda Priestly to the Hathaway character during a run through of the new issue of the magazine. "You go to your closet and you select, I don't know, that lumpy blue sweater you're wearing, for instance ... what you don't get is that sweater is not just blue, it's not just turquoise, it's not lapis. It's actually cerulean ... In 2002 Oscar de la Renta did a selection of cerulean gowns and then, I think, Yves St. Laurent showed cerulean military jackets. And then cerulean quickly shot into the collections of eight different designers and then filtered down into the department stores, then trickled down into some casual corner where you, no doubt, fished it out of some clearance bin."

Haute couture is to fashion what F1 racing is to the automotive industry. It sets the bar. The energy recovery systems used in Formula 1 this year marks the most advanced work being done on the development of hybrid engines. And while those cars look nothing like a Ford Fusion, the F1 experimentation with hybrids will likely lead to developments in the use of hybrid engines for the cars regular people drive and for energy recovery systems in general. Just like Oscar de la Renta did with his cerulean blue.

One of the unexpected issues arising from the transition to hybrids that continues to be of interest to me, was that the hybrid engines weren't loud enough for many race fans to experience the visceral impact of the noise rattling around in their chests. In fact, after the first race of the season in Australia, the Australian Grand Prix

Corporation was so upset about the lack of ear-splitting roar and vibrating heart, they considered claiming breach of contract with Bernie Ecclestone and F1 management. Bernie promises to make it louder next year.

Regardless of the decibel level, the introduction of the hybrid engine created the main two story arcs for the entire 2014 season.

Not all engine manufacturers got the beautiful circular waltz of energy spent and reclaimed quite right.

It was clear early in the season that Mercedes got it right with their design, which powered their own team as well as the teams of McLaren, Force India and Williams.

Engine maker Renault, which powered former championship team, Red Bull, along with the teams of Toro Rosso, Lotus and Caterham fell far behind the performance of the Mercedes engines and they struggled all year.

Ferrari, using Ferrari engines (are there any other kind?), had their worst season since 1980. They also powered the cars of two smaller teams—Sauber and Maurissa. The young Anglo-Russian team of Maurissa suffered their most tragic season although it turned out to be nothing engine related.

Mercedes dominated all other teams by about one second a lap. Following that, it was the rivalry between the two Mercedes drivers, Lewis Hamilton and Nico Rosberg that made most races exciting. It was their duel that brought the 2014 driver's championship down to the very last race.

Friends and rivals since childhood when they raced go-karts together, the 2014 season emphasized the rivalry, not the friendship. Sometimes it became bitter.

Hamilton is a British former world champion and F1's first driver of colour. His family was not wealthy. His father worked three jobs to support Lewis and still managed to get to his son's races. Nico Rosberg is technically German, but was raised in Monaco. His father is former F1 racer, the Finn, Keke Rosberg.

Lewis, known for being a brilliant, but temperamental, racer said, because of Nico's privilege growing up, he didn't have the "fire in his belly" to win.

Nico, who some Lewis fans called "Brittney" because of his blonde wavy hair and wide smile, accidentally hit Lewis going through a corner during Lap 2 at the Belgium Grand Prix and put him out of the race. Tempers flared.

Most races during the season finished one-two Lewis-Nico or Nico-Lewis. But one man has to win. And so on Sunday past, I and my worldly F1 friends and relations gathered around our television sets to see who would emerge the 2014 F1 World Champion.

For a sport largely seen as European, that penultimate race was a long way from Europe—far from the Spa Francorchamps Raceway in Belgium, through which I hoofed through miles of the Ardennes forest to claim my seat at the Eau Rouge corner in 2013, the 100th anniversary of the track.

It was miles, metaphorically and otherwise, from the streets of Monaco where, when drivers brush the concrete barriers of the narrow street circuit, it's called a "Monaco kiss." And where Prince Albert II, head of the Princely House of Grimaldi (and son of Grace Kelly) along with his wife Princess Charlene (expecting twins before the year is out) presented the drivers with their trophies for first, second and third place finishes in August.

