

radix

# WHAT ROOTS YOU?

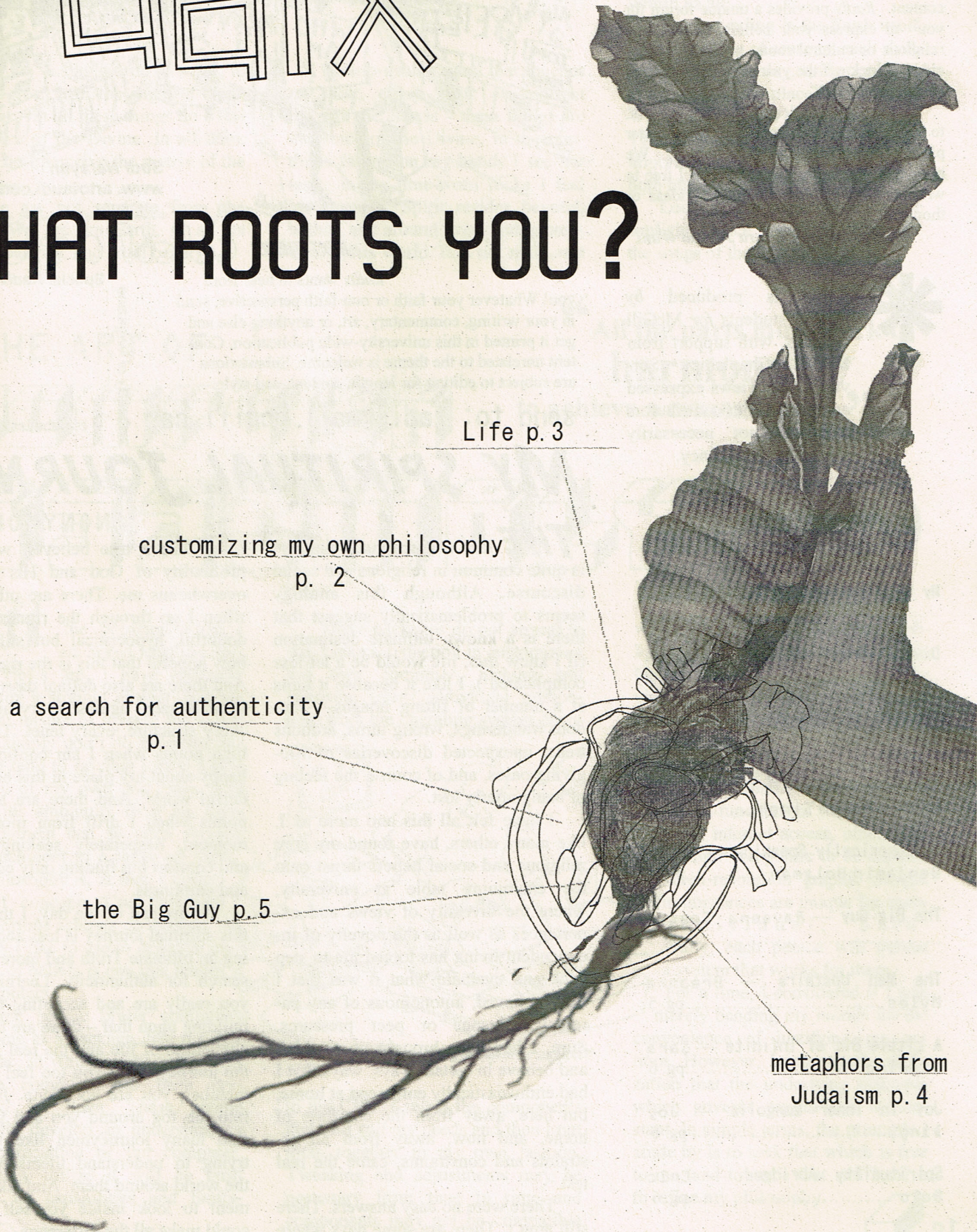
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# Hi!

