

# you can't say that

a novella by anon

*A crisis of hate sweeps the country.  
But Canada's fearless fourth estate  
stands on guard.*



*Note: Although minor revisions were introduced in 2017, this was written in 2011 based largely on passages drafted much earlier.*

“*You can’t say that.*”

“Say what? All I said was...”

“Never mind. Just don’t say it.” It continually surprised her to see how hopeless these guys were. Such a knack for faux pas. What would Mr. Ferber say?

“Sorry, Mackenzie, but all I said was they’re not black this time. They’re Eritrean. I mean, they are black but not black-black.” His voice trembled slightly. With his skinny frame shifting nervously in his baggy orange coveralls, he was barely distinguishable from the other guys in the newsroom. “I mean, I’m not trying to say that makes them any less black in the moral sense or that we should in any way denigrate them for it or anything, it’s just that...”

“Look, just forget it.” That sharp tone was one of Mackenzie’s specialties.

“Mackenzie, if I may, they’re toddlers this time, not infants.”

“Okay Jason, toddlers. You finished?”

“Saskatoon’s spelled wrong.”

Sometimes the struggle was too much. Here she was, trying to get page one wrapped up and this guy keeps piping up with the most annoying details. The Prime Minister’s Wife was with Eritrean children today, not exactly the same as the black children she’s usually pictured with. They were toddlers this time, not infants as on yesterday’s front page, pre-schoolers like the day before and whatever they were on Monday. They were in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, this time, not Kenora, Ontario, or Gimli, Manitoba, and there are two stupid “o”s in “Saskatoon”. It was as if all those white guys were harassing her, a white woman, and at a time of national crisis too.

But if anyone could handle it, Mackenzie could. Everyone who was anyone in Toronto knew the Mackenzie Taylor Mitchell story. Her career was meteoric, going back nearly 10 years to the time she was 14 and her dad got her a summer job writing political analysis for the Globe and Mail. While still in high school she cut her teeth serving on a good half-dozen royal commissions into racism, sexism, Islamophobia, homophobia and the Holocaust so by the time she got her degree in social work she clearly had a calling. Mr. Blum offered her some choices, including a judgeship or a cabinet position, but she picked journalism. “I’m going back to my roots,” she declared. The entire world, to the very bounds of the Toronto Star’s circulation area, would see her name in print every day.

Not to mention her photo. Just to look at it was to recognize her journalistic credentials. She absolutely radiated a sense of self-satisfaction, in fact sheer exuberance

about being photographed. Mackenzie was proud that the photographer needed only a few shots to get that special look out of her semi-pixieish face with her brown hair sheared down to what her hairdresser called a power crewcut. And just a bit of curl on her upper lip. True, it wasn't the same as TV exposure. But saving the world called for sacrifices. Mackenzie had to fight the war wherever it took her.

She thought over her home page/front page choices again — a prominent photo of the Prime Minister's Wife at a hinterland daycare centre for Airlift children, a heart-rending piece on great-great-grandchildren of residential school survivors, Canada's formal apology to Sudan, a gripping story about a girl who defied the almost insuperable barriers of sexism to take up skateboarding, the latest Statistics Canada numbers on hate and, of course, the lead story reporting today's proceedings of The Trial.

Fine choices, all. She glanced out the window towards downtown and saw another thick plume of black smoke, this one obscuring the newspaper's office tower on Yonge Street, a few miles east. A fine front page indeed for any edition of the Toronto Star.

There was nothing left for her to do but leave the petty details — writing the stories, editing them, designing the pages, proofreading them, getting the paper online, sending it to the printer, all the myriad petty details of a newsroom — to the white guys. As a woman in journalism, Mackenzie had more important things to do.

She turned back to face her staff. "You guys finish up," she ordered, "and get it right. Don't forget how the song goes."

Her voice sang out scornfully, triumphantly: "The blackflies are biting bigtime in the camps of northern Quebec."

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Not so amusing, though, was the fact that her country faced a crisis. A crisis of hate. Hate, hate, hate. It was all around her.

Hate was as Canadian as, well, Mackenzie knew this was no time for clichés about hockey and maple syrup. Hate was as Canadian as rape. As Canadian as sexism. As Canadian as racism, Islamophobia, homophobia, anti-Semitism, white guy-induced global warming and everything else that's awful. And hate was personified in Smith.

Smith. The very name sounded loathsome. It somehow sounded like a name that's been around for a while, evoking tradition and therefore oppression. Just one simple syllable and from that language that almost all Canadians used to speak, the name sounded dangerous.

So maybe it wasn't surprising that Smith committed that vile act — the most offensive hate crime known for a long, long time in Canada, even with the country's unrelieved legacy of shame — an atrocity that must surely go down in history as proof of everything the old Canada stood for.