The last race of the season was held at the Abu Dhabi racetrack in the United Arab Emirates, a part of F1 Supremo Bernie Ecclestone's expansion of the "world brand" of Formula 1 (or Bernie following the money).

The Abu Dhabi Grand Prix takes place at the Yas Marina Circuit on an island 25 km from Abu Dhabi. It's a modern high tech track that features a tunnel for a pit lane exit of which David Coulthard, former racer and now BBC host deadpans, "a lot of action happens there, we just don't see it."



The grandstands are covered by what looks like Bedouin tents and the Yas Viceroy Hotel, situated in the middle of the track, has a dramatic wire canopy that, to me, looks like a burka caught in the wind.

In the lead-up to Abu Dhabi, Lewis had won 10 races to Nico's 5 races and was 17 points ahead in the standings. But because the F1 rule makers ludicrously made Abu Dhabi a "double points" race, Hamilton would have to come second if Nico won, a weird, and hopefully not to be repeated, skewing of the odds.

Nico won the pole position in Saturday qualifying ahead of Lewis by .336 of a second (a lifetime), making him first on the grid, first out of the gate, an important advantage on any circuit where overtaking is difficult. Nailing-biting time for Lewis Hamilton fans, of which there are many all over the world.

Yas Hotel at night, Formula 1, Abu Dhabi

Yet the hybrid engine and driver rivalry aren't the sum total of what happened in 2014. I noticed more women in higher profile positions this year. Claire Williams, daughter of Sir Frank Williams, a former racer who has been confined to a wheelchair as a result of injuries he suffered in a non-racing related car crash in 1986, is deputy team principal for Williams F1.

Susie Wolff, the first women driver in F1 since Giovanna Amati, is a reserve driver for Williams. Giovanna Amati tried unsuccessfully to qualify in three races for Brabham in 1992 and was replaced by Damon Hill. (The main drivers for Williams are the Finn, Valtteri Bottas and Brazilian, Felipe Massa.)

Monisha Kaltenborn, a lawyer born in India and raised in Vienna, is the first woman team principal in F1. She runs and co-owns the Ferrari-powered Swiss team, Sauber with German, Nico Hülkenberg and Mexican, Sergio Perez in the drivers' seats. They arrived in Abu Dhabi second last, only besting the Renault-powered Caterham team, and not having scored a single point.

I like seeing women succeed in F1 and believe the inclusion of women in the garage and on the track could bring more fans than all of Bernie Ecclestone's "world brand" expansion plans. It is long overdue in racing and in the engineering field, in general.

On the other hand, 2014 was also the year of Vladimir Putin, the man with the inverted triangle torso, who popped up on the F1 circuit at the sport's newest race, the Russian Grand Prix in Sochi, a circuit that would look familiar to you if you watched any of the Sochi Olympics

The Sochi race itself was a stunning bore, a "parade" for F1 fans, although it must have been exciting for the Mercedes team who won the constructor's championship there. (In F1 there is a championship for the team called the constructor's championship, which emphasizes the design and construction of the cars, as well as one for the drivers.)

But Sochi had the added creepiness of the Putin factor. There he was ... in the little room where the podium winners stop by to get a drink of water, put on tire manufacturer's Pirelli caps and clamp on the handcuff of the rich man, a Rolex watch, in preparation for walking out in front of the crowds and television cameras to receive their trophies. It's a place for the drivers to catch their breath and have a few words with each other, sometimes friendly, sometimes not.

In that little room, Lewis Hamilton, the race winner, did everything but go near Putin, not easy in such small quarters. He darted around, fiddling with the caps on the table, the wristband of his watch, drinking water and, doing what he does after every race, running his fingers through his sweat-soaked hair trying to get it to stand on end before he goes out to the podium. Was he avoiding Putin?

