

China an innocent victim in Olympic boycott

'Anglosphere' seems intent on recreating a cold war

KEN STONE

Canada's diplomatic boycott of Beijing's Olympic Games flouts the Olympic spirit, is based on false reports and promotes cold war with China.

The ancient Olympics brought Greeks together in a peaceful sporting/cultural festival, despite inter-city conflicts. An Olympic truce was declared, so all Greeks could participate in safety.

Impressively, on Dec. 2, in a consensus vote, the 193-member UN General Assembly reaffirmed the Olympic truce for the Beijing Games. UNGA president Abdullah Shahid observed: "Nations should use sport as a tool to support dialogue and reconciliation, striving for a peaceful world aligned with the principles and values enshrined in the United Nations Charter."

International Olympic Committee chair Thomas Bach stated, "We can only accomplish this mission ... if the Olympic Games are politically neutral and do not become a tool to achieve political goals." Clearly, in mimicking U.S. President Joe Biden's petty diplomatic boycott, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is playing politics and is out of step with this international consensus.

Additionally, Trudeau's diplomatic boycott is based upon false charges of human rights abuses. Contrary to a recent editorial here, China's Uyghur population is growing in number and prosperity. Unlike Canada's native peoples, Chinese Uyghurs have an autonomous republic. Along with 800 million Chinese, Uyghurs were lifted out of poverty during the past five years — an unprecedented accomplishment.

One might question Trudeau's concern about Uyghur Muslims in the context of Canada's role in recent U.S. wars. In mainly-Muslim Afghanistan, Canadian soldiers routinely conducted nighttime raids on civilian homes and reportedly turned over Afghans for torture. Stephen Harper prorogued Parliament to avoid this scandal in 2008. In predominantly-Muslim Libya, a Canadian general led NATO's attack, turning Libya into a failed state. Canada was part of the U.S. regime-change coalition in mainly-Muslim Syria, where a half million were killed and more than 13 million turned into displaced persons. So, why is the PM so concerned about Muslims in China? I suggest there's an ulterior motive.

Again, contrary to your editorial, most Hongkongers are relieved finally to be peacefully reunited with the People's Republic after 150 years of British imperialism. For several years, they endured western-funded NGOs terrorizing the former colony with violence, arson and property damage. Chinese tennis star Peng Shuai is doing fine, as she has attested in recent public communications. She merely requested the western media respect her privacy. Taiwan is a Chinese province, recognized so officially by Canada since 1970. And it wasn't China, but Canada, which politically kidnapped Meng Wanzhou on behalf of the Trump administration. The Two Michaels signed confessions of violating national security laws, according to Chinese sources, facts unreported in The Spec.

China's Ottawa embassy recently stated: "Canada ... has committed heinous crimes against Indigenous people. Until today, systematic racial discrimination is still severe in Canada. Canada ... is certainly in no position to judge China on this front."

Finally, the Biden-led diplomatic boycott isolates Canada and promotes cold war with China. So far, it appears only four countries formally joined: Canada, U.S.A., U.K. and Australia, all predominantly-white, English-speaking countries, representing a tiny minority of countries and the global population. This tiny cabal is out of step with most of the world on many issues.

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THE REST OF THE WORLD, HOWEVER, LOOKS TO CHINA FOR PROSPERITY THROUGH ITS BELT-AND-ROAD INITIATIVE. Canada, whose second largest trading partner is China, should too. But the "anglosphere" seems intent on recreating a cold war with China. Its ulterior motives are hegemony and profits through an arms race, including Canada's obscenely expensive new fighter jets and warships.

The diplomatic boycott is one more reason that Canadians have been calling for an independent foreign policy. Instead of aping U.S. pettiness, Canadians should applaud the Olympic Truce and celebrate the participation of our athletes in Beijing.

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THOMAS FROESE PHOTO

Torstar contributor Thomas Froese recently came across this Christmas display. Writing about the nature of joy, he notes, "You don't pursue joy. You choose it. Or, maybe more accurately, joy chooses you. You just receive it."

Joy is not just pleasure or happiness. It is more

THOMAS FROESE
OPINION

I was driving downtown and it was courage as much as joy that came to mind. I'd just driven past a rather unpretentious display with the letters J-O-Y. The O had a nativity scene formed inside. The small, three-letter word was lit in front of a church. It wasn't much, really.

Nearly, I'd passed a city hospital where a friend is suffering. She was a large, accomplished professional who'd visit my family when we lived and worked in Uganda. Now she's frail as a bird, having lost about 100 pounds to some inexplicable illness. If you visit, you'll notice that in her confused state she might ask you about her long-dead sister.

Our friend was recently moved to a hospital wing where she'll likely die. Think of the most morose ward of longing souls from some movie. "God has made a decision and I'm not happy with it," she said about the move. Who would be happy? So much of life is out of our hands. And death? Even more so.

But about joy. Mary and Joseph, from that first Christmas, know something about joy, if not courage. Joy, to be clear, is not pleasure or happiness. It's more. That's what they'd say. Joy is deeper. More mysterious.