Mackenzie would never forget the day of Smith's outrage. She was sitting at her desk, drafting an editorial about the glass ceiling when suddenly all the phones started ringing at once. Then a weird, eerie noise came from one of the newsroom women, quickly taken up by the others.

First they were sort of wailing, then some of them started crying while others began shrieking. Some of them just glared, faces contorted with anger, at the white guys who suddenly looked even more frightened than usual.

Mackenzie grabbed one of the phones and listened in stunned silence as a reporter told her what happened. Mackenzie hung up without saying a word. Then she suddenly found herself shouting at the white guys: "HOW COULD YOU? HOW COULD YOU?" Other women were shouting too and someone threw a flowerpot. The white guys were now huddled together in a corner, some of them shaking as the women's chaotic uproar transformed into a unified chant:

"SHAME! SHAME! SHAME! SHAME!"

The loud, outraged refrain continued for a few minutes. Then, one by one, voices dropped out as the women succumbed to their grief, hugging each other and sobbing. Occasionally a woman would suddenly break away and attack the nearest white guy, punching, kicking, scratching and screaming as he crouched down, covered his head and curled up in a fetal ball.

As anger shifted to despair, the women led each other, still sobbing, from the

newsroom. Mackenzie barely gained enough composure to order the terrified white guys to re-do the front page. Then she joined the others in some badly needed stress leave.

That was Canada's darkest day, the day Smith committed his atrocity, the hate crime of all hate crimes. And against His Magnificence, of all people.

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Now Smith's trial was the lead story throughout the Toronto news media. Day after day, TV broadcasts related expert testimony from witnesses who detailed the immanent danger of racism, the twisted life story of Smith, his inherent evil and the vast, oppressive power structure he represented.

Like everyone else, Mackenzie watched with what she, a veteran journalist, could only describe as shock and disbelief. As a middle class Canadian white woman and victim of oppression herself, she understood exactly what happened to His Magnificence.

But traumatized as she was, she knew she had to do more. She had to do more to fight this growing scourge of hate, especially now of all times, while Canada's Airlifts carried out the greatest humanitarian mission the planet has ever experienced. She had to do more to make this world a better place. She had to be on TV.

She should be the one telling people first-hand about the crucial issues of our time. That should be her standing outside the court, summing up the day's proceedings with just the right look of moral certainty as she signed off: "Meanwhile, the lives of women and immigrants fall by the wayside. For CTV News, this is Mackenzie Taylor Mitchell."

Or better yet, she should be in the studio every night, with someone introducing her as the star anchorperson: "And now, with the news that matters, here's Mackenzie Taylor Mitchell."

"Thank you, Mae-Ling. Today's top story: Disturbing revelations that Smith resented being sent to a camp."

For Mackenzie was one of those people with a mission. She was a born maverick, a non-conformist and free-thinker who was destined to challenge received opinions and confront established authority. She was a Canadian journalist.

But her crusade called for greater prominence than a newspaper editor and columnist. She deserved better and so did the public for whom she struggled. She needed greater exposure, the exposure that only TV could give her, to fully demonstrate her courage and insight, to speak truth to power. Then the world would see her, Mackenzie Taylor Mitchell, single-handedly stand up to the vast, oppressive power structure of racism, sexism, Islamophobia, homophobia and anti-Semitism. Just thinking about it made Mackenzie steel her resolve once more: Mackenzie Taylor Mitchell, champion of the oppressed, scourge of the oppressor.

A white guy interrupted: "Mackenzie, your limo's here."

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Very much the picture of a front-line Torontonion activist, Mackenzie sat with her hands in the pockets of her zipper-festooned black leather biker's jacket, her face defiant as she looked out the limousine window and thought of the Smiths.

This was once their turf — the four-square-block expanse of late 19th-century brick factories and warehouses where Smith and his ilk used to punch timeclocks and perform menial functions for hourly wages. Beyond that lay the neighbourhood of Parkdale, formerly known for the crappy cafes where Smiths ate crappy food, the hotels with cavernous taverns where, Mackenzie had heard, working class men and women continued to mingle even after the sexual counter-revolution. Back in those days there were modest houses and even more modest apartments and rooming houses teeming with white working class people, often entire families of them. All that was the old domain.

The factories and warehouses were already out of bounds to any lingering Smiths. Like her own bright new workspace, the buildings had all been renovated to suit the new professionals, with studio-offices, gyms, squash courts, tennis clubs, smart new cafes, lounges and restaurants where no Smith would dare enter, not even as a waiter. Mackenzie did miss the view from the Star's office tower high above Yonge Street. She had enjoyed looking down on the little people scurrying beneath her. But this neighbourhood had a special appeal. Once enemy territory, it was now utterly transformed. As her police escort passed the sentries on Dufferin Street and turned north, she saw just a few remaining Smiths, easily identified by their baggy orange coveralls as they swept the streets. But, thankfully, most of the people were multiculturals. Or, judging by the occasional armed motorcade, other middle-class white women.