It sure looked like it. Eventually, he had to shake Putin's hand to get out of the room, but was Lewis making a point here by his stalling? We'll never know, but he got some points in my book, that's for sure.

Tragedy also struck Formula 1 in 2014. During the Japanese Grand Prix, under a yellow flag, the young French driver, Jules Bianchi's car, a Ferrari-powered Maurissa, skidded off the track at a very high speed and ran underneath a recovery vehicle while it was tending to Adrian Sutil's car, the Renault-powered Sauber, which had skidded off the track on the previous lap at the exact same spot.

The entire race had a sense of foreboding about it. It was raining really hard. If you have seen the movie *Rush*, during which Niki Lauda refuses to continue the Japanese Grand Prix because of the rain, the race conditions were similar. The race actually started under a yellow flag and then, on Lap 2, was stopped because of the weather. After 20 minutes, the race was started again, but still under a yellow flag. On Lap 9, the race was green-flagged and went forward with a general mayhem until the yellow flag came out again on Lap 42 when Sutil's car went off. On Lap 43, Jules Bianchi's car also went off.

Not that anyone knew it at the time. Because it was in the exact same spot as Sutil's car, the GPS readings were confusing. The Maurissa team knew something was wrong because Jules wasn't answering on his headset. But no one else really knew exactly what had happened until after the race.

His head injuries were "devastating." A sensor in his helmet measured an impact of 94G. His condition was classified as life threatening and critical then and continues to be today. The young man was hurt so badly, very badly. The race was called on Lap 45. I cried.

Bianchi's accident was the most serious crash in F1 since Felipe Massa's injury in 2009 when he was qualifying for the Hungarian Grand Prix. Massa's helmet was hit with a suspension spring from another car on a high-speed part of the track and he drove into a tire barrier. After the incident, his condition was described as "life-threatening."

There have been no on-track deaths in Formula 1 since Ayrton Senna died while leading the San Marino Grand Prix in 1994. The same cannot be said for Indy racing which continues to be carnage, despite the technological developments in making car racing safer. (The topic of another post.)

But all of the emotions—all the blood, sweat and many tears—of the 2014 season came to bear on the 22 cars lined up on the grid at the start of the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix.

The conditions were excellent; the drivers' eyes are riveted on the starting light stanchion, a row of five lights. The race director starts the sequence and each of the five lights turns red, one-by-one.

Then, boom, all five lights go out and the race is on. Lewis Hamilton's car flies off the grid like it was shot out of a cannon. He said later it was the best start he'd ever had. Nico Rosberg's car raced in behind him, but Lewis had taken charge of the next 55 laps.

After 10 laps, Lewis and Nico are set firmly in the one-two positions, with the cars of Williams' drivers Felipe Massa and Valtteri Bottas running three-four.

On Lap 12, Nico Rosberg pits for new tires.

On Lap 14, Felipe Massa pits for new tires.

On Lap 17, The Renault-powered Toro Rosso of Russian driver, Daniil Kyvat, retires from the race after spinning out, a frustrating finale of his commendable rookie season.

On Lap 25, it's a pivotal moment of the race. Nico Rosberg reports that his engine is losing power, a failure triggered by the finicky electronics of that energy recovery system. Something similar happened to his car at the Canadian Grand Prix in Montreal.

On Lap 28, Pastor Maldonado's (sometimes called "Crashtor" Maldonado) Renault-powered Lotus bursts into flames. He pulls over and gets out, his race day done.

Lap 30, Despite losing the power of his energy recovery system, Nico Rosberg is still running third with the Williams of Felipe Massa giving chase.

Lap 34, Massa easily passes Nico Rosberg.

Lap 35, Rosberg pits and comes back on the track in seventh place.

Lap 37, Rosberg pleads with his race engineers on the radio, "What the hell can I do to get to fifth?" (the position he needs to win the championship should Hamilton, for whatever reason, fail to finish.) "Just go flat out," was the damp reply.