As the new editors of *Radix*, we are incredibly excited about the year ahead and the opportunity to develop our vision of a high-quality, inclusive magazine with diverse content. *Radix* provides a unique forum for you to express your beliefs, values, and religious or cultural roots, and thus we decided to kick off the year with the theme of "What roots you?"

Ladies and gentlemen, it is time to talk, to express, and to vent—and what better place to start than your core beliefs? We hope that you enjoy this issue. Feel free to write to us with your comments, ideas or thoughts.

Aileen Morrison & Isra Jeelani Wani



*Radix* is produced by McGill students for McGill students, with support from McGill Chaplaincy Services. The views expressed are those of our contributors and are not necessarily shared by Chaplaincy.

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Sudi Narayan  
www.artofsudi.com

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# WRITE.

NEXT THEME: *celebration*

*Radix* wants to hear from

you! Whatever your faith or non-faith perspective, send in your writing, commentary, art, or anything else and get it printed in this university-wide publication. Content unrelated to the theme is welcome. Submissions are subject to editing for length, content, and style.

send to: [radix@mail.mcgill.ca](mailto:radix@mail.mcgill.ca)

Quality of Magazine

Special *Radix* Graph

# of submissions

## MY SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

ANONYMOUS

**THE** idea of a spiritual 'journey' is quite common in religious and social discourse. Although this analogy seems to problematically suggest that there is a known ultimate destination (if I knew *that*, life would be a lot less complicated!), I like it because it hints at a number of fitting images—random wanderings, wrong turns, arduous treks, unexpected discoveries of life-giving oases, and of course, the feeling of being utterly lost.

I have felt all this and more as I, like many others, have found my core religious and social beliefs thrust onto the examining table at university, where the diversity of views and experiences as well as the novelty of independent living has forced me to step back and evaluate what it was that I truly believed, autonomous of any parental influence or peer pressures. Sure, I had been brought up to think and behave in certain ways, ways that I had enthusiastically embraced at home, but here, away from the comforts of home, and now, away from all restraints and constraints, came the real test.

There were no easy answers. There still aren't. There are some days where

I feel like a true believer, when the profundity of God and His creation overwhelms me. There are other days when I go through the rituals feeling doubtful, hypocritical but still somehow hopeful that this is the right track. And there are also defiant days where I want to rebel against every authority, every structure, every tenet. There are high points when I am confident and happy about my place in this big, wonderful world. And there are also low points when I drift from moment to moment, desperately seeking clarity and comfort but finding only confusion and emptiness.

At the end of the day, I think that this spiritual journey is less about finding an ultimate Truth and more about a search for authenticity. Learning who you really are and accepting that and building upon that—these are the great challenges of life and the real goals of the journey. So if you too feel lost, remember, you are not alone. Just peer into the fog around you and you will find many journeymen like you, all trying to understand themselves and the world around them. And take a moment to look inside yourself too. It could make all the difference.



# Divine

# Songs

BY SARAH NEEDLES

*In* a single drop of water, in a gold-green leaf, the slightest brush of wind – in all these things do I feel the voice of the Divine. In all these things do I perceive the matrix of the Universe.

We are not separate from the Earth. We are the Earth, in all its chaos, balance, and cruel beauty.

Each brushing wind that touches my hair, every shaft of sunlight through the clouds – these things are the voice of the Divine. In the rain-drops falling on my hands I see her tears; in the time-worn rocks I feel his strength. Spirit resides beyond, within, and around every living creature in this world. It is not male, not

female, but both and neither. The Divine is unknowable, and yet lives within us all.

My grounding is the Earth itself. Each changing of seasons, each shifting of night into day, brings me back to myself and my place in this world. We all have part to play in the dance. To feel so insignificant, and yet so important - this is the nature of being both human and divine at once.

Look at the stars. Smile at the sunlight. Dance in the rain. These are the songs of the Divine.