They were the new Canada, the hope and future of our country — middle class white women and immigrants. The immigrants came from pretty well every non-white country in the world, but many more from some countries than others. They came here to flee oppression, create jobs, bring diversity and enrich our culture.

The limo suddenly swung west on Bloor Street, an unplanned detour probably necessary to avoid a ruckus. Mackenzie looked out the window but couldn't see past the Asian motorcycle cops riding alongside her.

The ruckus was now a nightly event and in some parts of the city continued throughout the day. Just some kids blowing off steam, everyone agreed, but you know you're too close when oily smoke penetrates your limo. As a middle-class



white woman, Mackenzie knew first-hand how those poor black kids suffered.

A few armed checkpoints later, Mackenzie's motorcade slowed through the bomb-screening device and arrived safely at the gated community she called home.

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“A little less sneer please, Mackenzie. Actually can you change that sneer to a smirk? A little smirk’s okay. When you get to the last line, drop the smirk and try to furrow your eyes just so. Lift your chin a bit. Now, *now’s* the time to sneer, but just a little. Just a hint of sneer. Keep looking directly at the camera. Look judgemental. Pretend you’re looking at a white guy.”

In an old-fashioned sense, Ricky was a white guy himself. But his bearing and his clothing — the lavender look, it was called — showed he was a victim of homophobia. That’s why he didn’t have to dress in baggy orange coveralls or live in a camp like the other white guys, the oppressors.

But if he was a victim, why did Mackenzie find him annoying? Partly because he was telling her what to do, she decided. That’s something Mackenzie very rarely heard, ever in her life. But as a journalist there were some people you did listen to, and Mr. Reuben said she needed the training before she could go on TV.

At least he sounded encouraging. “Work at it, Mackenzie,” Mr. Reuben had said. “Someone as astute as you really belongs on TV.”

“Okay, that’s it for today, Mackenzie darling. You’re making tons and tons of progress but we still have a ways to go. Same time tomorrow? Have a really good one.”

Mackenzie left Ricky’s little studio and climbed the stairs back to the newsroom. It didn’t seem to matter where you were in this building, she thought, you could still hear the bass. No other instrument, just that relentless boom bass in the background. The noise often gave Mackenzie headaches and, even worse, a vague feeling of apprehension. During the rush to evacuate downtown, the Star neglected soundproofing.

It was a bad decision. It followed another bad decision — to bring the others. There was no need to. They could have survived downtown.

But if the noise problem couldn’t be fixed, the Star might have to move again fairly soon. This time it might be better to keep the two departments in separate buildings.

The subject came up in editorial meetings, executive meetings, networking meetings, empathy meetings, crisis management meetings and all the other meetings that took up most of Mackenzie’s time. It was a sensitive issue, of course. The newspaper’s commitment to employment equity meant they had to be hired. But everyone agreed they were happier on their own, in their own section of the building. No one in Mackenzie’s section really knew what went on over there. They’d

probably forget about the others were it not for that relentless bass.

And, in Mackenzie's case, the gnawing feeling it left in her gut. She knew the apprehension was irrational, no doubt another racist white guy legacy. There was really nothing to fear. Those feelings were just another way that Mackenzie was victimized by Smith and his ilk, the white guys in baggy orange coveralls and their vast, oppressive power structure.

Back in the newsroom, Mackenzie looked out the east window towards the downtown office towers, or what could be seen of them through the smoke. That gnawing feeling became worse. She had some tranquilizers, but her doctor told her to cut back. The evacuation had been traumatic, she told Mackenzie, but you can't keep medicating a problem like this. Mackenzie knew she had to get a grip on herself.

She turned, looked out the west window and felt a bit better, relieved actually, on seeing again the fortified wall and armed guards just a few blocks away on Dufferin Street. Beyond that she saw the neighbourhood of Parkdale and her mood shifted again, this time to what she liked to think was her characteristic defiance. As she looked toward Parkdale she thought again about the old Canada.

She didn't like it. She just didn't like it, especially lower class neighbourhoods like Parkdale. She especially didn't like lower class white people.

For some reason she never felt comfortable around them. They were scummy. She didn't like scummy people. She didn't like the scummy way they dressed, the scummy way they talked, the scummy way they acted.

And their values were scummy too. It just didn't seem important to them that she was important. They seemed to inhabit a different universe, one that didn't revolve around her. But it wasn't just Mackenzie who considered them scummy. Scummy was their portrayal just about any time the news or entertainment media acknowledged their existence.

Wow, did their scummy little universe ever change when blacks started pouring in. Did they ever get their comeuppance.

It was the people in neighbourhoods like Parkdale who experienced mass immigration first-hand, especially black immigration. Unlike other Torontonians, people in those neighbourhoods got to know blacks at work, on buses and the subway, in stores and cafes, in taverns and restaurants, at schools and playgrounds, at the laundromat, down the street, in the elevator, up the stairs, across the hall, next door.

