

LETTERS

Strikers overly disruptive

I was heading to downtown Hamilton for lunch and then over to the Hamilton Farmers' Market and observed what appeared to be a militarized zone of striking workers. While I respect their right to picket, I'm not understanding why it has to be so adversarial and standoffish. The elderly lady walking behind me was quite rattled, too. They were ranting and yelling and commandeered the entire sidewalk. Is their goal to cause disruption to everybody?

Blanche Baldwin, Hamilton

Focus on potholes, not foliage

We live in such a gorgeous part of the province, but imagine looking out your window or driving down a secluded country lane to find workers cut back foliage along the road allowance, which did not require attention. A beautiful (ancient) Osage Orange tree ripped apart and left with broken branches and half cut limbs (probably one of very few of these trees in the area). With all the "real" work required in the city, who approved this atrocity? Let's make sure we focus on potholes and sewer leaks and leave nature alone unless there is significant safety issues.

Ron Sadler, Hamilton

An archaic institution

Recently a writer listed the shortcomings of the royals – "their dark past, phoney contrition" etc. – as to why the monarchy should be abolished. The case for abolition need not disparage the Royal Family. Neither their faults or foibles nor their dedicated and admirable service are relevant. But kings, queens, princes and princesses do belong to history books and fairy tales. Canadians continue to accept the authority of a foreign monarch, and thereby accept royal assent, (we require "royal" signature to pass laws, etc.). This is really a note from the parent giving permission. We hire a governor general and lieutenant-governors to sign the notes. Do Canadians realize that we can't change the speed limit on Highway 401 without such signature?

Although this is merely symbolic ritual these days, Canadians nonetheless remain subjects of the Crown, an archaic and flawed institution to which we are compelled to owe allegiance.

Peter Schneider, Mount Hope

CBC too woke

Letter writer Maxine Martineau warns against Ron DeSantis and Pierre Poilievre because they want to "destroy or control" Disney and the CBC. Does not the writer realize that the CBC is nothing more than a propaganda outlet for the Trudeau Liberals, and Disney is the same "woke" outfit that will no longer use the terms "ladies and gentlemen" and "boys and girls"? Assuredly, both institutions require considerable modifications to better serve the public.

John Harley Whitlock, Brantford

Police need schooling

Premier Doug Ford's latest attempt to grovel to his base is truly astounding and speaks to the numerous examples of Conservatives downplaying education. Now the premier believes policing is so easy that high school grads can now be police officers. What a slam to the men and women of all police forces in Canada! One of the most dangerous, demanding, precise and high-stress professions can be done by high school grads. I guess that since Ford has achieved success in life with a high school diploma, police just need a high school diploma too. If I was a police officer who has just been insulted by the premier with his demeaning and ignorant attitude about policing, I would be fuming!

The real reason for this is to throw a bone to the fringe, those out there who supported the "Freedom Convoy," who supported anti-vaxer fake science, who have been duped by social media right-wing extremists, who have become anti-immigrant and pro-white supremacy.

Bob Macoritti, Ancaster

Education is valuable

Confucius said, "Education breeds confidence, confidence breeds hope, hope breeds peace." The personal growth acquired through time spent obtaining a bachelor's degree or post secondary college education will give you new knowledge, strengthen your critical thinking skills and your work ethic, awaken your creativity, help you with problem solving, sharpen your written and verbal communication and overall enhance your life journey. Removing this admission requirement for the Ontario Police College is an enormous step backwards.

Judith Keegan, Lincoln

Tax is a boondoggle

The only significant revenue from the vacant unit tax (VUT) will be from the penalties collected. In Toronto, about 19 per cent of the households did not return a vacancy declaration.

In Hamilton, this would amount to about 33,600 households. At an average assessment of \$381,000, the VUT would amount to \$128,000,000 to the city coffers. It is not the VUT that will bring in the money; it is the penalties for not filling out the forms. What a boondoggle.

Robert (Bob) Miller, Hamilton



COURTESY OF FROESE FAMILY

In this photo, circa 1953, Guenter Froese is in Germany with his mother, Kaethe, and father, Franz. "We're here. Then gone. A dying wisp of air," writes contributor Thomas Froese. "If we're lucky we'll leave things behind that will grow into something worthwhile."

Getting to the root of what matters



THOMAS FROESE
OPINION

Today's offering is about roots, and where we come from, and these sorts of matters that run under the surface of our lives. My father appreciated roots.

And what's not to appreciate? Roots bring nutrients. They stabilize plants and trees: tap roots for depth, lateral roots to anchor, sinker roots to find more water. In tough soil, roots can even rise above ground to look for that precious oxygen.

Sometimes roots can't hold, and a tree will crash in a spring storm. A family friend told me how her beautiful willow recently fell, its roots dramatically visible. Then she shared about helping her teen with homework about, you guessed it, roots. Then we talked about anxieties common to parents, and that whole storm.

It's true. Moms and dads everywhere, for better or worse, question themselves. Now that my children are around the age I was when I left home, several times, I understand more what my father felt. No, there's no manual for this stuff in any generation. Eventually you realize that as a parent you know

pretty well nothing. Which is rather liberating.