Lap 40, Nico Rosberg's car is now the slowest of the field with the exception of rookie British driver, Will Stevens, who received the super license required to drive in F1 half an hour before the race and is filling in for Maurissa's Jules Bianchi.

Lap 43, Lewis Hamilton, still out front, posts a quick lap and tells his engineers "I'm comfortable" although, according to *The Guardian*, you can "still hear anxiousness in his voice."

Lap 46, Williams' Felipe Massa, now in second place, has just posted the fastest lap and it looks like he is setting up to challenge Hamilton.

Lap 54, Nico Rosberg's race engineer tells him to "box, box, box!" a recent and more thrilling way of saying, "come into the pits." Delivered in a clipped British accent, it's a handy phrase with an array of applications. (Instead of calling out, "dinner's ready!" to your family, for example, try calling out "box, box, box" and see how they react.) Despite the call to box, Nico says, "No, I'd like to finish." The team gives him the go-ahead to continue. I am sad for Nico.

Lap 55, Lewis Hamilton crosses the finish line with the checkered flags waving and wins the 2014 F1 World Championship, saying "it means so much more to me than the first time," and "this is the best day my life," winning *us* all over with his excitement and enthusiasm. Well done, Lewis!

Nico Rosberg visits Lewis in that little room where the podium finishers are putting on their Rolexes and Pirelli hats to congratulate him. "You deserve it," says Nico. They hug.

And who has placed second in this thrilling last race of the season? It's that guy Felipe Massa, the Brazilian who was airlifted from the 2009 Hungarian Grand Prix in critical condition with a head injury, but who recovered and had a titanium plate inserted into his skull to strengthen it for racing.

Well done, Felipe! I am so happy for you.

And to you, Jules Bianchi, you handsome, dynamic young race driver who had your whole beautiful life ahead of you—Godspeed.

Chapter 8

Welcome to your 2015 F1 Season: Your armchair guide to the good stuff



Red Bull Boss, Christian Horner, with his fiancé, former Spice Girl, Geri Halliwell

Originally published March 13, 2015

We're off to the races again! Thank goodness. While the temperatures are still freezing in Eastern Canada in our imaginations we can bake in the sun at the Australian Grand Prix on the weekend. For those of you who haven't been paying too much attention since I wrote my F1 season wrap-up in November, don't worry! I've cobbled together some of what I'm going to be looking out for in the first couple of races and during the season (on *and* off the track) There's no shortage of gossip in Formula 1 so let's get started.

What's up with Fernando Alonso?

He is arguably the best driver in F1. Yet, the two-time champ has spent the last few years in cars that Lewis Hamilton would have flounced around the paddock declaring "undriveable."

His return to McLaren with Jenson Button and the new Honda power unit were meant to herald the revitalization of the team. Then a seemingly unexplainable crash during pre-season testing at Barcelona's Circuit de Catalunya on February 22, the three days he spent in hospital and the decision that he would not drive in the season's opening race, coupled with team principal Ron Dennis's insistence, until yesterday, Alonso wasn't concussed, has created an epic F1 mystery.

One dominant theory is that the car gave Alonso an electric shock, which rendered him unconscious prior to the incident. McLaren itself laid the blame on "gusty winds." There's a rumour that when Alonso came to after the incident, he thought it was 1995 and he was in karting. Yesterday Ron Dennis decried his own previous comments about Alonso *not* having a concussion, saying, "It was not the best performance by me."

BBC TV race announcer, David Coulthard, is saying, "something doesn't add up." BBC Radio 5 F1 analyst, Jennie Gow said, "nobody is really buying it."

Maybe he's just tired of driving crummy cars. The consensus is that if Alonso also sits out the Malaysian Grand Prix, then something is *really* happening. It will be worth tuning into the practice (TSN5 on Friday 1:55 EST) and qualifying (TSN 1,2,3,4,5 on Saturday 1:55 EST) broadcasts just to get the most up to date theories and see if Ron Dennis' *mea culpa* is believable.

