

Anger is the story of the year



THOMAS FROESE PHOTO

This sign is one that sends a message that's explored today by contributor Thomas Froese.



THOMAS FROESE
OPINION

She's a friend, a literary academic who's learned and gracious, a woman of faith who — while the pandemic continues to spin and dance out there — often foregoes going out. This, in order to protect her vulnerable husband.

We talked about the vaccine — she's fully vaccinated — and about people who are still hesitant about the jab. "I don't know how to love them," she said. "I find that this is the hard part, not being angry at them. And I don't know what to do with that."

Anger. It's been the story of the year in 2021, if not the story of any year.

Sometimes we might be incensed for entirely sound reasons, like my friends. Sometimes anger is more a result of that shaky and hopeless "us versus them" view of life.

Yes, anger, among the deadliest of the seven sins, can still have a sort of fun, if not short-lived, season in the sun. I mean, why not get angry at those pebble throwers? They're angry at us!

The good news is that Canada is a fortunate nation where adult vaccination rates are among the highest in the world. The bad news is that even a good political state, one that makes all the right moves (and what state does?), still operates within grinding machinations that can be horribly impersonal.

So it's not helpful to get smug when considering the unvaccinated or the consequences — "Sorry, no admittance" — that they bring upon themselves. Earlier this year, while in Winnipeg, (an easy place to get angry at during Grey Cup weekend), I talked about this with an unvaccinated gentleman. I suspect this is what he meant. Don't get smug.

Still, when he compared Canada to the former East German Communist state, I could have choked on my soup. Even in their most bungled moments, no Canadian government has laid barbed wire atop a concrete wall before machine-gunning down anyone trying to escape.

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, a former Soviet dissident who won the Nobel Prize for Literature, knows something about it.

If anyone could have raised an angry fist against the state, it would be Solzhenitsyn. After spending years inside the Soviet's notorious Gulag system, prison-labour camps where more than 1 million people perished, he wrote about the brutality.

Even so, in "The Gulag Archipelago," a book that Time magazine called the "most important of the 20th century," Solzhenitsyn said this: "If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds, and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being."

Which is to say that the line dividing good and evil cuts through both the communist heart and the democratic heart. The black heart and the white heart. The urban heart and the rural heart. The rich heart and the poor heart. And, sure, the vaccinated heart and the unvaccinated heart, that is my heart and your heart and every other striped or polka-dotted heart out there.

Later, banished by the Soviets, Solzhenitsyn wrote from the United States for some decades before returning to his Russian homeland where he died in 2008. He comes to mind because today, Dec. 11, is his birthday.

More so, voices like his, voices that unite reason and faith in a rather beautiful marriage, are the clarion calls that will help us find our way out of the forest of any given time.

I recently reacquainted myself with one Solzhenitsyn article, aptly titled "A World Split Apart." It's published in a collection of stirring essays called "Finding God at Harvard." The book's various contributors all see a certain grandeur in our world, even when it seems that we humans want nothing more than to blow it up.

I suspect that my above-noted literary friend would appreciate this sort of collection. Christmas, after all, is coming. Maybe some others would appreciate it, too. FIND THOMAS FROESE AT THOMASFROESE.COM.

LETTERS

Please, Santa

Thought I would help you out by ticking off half a million wishes. Tickets Grey Cup win, please. Todd Connors, Hamilton

Make some noise!

At Sunday's Grey Cup, every time the defence is on the field the fans in attendance need to make more noise than they've ever made in their lives. Every time Zach Collaros steps on the field he should feel like he's barking his orders into a Category 5 hurricane of noise. Oskee Wee Wee! Kevin Browne, Ancaster

Go, Cats, go!

After reading Steve Simmons article that he thought the last time (1996) that the Grey Cup was played in Hamilton would be the last, implying that the CFL would cease to exist, it is no wonder the CFL in Toronto always seems to be a hard sell. Why not focus upon some of the positive aspects of this Grand Old League and game. The NFL and the CFL are both terrific leagues with terrific athletes. In the view of many CFL fans "Our Game" is more exciting. Our field is 15 yards wider, we have no fair catches or end zone dead balls, and our players receiving punts and kick offs have to make a play with the ball on every kick. We have a 20-second play clock compared to a 40-second play clock in the NFL, that allows for more real playing time in our league.

As Canadians, my wife and I have cheered on our Hamilton Tiger Cats for 65 years. We also cheer on the Steelers and Bills respectively. It would be nice to see more positive articles from

the Toronto media, but I suppose I will have to just keep reading Steve Milton's excellent articles. David Gallo, Ancaster

Police lines

Cross a police line when told not to? Expect to be confronted by an officer! Raise a hand to an officer, Black, green, yellow, or grey, expect to be put to the ground and handcuffed! Michael Csoke, Mt. Hope

Don't drop charges

If you want to clash with police and break past erected barriers and charge at officers, you are going to get arrested, by force if necessary. This will undoubtedly end you up in court facing charges. The suggestion to drop the charges and suggest this is a racial issue is not only ridiculous, but it also circumvents our judicial system. What kind of message are we sending to the public that it's OK to break the law if you are a visible minority? The charges will be dropped after politicians and community leaders speak out.