## THE ART OF COMPUTER

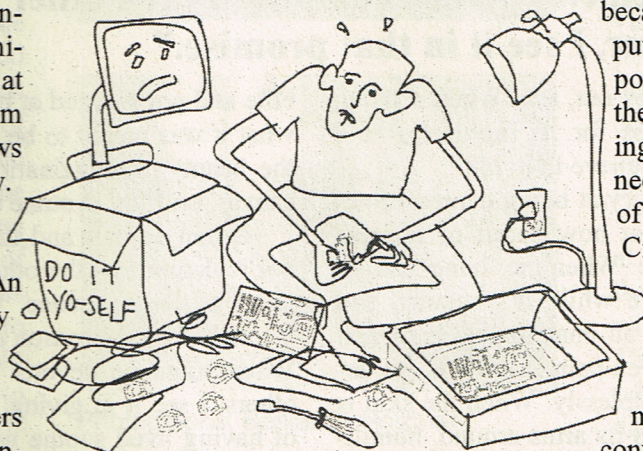
## ASSEMBLY

BY GENE  
LEUNG

*On* the occasion when I am asked what my religious views are, I have difficulty providing a straight answer. It's not that I'm unsure of myself, but a few words simply don't do it justice. Instead, I tend to say that I have a philosophy of my own and leave it at that. This ambiguity frees me from the judgment that so often follows the attachment to a religious view. My philosophy is, in fact, a collection of concepts I've borrowed from various schools of thought. An analogy I like to use to describe my system of beliefs is one that relates to computers.

Some people prefer computers that come as a package, like the Apple iMac, in which every component of the computer has been pre-selected for them. These people gradually develop an understanding and appreciation of the computer. How they utilize it will be built around its capabilities and limitations.

These packages do not appeal to me. I take satisfaction in customizing my own computer, picking and choosing every individual component from the operating system down



"You're really not going to call tech support?"

to the CPU. I select the components that best suit my needs and then I put them together in my own fashion. Tweaking and adjustments may be necessary from time to time and components may not be compatible

“All the parts must work in  
harmony  
to achieve a common goal.”

with each other, but when such problems arise, I exchange the incompatible parts for compatible ones. The idea is that all the parts must work in harmony to achieve a common goal, because everyone who uses a computer uses it to fulfill a certain purpose. While some users only require the basic functions of word processing and internet access, others will need their computers to be capable of high-resolution graphic design.

Circumstances are unique for every individual; naturally, each person will pursue a system that works for them.

For a time, I considered if I was merely bending my morals for the convenience of justifying my actions. However, I came to the realization that the underlying principle which governs my morals is constant. In simple terms, the principle I abide by is to seek that which is true to me, and towards that end I strive to refine my philosophy.



# The simple / profound pleasures of LIFE

BY KARAN SINGH

**Beliefs** are often based on what we've learnt, experienced, or have been told to believe; usually it is a combination of all three. However, when I think about what roots me, I can only turn to one thing: my experiences and the feeling of *life* they instill in me.

Walking down a street on an ordinary evening as the breeze caresses my skin, I feel its extraordinary touch. Looking into the joyous, mischievous eyes of a child who wins me over with his wondrous smile, I can see it. When the touch of a fellow human being speaks of love and compassion, I feel it. It's in the changing colors of fall, as the leaves dance and sing in excitement at the impending newness.

As my feet touch the ground and mother earth pricks me slightly in jest, I feel it. When an unfed mouth looks back with hope after going hungry for months, it lives. When a mother tends to her child while it clings to her bosom, the purity cries out, *life*. When a fallen tree knows nothing but forgiveness for its murderers, and stands mute while others follow, I believe in it: *life*.

When I am dissatisfied and angry at being denied something, I fight with it. As I argue at how bereft of fairness things are, I watch it take to silence. When the living slaughter all that they have built, I stare while it's stunned and ashamed. When a drop of water is an unattainable luxury, it struggles to take refuge in rain. When pain is inflicted on another to derive pleasure, it wails helplessly. When the skin is the only clothing available, it wraps its arms around, humiliated. When a person's only worth is a wad of paper, it stands mute at the misfortune. When the only symbol of faith is bricks and mortar, it is angry.