Regardless— if, as Jennie Gow put it, "the [Honda] power unit is not yet talking to the car" is true, the likelihood of Jenson Button and Alonso's replacement, Kevin Magnussen, even finishing the race is less than 50-50. Is it worth it for Alonso to fly all the way to Australia for that? Would you?

Who will be driving for Sauber?

Generally speaking, teams know who will be in the driver's seats well before the first race of the season. Not so at Sauber. The team's third driver in 2014, Geordo van der Garde, is insisting that one of the 2015 seats belongs to him. And he's telling it to the judge.

Apparently, van der Garde's backers paid a "substantial" sum of money to Sauber in 2014 to have him as third driver last year so he'd graduate to a race seat in 2015. But Team Principal, Monisha Kaltenborn, got a couple of better offers when Marcus Ericsson and Felipe Nasr "came on the scene with bigger sponsorship deals," according to Motorsport magazine. And Sauber, a team clinging to this side of bankruptcy (See "Can we talk turkey?" below) by the thinnest of margins chose the drivers who brought the most money with them. No fair says van der Garde. A court in Switzerland agreed saying on Monday that failing to race van der Garde is "an intention to breach, if not an actual breach of the Award by the Respondent."

As I am writing this, Sauber lost the appeal at the Australian court to which van der Garde turned to for "enforcement" of the Swiss decision. If Sauber is "forced" to give up one of those more lucrative seats for van der Garde, Monisha Kaltenborn's financial headache just got worse. Kaltenborn, a lawyer by trade, has said she always felt her legal grounds were strong. Maybe. There is the technicality of van der Garde needing to get his super license before the race—a technicality that just may prevent him from taking his lawful place in the car. In terms of finishing the race on Sunday, Sauber will be lucky indeed if they come in last and second last regardless of who is in the driver's seat.

After winning the drivers' and constructors' championship last year, what does Mercedes, with drivers Lewis Hamilton and Nico Rosberg, have to say for itself?

We're one second faster than everyone else.

Podium? High likelihood of a one-two finish. Some are saying they could possibly win every race on the 2015 calendar.

Can Ferrari really go from its worse year in 25 years to being a challenger in 2015, even with four-time champion Sebastian Vettel?

I've got to say, I think Sebastian Vettel looks good in red. His resting face doesn't look so pouty when he's wearing red. It's definitely his colour—the blue drained him. Working in a challenging car will bring out the best in Sebastian Vettel. He's a good communicator and able to articulate what's going on inside the car for the mechanics and the engineers. It's hard to imagine he's still only 27 years old. And the car was fast in Jerez during testing, no doubt, the fastest three out of four days.

Yet, there are two big IFs with Ferrari. (IF being F1 backwards according to Murray Walker) One: Is the car reliable? Can it run fast for all the laps of the race? There's no evidence to feel overconfident on that point. Two: Kimi Raikkonen. I know there's a big contingent of fans that like the cold fish Finn vibe of Kimi. To me, since even before he had his back surgery, Kimi's been out of sorts and while the presence of Vettel might light a fire under him for a little while, it will more than likely annoy him by the time they get to Barcelona in May. He's burnt out on the politics of F1 and this year the politics and money talk are flying thick and fast.

Forget the podium, it would be a very big accomplishment, indeed, if both Ferraris finished. It would be great if they did.

And the plucky Force India?

Sadly after a great showing last year, Force India's money woes delayed the production of their car and the drivers haven't had much time in it. Somewhat inconsistent, Sergio Perez has shown flashes of brilliance. Nico Hülkenberg is an enjoyable driver to watch and did a great job for Force India last year. These guys are likely to get better as the season goes on. And they have the Mercedes power unit.

Will they finish on Sunday? Hopefully.

Lotus?

Struggling. Hoping to get in the top 10.

Will either Grosjean or Maldonado finish the race on Sunday? Probably not

Have you heard a peep from Williams?