This was not a racial issue. This was a case of people breaking the law and now complaining they were arrested. To quote TV character Tony Baretta "Don't do the crime if you can't do the time." Dennis Bryson, Ancaster

A fourth booster?

Israel's ministry of health said that the residents of Israel will need a fourth booster shot to be considered fully vaccinated; Israelites will also lose their green status and not be allowed to enter into synagogues, restaurants etc., until compliance. But like Canada is rolling out a third jab to various groups, health experts have already told us a third booster shot will be considered

to be fully vaccinated. But the health experts also told us that two doses were considered to be fully vaccinated and that it was going to protect Canadians 10 fold! Now, health experts say that booster shot No. 3 will offer Canadians the ultimate protection. But while the U.S.A. follows Israel's data and Canada follows on the heels of what the U.S.A. does, how long before a fourth booster shot becomes a reality for Canadians? Tina Maini, Hamilton

Food security

Much complaining about the shortage of food but no suggestions as to how to avoid these shortages. This farmland that everybody wants to save, why don't we grow vegetables on it — the ones that we import from places like Bangladesh and Honduras and stop selling our fresh fruit and vegetable industries to U.S. companies? There will be more shortages if we don't smarten up and grow our own food. Otherwise, we will become a third-world country — the writing is on the wall for those who can see it. Susan A. Frandsen, Dundas

Unsafe Olympics?

I wonder what Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig would advise about sending our athletes — but no diplomats — to the Beijing Olympics? They know too well what can happen to Canadians in China when China disapproves of Canada's actions.

So, now we're sending our athletes into an angry China? It will be far too easy for Chinese officials to falsely accuse our athletes of anything from drug possession to spying.

Was no lesson learned from the imprisonment endured by the Two Michaels? Suzie Scott, Hamilton

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Hamilton, this is our moment to shine

I am looking forward to joining you in a celebration of our team's and our city's success

LARRY PATTISON

In 2010, I wrote a story titled "Ivor Wynne is already a great stadium location." Little did I know then that it would lead to a campaign to save IWS.

I put a lot into advocating for the ageing pile. Probably more than I should have considering my world was otherwise crumbling around me from a failing marriage to the ways those struggles send the rest of your world spiralling. I learned a lot about life and most importantly myself, through all of those months of research and advocacy.

For more than 50 years, as captured in a compilation of stories from the Ivor Wynne Stadium scrapbook located in Hamilton's Central Library, our city talked about the fate of our beloved stadium.

Fast forward to 2021, and here we are finally ready to host a Grey Cup on Balsam Avenue again after the redevelopment of the stadium district. We've come a long way from uni-benches to backrests; troughs to urinals, Light Bright's to the big screen and now, the big show. We know that a home championship appearance in football is rare, but for Hamilton, so has hosting

the game itself with No. 11 only days away compared to Toronto's 48.

There is much to celebrate considering all those times we were at threat of losing our team through the lean years, to now as we await our second straight Grey Cup appearance.

I've been following the Tiger-Cats with my family from riding a personalized Ticat bus parading the Pattison hosers and our friends through the streets of Hamilton on game day as a kid, to walking over on a Friday after work, buying a scalper ticket for \$5 in the years where the product on the field was rebuilding and attendance was scarce. There are certainly more important matters beyond the stadium grounds from homelessness to the continuing threats of COVID-19 and the effects it's all having on the mental health of kids and adults alike, but I am looking forward to turning the channel of life for a few hours this Sunday. I am eager to celebrate the journey to this day and to embrace the positive ways our city is moving forward; including those from out of town setting up roots and falling in love with Hamilton in large numbers after a lifetime of being called the amput of Ontario.

For me, being at Tim Hortons field for the 108th and my first ever Grey Cup will be a celebration and reflection on the part 75 Balsam and our Tabbies have played throughout the story of my First 48, and what it all taught me about how to fight for more important things like my children and education matters.

We have all played a role in the Road to 108. For me, my journey also includes blogs I have run such as Save Ivor Wynne and A Beautiful Night for Football. I am looking forward to joining you in a celebration of our team's and our city's success which, as I tell my U15 girl Hawks, isn't always reflected on the scoresheet at game's end.

I believe everything happens for a reason. I am re-marrying now and although life has its pains and struggles, everything I have learned and all that I have fought for led me to someone who has brought so much to our home team — like our family's Grover, Ozzy, Danny Mac, or Simoni.

Let's go, Hamilton! This is our moment to shine. LARRY PATTISON LIVES IN HAMILTON AND HAS WRITTEN AND POSTED EXTENSIVELY ON IVOR WYNNE STADIUM AND ITS REPLACEMENT.