But isn't it interesting how generations, like roots, can carry subterranean mysteries? Consider, for example, that my mother was a nurse. As was her mother. As was my mother's sister. So is my wife's sister. Like their mother. Our daughter, Child No. 1, is studying at McMaster. For what? Nursing. Is it something in the water?

More interesting, 70 years ago my father trained as a nurse. Now there's mystery. "My brother can be anything, but not a nurse," his sister had said at the time. In Germany it was easier to picture him on his motorcycle, looking like James Dean, or, later, with his axe and bushman beard, lumberjacking in Northern Ontario. "My brother, Guenter, a nurse? Come on."

It was in broken, postwar Germany that his father left home. His training in nursing, and therapeutic massage therapy, is rooted there. His sister, now 93, must still be thinking about it. Dad Froese not only became a nurse, but eventually, in Canada, owned and operated a nursing home where he cared for, among others, his own mother and father. And the home's defining feature? The garden.

It was filled with exactly what you'd expect on God's good, green earth. Roots. It was the garden that never ended, stretching from one

city block to another. Several detached houses now stand in its place. Think vegetables, root plants like potatoes and beets and carrots and you name it. If left untended, the weeds, of course, grow like trees. And in the midst? There's this boy.

Sometimes in that garden, especially while planting in spring, my father and I worked late: mucky, cold, dirt in our hands, even under the moonlight. So when he eventually remarried (his first wife died) and I was best man, I gifted him a golden hoe, a plain hoe from Canadian Tire that I'd painted gold. I now keep that hoe – it's 30 years old – as a remembrance behind my own family home, beside a garden sign that says, "Sow, weed, water and wait."

I'm thankful I worked at my relationship with my father, like I worked that garden. Because we live with our parents even when we don't. I'm thankful, also, that my father knew his grandchildren. He often shared about my Mennonite heritage, even while still living in that aged home, photos of his paternal grandparents looking down from a living room mantel.

This is it. We're here. Then we're gone. A dying wisp of air. If we're lucky we'll leave things behind that will grow into something worthwhile.

A year ago today, April 29, some unexpected happenings allowed my children, with their mother and myself, to say goodbye together at my father's deathbed. He was later buried in a pine box. He wanted that. A plain pine box cut from a tree that grew from some root.

Then that cool, spring soil was pushed overtop.

FIND THOMAS FROESE AT WWW.THOMASFROESE.COM.

It's draining being a 'strong mother'

MORAA MOCHAMA

I've been thinking a lot about motherhood recently.

I've been a mom for five years now. As far as roles go, I give it a solid four out of five stars.

Don't get me wrong. My kids are great and it is singularly the most fulfilling role I've had. But it has also tested me, drained me, and pulled so much from me that I can't in good conscience give it five stars – especially in the constant state of tiredness I seem to be in these days.

I've been thinking about my own mother, Agnes Mochama, who immigrated to this country at about the same age as I am now (mid-30s) with four children ranging in ages from five to 12.

She had to essentially start her adult life over, working part-time jobs to support us while my father was finishing graduate school. She eventually returned to school herself to earn two Masters degrees. She seemed to have – and continues to have – so much strength to endure such incredible obstacles, all while still managing to be a great mother.

There are so many days where I feel like I do not possess the same strength she did. In comparison, I know I have more privilege than she did back then – higher income,

access to child care, relatively stable employment – yet it feels like I can't seem to get it all together. And I have half as many kids!

Comparison can be such a thief of reality. It has taken a few years but I have learned and come to recognize that although my strength may not look exactly like my mother's, I am actually incredibly strong.

I have gone through my own battles. Big ones, such as enduring six months in the neonatal intensive care unit before I could bring my first-born home – he is now five and thriving! – and little ones, such as pleading with my two-year-old to eat three bites of food before allowing him dessert.

Every day as a mother I show some modicum of strength and I'm here to say, I'm tired of it.

As a society we love the narrative of the "strong mother." Heck, I've just done it above with my own mother.

What we do in return is fail to see that strength is not always a choice, but rather a determination to keep going for the sake of the family.

That strong mother is also tired of being strong all the time.

She's tired of picking herself up by the bootstraps and weathering the chaos of crises.

She's tired of being the shoulder to cry on and the backbone of the family.



COURTESY OF MORAA MOCHAMA

Moraa Mochama relaxes with her sons, Jackson and Jordan.

She's doing it for her children, but she's tired. And she needs a break.

Mother's Day is coming up May 14. I know I'm asking for the same thing I've asked for the last five years, which is to take a break from being a mother.

I want to press pause on the demands of this role and take the day for myself.

We mothers need to have a real break, to find ourselves again, because we are actually whole people outside of our motherhood roles. We need to be able to regenerate and restore our bodies in whatever way makes sense to us. My preferred activity will be watching various TV procedural shows while in bed.

We need to take care of ourselves so we can take care of others. You cannot pour from an empty cup. So take a break and fill yourself up – even just for one day.

MORAA MOCHAMA IS A COLUMNIST FOR THE WATERLOO REGION RECORD.