So instead of Merry Christmas or Happy Holidays, let's greet each other with "Hey, I wish you that mysterious, indescribable and deeply-abiding joy." Hmm. The Christmas card makers probably wouldn't go for it. Stick with Joyeux Noel? OK.

Joy often grows in the soil of our longing. Our hunger. Which reminds me of Catherine Hardwicke's film "The Nativity Story." There's Joseph on the difficult road to Bethlehem. At day's end his feet are bloodied and blistered. He's exhausted and hungry. And after attending to Mary, who does Joseph give his own meagre portion of bread to? The donkey.

Speaking of longing and movies, C.S. Lewis might also help here. His autobiography, "Surprised by Joy," explores Lewis' spiritual hunger, his journey from skepticism to faith. More so, if you're familiar with your Academy Award winners, you might recall Hollywood's version of "Shadowlands" with Anthony Hopkins and Debra Winger.

Lewis, an Oxford don who's among the 20th century's best-known theological thinkers, married, to everyone's complete dismay, the American Joy Davidman Gresham. It's a remarkable love story in itself. But after Joy died of metastatic breast cancer, the otherwise demure Lewis was shaken in his core and struggled to reconcile God and suffering.

Despite Hollywood's glamorizing ways, Lewis is more earthy in his

own reflections. In his book "A Grief Observed" he shakes an angry fist as much as anything, "God, why?" Tellingly, Lewis also writes, "Joy was a splendid thing, a soul straight, bright, and tempered like a sword. But not a perfect saint. A sinful woman married to a sinful man; two of God's patients not yet cured."

Not yet cured. Just like our friend in the hospital is not yet cured. Just like, maybe, someone you know is not yet cured. Just like you're not yet cured. Just like I'm not. Just like any mortal who's ever walked God's good, green earth longs for a cure, that is a life that's more whole and lasting. And aren't we now all longing for a certain cure during ongoing pandemic days?

In the meantime, what will help us keep going is a good measure of courage, not unlike that first Christmas.

Maybe in this we'll also know that deeper joy on our own journey. Not just some momentary happiness to pursue, but joy that's more enduring and secure. No, we don't pursue joy. You choose it. Or, maybe more accurately, joy chooses you. You just receive it.

Yes, of all the things we receive in life — and we receive much — joy has to be the best gift going. Thank God for Christmas, when we're especially reminded of it, joy incarnate, this strange joy that wrapped itself in human skin.

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When they call for support, we can and should respond

There's no shame in arrest for standing up for Indigenous rights

SHAWN SELWAY

Following the arrests made at the edge of the Wet'suwet'en lands in Northern B.C. last month, there were calls for demonstrations of solidarity to be organized across the country. Hundreds of people attended in Toronto, Guelph, Montreal, Kingston and Hamilton to name a few.

I went to the rally held at the downtown Federal Building in Hamilton on Nov. 21. It was a festive affair. Many speakers were aboard from many groups. There was a round dance. And there was a watchword painted on the street in pink: "ALL OUT FOR WEDZIN KWA." This is the river that nourishes the Wet'suwet'en territory.

All my life, and for long before, Indigenous people have been persistently, courageously increasing their powers and their capacity and shaming the rest of us. Now, finally, large numbers of us have come to realize the fullness of the harms done to Indigenous children and others — in our name.

In our name. So when Indigenous people call for support, we must give it, as asked. And we must work in good faith with Indigenous people to achieve reconciliation. That

means concrete measures to recognize rights over lands, and restoration of lands and resources. Not endless stalling until some pretext allows the state to send in the police. And we must work to recover our own dignity, partly taken from many of us before we were even born by the cruel actions and racist lies of earlier generations.

After the rally, as I was walking back home to the North End, my path was blocked by two police officers, who informed me that I was under arrest for painting the street.

Four hours later, I was released from custody. I had no coat, no hat, no boots and no phone. No cellphone? That's right. A detective kept my phone. Why? "To search for evidence." Of what? Conspiracy to paint the street? Alarming. Evidence of my presence at the scene of the alleged offence? There are many photographic and video records of the event. The following week five Black youth were arrested, four of them violently forced to the ground before being handcuffed.

I was treated with civility throughout. I was placed in a concrete chamber painted baby blue, a colour which failed to soothe. Shortly, a phone was handed in to

me, and I spoke to duty counsel, as the publicly available lawyer for these occasions is called. Then I waited.

Eventually I was questioned by a detective, who began, "I just want to understand." To this and all other questions I replied "I have spoken to duty counsel and been advised to say nothing."

I just want to understand? No. This detective understands very well why I was there at that demo on that day. He is the second-last link in a long chain of deceitful individuals, starting with Justin Trudeau and John Hoggan, descending through the bureaucracies, courts, and the police forces, and ending with the 200-pound uniformed officer who places his knee on a young woman who is doing what that officer is meant to do: serve and protect the poor and all of us.

Indigenous people have given us ways to do much better for them and for ourselves. When they call for support, we can respond. You can. You should.

Yes, we might go so far as to paint a road. The world will not come to an end. It can become different, for all of us.

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