When two people commit to each other forever, I see it in that promise. When millions gather to celebrate their oneness, it shines through their strength. When after a tragedy where all was lost, a man looks at his two hands and smiles, I see it

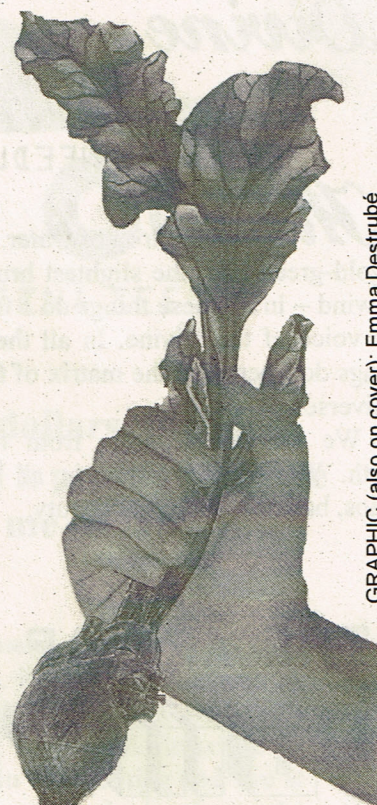
in that hope. When the love of one who looks out for

me is caring and compassionate, I experience it.

When achievement and failure stand side by side, knowing both are temporary reflections of each other, I see *life* in that irony. When a being lights up at the smallest pleasure known to humanity, I see it in the simplicity. When parent looks at his newborn with hope, I see it in that desire. When pride shies away at the slightest sight of humility, I stand amazed at its strength. When the darkness of ignorance is overcome with the candle of knowledge, I feel its presence. When cultures and identities embrace, I see it in that acceptance. When religion is not used as a weapon by the elite and not scorned at by the populace, but understood for what it was meant to be, I see it in possible change. When the beauty of imagination and creation comes alive on a canvas, on film, in stone or through letters, I read it.

When despair and the dread of death hangs on to life, not realizing that the other side is just as beautiful, I see it laugh at the innocence. When deep depression and futility is touched by the reason of why we are, I see it in prudence. When someone devotes an entire lifetime to working for others, I see it in giving. When the aged skin and symbols of having lived soothe with their sense of peace, I sense it in contentment. When a broken heart cries itself to sleep, I see it in emotion. When lust stands exposed at the hands of complacency, I admire it.

In this and in every single fiber that breathes and completes this process of which we all are a part, I feel rooted. I continue to walk on this path with it, my companion holding my hand; my companion LIFE.



GRAPHIC (also on cover): Emma Destrubé



# METAPHORICALLY SPEAKING

BY BENJAMIN HOLZMAN

**"In fact, whether the world will be judged  
as good or bad is entirely dependent  
on our next act."**

**WHEN** Milan Kundera claimed "a single metaphor can give birth to love" in the novel *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, he was recognizing the power of metaphors to shape our deepest beliefs and convictions. From the Christian idea that Jesus is like a shepherd to the Buddhist idea that religious devotion is like a journey on a path, metaphors feature heavily in religious traditions the world over, evoking faith and adherence.

In my own religious tradition of Judaism there are three metaphors which I find especially powerful. The first of these is the concept that human beings were created in the image of God. The implication of this for those that believe in God is more profound than one might think. Sure, we may perceive of ourselves as being made in God's image, but do we see God in the face of the other? For if each person is made in the image of God, even the transgressor, the heretic, and the adversary must be treated with a degree of respect and reverence. The real power of this metaphor is that it compels us to not only tolerate others, but to love them – even those who hold beliefs and values contradictory to our own.