No? Me either. They have been so quiet all winter—no distractions. You have to think that's a good sign, right?

Finish the race? Yes. Possible podium? Yes

Is it just me or has Red Bull become a bit of a bore?

We have two Toro Rosso graduates, Daniel and Dany (Ricciardo and Kyvat) in the drivers' seats, both good, even exciting drivers, but RB is carrying on like everything is so *hard* all the time, not winning is such a *struggle*. The real question I have for Red Bull is this: Will Christian Horner and Geri Halliwell's relationship last the season?

The chattering classes were blown up in 2014 when Christian Horner (a handsome, if pre-occupied, team principal), took up with the former "Ginger" Spice six months after his partner of 14 years, Beverley Allen, had given birth to their first child together, Olivia. Little Olivia was born just after the 2013 Korean Grand Prix, but proud papa Horner didn't make it home to see the baby until after the Japanese Grand Prix. The Halliwell-Horner's engagement was announced in an advert they'd taken out in *The Times* just before the season ended in November 2014 although no date has been set for a wedding. According to the *Daily Mail*, Christian Horner's parents, Gary and Sara, have said they are flat out not going to the wedding. Christian Horner co-founded the racing team Arden with his father, Gary, but according to *The Mirror*, "he has since resigned from

the four directorships he shared with his dad – including Arden Motorsport Limited.” For her part, Geri Halliwell has something of a reputation for short “intense” relationships with high profile men.

Will Red Bull finish the race? Yes

Possible podium? Yes

Christian and Geri? No comment

What’s happened to Marussia?

A new team has been formed in the place of Marussia and re-named Manor Grand Prix. Gone is the Russian investor. In comes Stephen Fitzpatrick a 37-year-old energy executive from Northern Ireland who is a huge F1 fan and spent \$39 million to basically jump the fence and hang out with the people inside the paddock. He will be fun to watch. The Manor cars, however, haven’t run since the Russian Grand Prix last October and they may not be ready to be on the grid because of software problems. They’ve signed Roberto Merhi and Will Stevens as drivers for this season. Marussia owes 39 creditors a combined \$48.5 million, including \$9.6 to McLaren for providing wind tunnel and simulator services according to *Forbes* magazine.

Will they start in Melbourne? Very iffy

Will they finish? Unlikely

How is Jules Bianchi doing?

I’m sorry to say that Jules is not doing great. There has been no change in his condition in the past five months. He is still in a coma and his father says it’s difficult for the family because they could get a “terrible call” from the hospital at any moment. The FIA has concluded its investigation. [Click here to read it.](#) According to *Autoweek*, the Bianchi family has hired a lawyer and is considering a taking legal action against those responsible for the race in Suzuka. So sad.

Are there any new women in F1 this year?

In February, Lotus announced they were hiring a new female development driver, Carmen Jorda, a Spaniard who has competed in GP3 for ten years but has never won much of anything. You’re not likely to hear anything good about Carmen Jorda ([Click here for background.](#)) who has been accused of “buying a ride” with her sponsorship and good looks. Jorda’s former GP3 teammate, Rob Cregan, was less than chivalrous in his congratulations.

On Twitter he announced,

“Carmen Jorda couldn’t develop a roll of film let alone a hybrid F1 car.”

Tsk. Tsk.

Danica Patrick’s fellow drivers used to talk trash about her all the time too even though she was a successful mid-pack driver who led the Indy 500 and came 4th in that iconic race because she lost places on account of a conservative fuel strategy. Frankly, no one, with the exception of Dario Franchetti maybe, did more to get bums in the grandstands of that bedraggled Champ Car Series than she did. No wonder she buggered off to NASCAR.

But perhaps we can think about all that when reflecting on the fact that, when Russian business man Andrei Cheglakov pulled out of Marussia, the team was still receiving the \$10.5 million they had been getting annually from Grahame Chilton, the former chairman of British reinsurer Aon Benfield and father of Marussia driver, Max Chilton.