I also find compelling the idea that in each moment, all of the good and bad deeds performed by humanity are balanced perfectly on a scale, with our next deed capable of tipping the entire scale in either direction. This elevates even apparently trivial moral decisions to a level of importance equal to the entire sum of humanity's good and bad doings. In fact, whether the world will be judged as good or bad is entirely dependent on our next act. What an in-

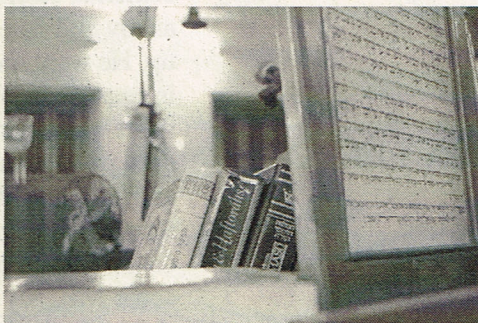
credible amount of pressure this puts on each individual to act in an ethical fashion! The power behind this metaphor is that it imbues each person with a huge responsibility for their own life, and also for the world as a whole.

Another profound metaphor says that when the universe was created, the 'vessels' which contained the light of God shattered, and 'holy sparks' became embedded and trapped in the physical world. It is incumbent on human beings to release this trapped

*Godliness* from all things and restore it to its holy source, in effect 'repairing the vessels'. This idea is fundamental to Kabbalistic Judaism (the mystical side of Judaism). This concept instills meaning into every object and teaches us to see the surrounding world as wondrous and mystical. Moreover, it provides a sense of mission and purpose to our lives and makes us believe that each moral act that we do, no matter how seemingly inconsequential, has some larger, metaphysical effect.

These metaphors all have, at their core, the task of infusing the ordinary and commonplace with high importance and meaning. Though the ideas behind them are related to Judaic theology, they need not be exclusive to it. Metaphors are malleable and can survive in many contexts, so that even

if one doesn't believe in the conventional conception of God, these metaphors may still be accessed as powerful vehicles for self-improvement and spiritual growth. These ideas are what deeply root me, and also what inspire me to strive for great heights - metaphorically speaking.

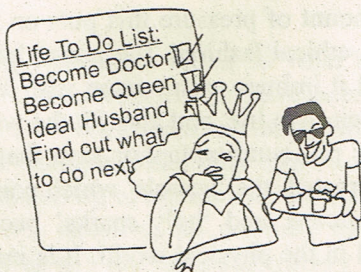


Photographs: Benjamin Holzman





**ON** a day to day basis, we involve ourselves in things like Facebook, shopping, TV, and mindless chatter to keep us going; breaks from our day to make it from one moment to the next. Then we participate in activities, work towards an education, build a career—more links from one year to the other. And before we know it, life has happened. But what out of all that has kept us rooted? Where is the driving force—the energy—the light—the life? Things like the internet, the latest fashion trend and a high profile career add spice to life – like icing on cake, so to speak. It's materialistic, things we can see and touch that last perhaps a few years or even this lifetime, but then what?



Millions of dollars, the ideal husband and a prestigious title only go with me so far – once I'm dead, I'm dead. That money, those people, and those things don't go with me once I've left this world. Let's say for all those materialistic acquisitions, I was awarded 100 points. Once I die, none of that goes with me; wherever it is I go, my net worth has crashed back to 0. So it doesn't do me much good to invest my soul, to truly root myself there.

#### The Man Upstairs

Here I am in need  
And by now I need a friend  
I don't know which way to go  
My heart needs time to mend

I put my hands together	I believe in angels
And I bow my head in prayer	And I believe in the Lord
I hope somebody will hear me	Does the man upstairs hear me
As into the sky above I stare	Or is the cost more than I can afford?

For now I will wait  
Because I surely know  
That the man upstairs hears me  
And it is love that He always shows

— Breanna Myles

# THE BIG GUY

BY RAVEENA SEETAL

**“Millions of dollars, the ideal husband and a prestigious title only go with me so far.”**

I would rather make a really good cake before I start icing it. For me that happens by building the one relationship that will carry over through all time, survive all births and all deaths. Five minutes in the morning and five at night—or perhaps ten spare minutes during the day. Whenever I can, I sit down alone, just me and the Big Guy, focus on all I have to be thankful for, and ask for enough guidance and faith to face the next day and all the challenges that come along with it. But why do I ask for these things?

In a recent spiritual youth group, the topic of discussion was: why should we reflect upon and remember God? I must admit I wasn't really paying attention, when a boy of 16 spoke up. “How can we NOT?” he suddenly proclaimed. “The world is powerful; it WILL play tricks on you. If you don't ask God to keep you centered, strong, and focused, you will be lead astray and lose yourself.” Interest peaked, I sat up. He went on to explain how losing one's self in materialism doesn't add to their spiritual value—the currency that *really* matters. What gets you spiritual “points” is appreciating God and all His gifts. It's alright to enjoy money, nice clothes, good company, but I cannot become consumed by that, I cannot let that become ME. My focus has to be on HIM. I am a child of a higher power and when I leave this world, I want to have enough points to help me climb the cosmic ladder to reach that power. That is what roots me – always keeping the Big Guy in mind, living life to make Him proud, and knowing that my genuine efforts will be rewarded when my time comes.



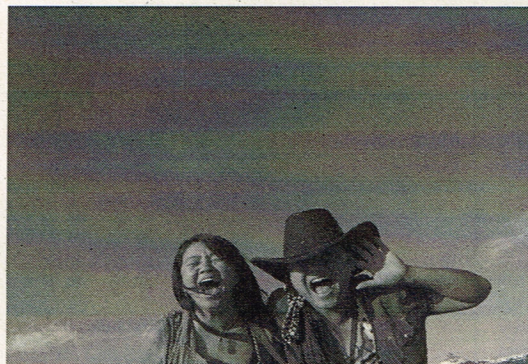


# JOY IN INNER MONGOLIA

BY JOY DING

LIVE in the NOW. GRAB opportunities, and EMBRACE the world. TAKE risks, with OPEN ARMS!

Continue to foster you soul and enjoy the simple pleasures of every waking minute.



LEFT: My cousin and I let our hearts and voices soar in the grasslands. There was no one around and we just let go. It felt so good to undo that knot inside and let our past just blow away with the wind. MIDDLE: Me running through the green grass under the blue sky. I felt so FREE, happy and unbound by society's expectations. RIGHT: I could smell the crisp air, hear the sounds and nature, and feel the brush of the wind on my arms—truly a moment that has to be experienced to be understood.

## A LITTLE BIT OF INFINITE

BY SARA GIDDING

If I want to grow up,  
I must grow down.  
To grow with direction,  
I must find my ground.

I know I'm not the first  
And I won't be the last  
So I lean to the light,  
I look to the past:

A moment of grasping,  
The intricacy lights up.  
How infinite ripples converge,  
Overflowing his cup.

To live each moment  
As absolutely new,  
To bear witness to this fact  
Is the mission of a Jew.

What do I have,  
What will I produce,  
How will I know  
To produce my unique fruits?

The first of my people  
Recognized his source,  
Heard in the life of dead matter  
An Infinite force.

He learned that simply,  
To learn how to hear  
That all is really One  
Is to learn how to steer.

In this endless journey  
Lie my roots.  
From here flows my life  
That produces fruits.

The potential is contained  
In the seed, so humble.  
To actualize, it knows  
It must empty, must crumble.

Themes recurring  
That same word twice.  
Too perfect to be uncanny,  
Smoother fused than a splice.

To heed the subtleties,  
To hear the song,  
Is to know who you are,  
To sing along.

Uniquely mine,  
From unfragmented me,  
The deeper my roots,  
The more I am free.

## Spirituality Abridged

BY ERIC BOLO

To know

that I am a composite piece  
of the universe and of life  
and to cultivate that knowl-  
edge; this is what spiritual-

ity is to me. The path I  
walk, the temple I bow or  
kneel in and the number of  
beads on my rosary are con-  
tingent, secondary. We all  
need water for our roots, yet  
the stream may be flavoured  
in an uncountable number of  
ways.