Can we talk turkey?

I've saved the best for last (and I'm only half kidding!). We need to talk about money because, generally speaking, when a race season starts, the money talk gets dialed down. But this year is different for a couple of reasons. The action on the track is going to be fairly predictable and F1 is awash with more money than ever before in its history. Hopefully having a few basics in your back pocket will prevent you from being bored out of your mind and contribute to the substance of your F1 race fan chatter.

Despite the whopping revenues made by the conglomerate of F1 owners in the past few years, the costs of fielding a team, which are born by the team, have gone through the roof and Bernie Ecclestone is worried. You need teams to have a series. The bigger teams (Mercedes, Red Bull, Ferrari) can afford to spend the money. The smaller teams can't. Two teams—Catherham and Marussia faced bankruptcy in 2014. Catherham didn't make it. Marussia (now Manor Grand Prix) was saved by white knight, Stephen Fitzpatrick. With Bernie Ecclestone's support, an F1 strategy group presented cost control regulations to make F1 more affordable for smaller teams. But the big guys didn't buy into it although in recent days Christian Horner has made the suggestion to save money by abolishing wind tunnel testing. As of this moment no one is agreeing with him (or is it that it's hard to take Christian Horner seriously anymore?)

To help ease the situation, three teams—Sauber, Lotus and Force India—were given \$10 million advances against their prize money. Don't worry. It wasn't because Bernie's heart grew two sizes. It was because F1 promises a grid minimum to promoters. Bernie – the face of the F1 conglomerate – has to make sure at least 10 teams show up.

Here's some basic points of F1 financing that come from *Forbes* magazine's Christian Sylt, author of *Formula Money*.

- Developing nations are lining up to tap into the power of F1 to boost tourism revenue. Argentina, Hong Kong, Poland, South Africa, Thailand, Greece are said to be on the waiting list.
- The current host fee for a race is more than \$60 million, up from \$15.7 million in the past 10 years. The average host fee is \$27 million. Older races pay less. Montreal pays \$18 million to host, for example, while newcomers like Abu Dhabi pay \$66 million.
- The average annual team budget is \$211 million. Some teams have a \$100 million budget. Some have \$400 million.
- The amount of prize money divided between all teams by a pre-set formula was \$750 million in 2013.
- The television viewership of F1 racing was 425 million in 2014, down 25 million because of the introduction of pay per view television. Sponsors are not worried. Pay per view has delivered them the committed fans, the ones they want to reach.
- F1 is the most watched annual sporting event in the world.
- F1 revenues are growing by 15% a year.

Here is a breakdown of where F1 got its revenue in 2013:

Total Revenue	\$1,550,000,000	
Trackside Ads + sponsorship	\$232,500,000	15%
Corporate hospitality, F1 Junior series (GP2 and GP3)	\$310,000,000	20%
Broadcasting rights	\$496,000,000	32%
Host racing fees	\$511,500,000	33%

There are many layers to an F1 season—the derring-do of the race driver, the competence of his legal team, their lives behind the scenes, the business of the sport and, of course, the race on the track during which all those other things fade to the background. For the fan, it's tons of fun whatever way you look at it.

I'll be live blogging from the Canadian Grand Prix in June 5, 6, 7—my first time doing a blog during a live race weekend. I'll give you lots of notice and keep you posted!

Here's to a safe season.



Jules Bianchi
1989 - 2015



About Your Working Girl

Gail Picco is a strategist who has worked in the nonprofit sector for 25 years, most of which as President of Gail Picco Associates. Prior to that, she worked in a shelter for assaulted women and children for eight years.

She is the author of *What the Enemy Thinks: A Beck Carnell Novel*, the first in a trilogy set in the nonprofit sector and released in 2015. Civil Sector Press will publish her latest book, a work of non-fiction called *Cap in Hand: How Charities Are Failing the People of Canada and the World*, in November 2016.