*Who is to judge  
whether rosemary  
is worth more or  
less than jasmine  
or cinnamon?*



### Newman Centre

3484 Peel St, 398-4106  
newmancentre@mail.mcgill.ca  
www.newmancentre.org

Did you know that  
**Roman Catholic Mass**  
is held conveniently  
on campus  
several times per week?  
Contact the Newman Cen-



### The Muslim Students Association of McGill

We offer: weekly study circles, free Islamic educational materials, Ramadan services, lectures/conferences, library (Shatner building, room 430)  
3460 McTavish Street, Rm. 14  
ssmu.mcgill.ca/msa  
msamcgill@montrealmuslims.ca

### Unitarians Unite!

Meetings every  
other  
Thursday.



Contact Curtis Murphy for details.  
curtis.murphy@mail.mcgill.ca

### St. Martha's in the Basement

McGill Ecumenical Chaplaincy's St. Martha's shares a weekly informal worship and discussion, followed by a vegetarian supper. It is a welcoming place to form meaningful friendships, explore faith in an inclusive way, and bring sacredness to our lives. Friends of Christians very welcome.

Wednesdays at 6pm in the basement of the United Theological College, 3521 University.  
For details call: Gwenda Wells at 398-4104.

JOIN  
STUDENTS  
AND STAFF  
OF THE  
UNITED  
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COLLEGE



THE UNITED THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE  
LE SÉMINAIRE UNITÉ

(OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA)

FOR WORSHIP AND FELLOWSHIP  
EACH WEDNESDAY.  
BEGINS AT 11:45 AM  
3521 UNIVERSITY STREET  
849-2042

### McGill Student Parents' Network

The MSPN provides support to McGill students who are parents.

Regularly we offer free of charge to McGill students: in-home babysitting, support group meetings, study sessions for parents with babysitting for children.

Interested families should contact the MSPN coordinator at  
mcgillspn@gmail.com  
or at (514) 398-4104

### Sikh Chaplaincy Open Meeting



Social get-togethers  
Newman Centre, 3484 Peel  
Contact Manjit Singh,  
Chaplain  
manjit.singh@mcgill.ca

Share a HOT VEGAN LUNCH at the

### RABBIT HOLE CAFÉ,

a Collective Vegetarian Kitchen

3625 Aylmer, downstairs

Fridays, 1-4 pm

Donations of \$1 or

a non-perishable food item  
are appreciated.

### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Food depot and nutritional  
tips and support.

3625 Aylmer, 1st floor

Fridays, 1-5 pm

Email: food4thought.yd@gmail.com

### Hillel House

Attention, Jewish students and friends! Discussions on Jewish topics, Jewish feminist movement, social events, "ask a rabbi," "Ghetto Shul," Torah study, dating services, message boards, and much more!!!

Ask for rabbi Dov  
Whitman.

3460 Stanley Street  
(Hillel library)

845-9171

rabbi@hillel.ca

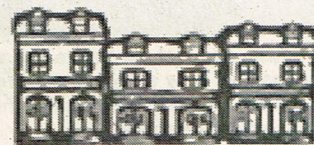


### International Students!

#### Are you freezing?

Lightly used coats, clothing,  
shoes, and boots  
are available  
free of charge  
to International Students.  
Stop by Chaplaincy Services.

3600 McTavish St., Suite 4400  
Monday-Friday, 9:30-4:30  
398-4104



YD The Yellow Door  
La Porte Jaune

#### Volunteers needed!

The Yellow Door Elderly Project is seeking volunteers to work with seniors living in and around the McGill Ghetto. No major time commitment required — flexible hours, just a couple of hours per month! Great opportunity to contribute to community spirit

If you would like to become  
a Yellow Door volunteer  
call 398-6243 or email:  
elderlyproject@hotmail.com

### Montreal Diocesan Theological College

3473 University Ave.

Daily Christian worship—all are welcome!

Morning Prayer, Mon.-Thurs.: 8:00 am

Evening Prayer, Mon.-Thurs.: 4:30 pm

Eucharist Wed. 11:30 am (followed by lunch),  
Fri. 7:30 am

All are welcome!

### Free Zen Meditation

McGill Chaplaincy

3600 McTavish, #4400

Thursdays 3-4 pm

(Discussion, Instruction,  
and Q&A at 2:45)



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