Were they grateful? Far from it. With appalling unanimity, lower-class whites started spreading the most ridiculous racist myths. Blacks were lazy, they said. Unco-operative, inconsiderate. Noisy, very noisy. Stupid. Sullen, miserable, touchy, belligerent. Very belligerent. Quick-tempered, hateful, violent, extremely violent, exceptionally violent, vicious — and even (this was so unspeakably outrageous that it was sick) blacks were sexist and racist.

Blacks were sexist and racist? That was a complete contradiction, a total inversion, a pathetic perversion of everything known to be absolutely true. Could anything be more ridiculous?

Luckily, the really smart people came to the fore. Those were the other whites, better off, more sophisticated whites like Mackenzie, who recognized mass immigration for the blessing it was. All the really smart people loved non-whites, especially blacks. Especially Caribbean blacks. Especially Jamaican blacks. All the really smart people knew that if any proof was needed that mass immigration was both a necessity and a blessing, a virtue in itself, that proof consisted of Jamaican blacks. And no Jamaican better exemplified virtue than His Magnificence.

All the really smart people worked tirelessly to set the record straight about immigrants, especially non-whites, especially blacks, and most especially Jamaicans — and to make sure nobody, absolutely nobody, ever so much as suggested a contrary view again.

The message quickly became the mainstay of Canadian culture. It didn't matter whether you read a novel or a textbook, watched a sitcom or a soap, listened to a speech or a pop song, pored over a doctoral dissertation or a comic book, they all extolled the benefits of mass immigration and multiculturalism, not to mention the undeniable fact that black people, especially Jamaicans, were morally superior to lower-class whites. Who would dare disagree?

Certainly not a journalist. Mackenzie didn't get to be one of Toronto's top political and social analysts by questioning the obvious.

No need to, when she understood the issues so well. Although she knew Canada no longer had any such thing as an ethnic hierarchy, she had no trouble acknowledging that Jamaican blacks were the ideal immigrants, preferable to all other ethnic groups. Anyone who grew up on American TV knew that there was something very special about blacks and it was high time Canada had them too. Mackenzie also knew, sort of knew, maybe in an inchoate manner, that Jamaicans were the people most different from the old Canada, and therefore the people most likely

to transform this country. And she really thought it was cool that those scummy lower-class whites finally got what was coming to them — and from Jamaicans, whom those scummy lower-class whites could only describe as quick-tempered, ultra-violent, etc., etc., etc.

It was irrational, totally irrational, hateful and racist. Mackenzie knew that from personal experience. She had met blacks herself. Black TV newscasters were perfectly safe.

That's not to say Mackenzie didn't care for other non-white immigrants. Not at all. She was especially fond of those little Filipina women. Short, quiet, conscientious. Obedient. Like most of her friends, she always hired them as her housekeepers.

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**B**ut even though Jamaicans would be at the top of Canada's ethnic hierarchy (if Canada had an ethnic hierarchy, which of course it didn't) there just weren't enough Jamaicans, or even other Caribbeans, to fill this country. Meanwhile the boats, the freighters full of anonymous Asians, arrived with agonizingly slow frequency. Then began the greatest migration of all, as Religion of Peace adherents desperate to escape Religion of Peace countries brought their Western welcomers the Religion of Peace.

This, Mackenzie understood, constituted a social movement even more momentous than the Caribbean migration bestowed on Toronto. It made Smith's crime all the more heinous for in any way implying that unlimited black immigration was anything but the undeniable blessing it so undeniably was. Crush any opposing argument, Mackenzie thought. Ban it, banish it, tear it out and destroy it root and branch. That had always been her conviction and if anything it held even stronger now, lest such notions be applied to Canada's Religion of Peace newcomers.

And all the others brought in by the Airlifts. No longer did Canada have to rely on smallish crowds arriving on commercial flights each day, or by taxi at the southern border, let alone on the occasional rusting freighter to deliver our much-needed refugees. Now, planeload after planeload brought the Middle East, Latin America, Asia and Africa to Canada. Entire villages, towns, communities — tribes, clans, sects, factions and cartels — were being transplanted to the hinterlands of northern and western Ontario, the Prairie provinces and the northern territories, where they repopulated the little towns and cities while creating jobs and enriching our culture. Just today the Prime Minister's Wife visited an Ik pre-school, one of several in Red Deer, Alberta, where the Ugandan tribe introduced diversity by displacing the whites.

In a lot of cases, the whites had already left. It was yet another case of racism rearing its ugly head, this time resulting in stories — racist myths, again — that heavily armed First Nations across Canada were attacking farms, ranches and other isolated white homes. Then the towns were "disrupted," the racist myths maintained, as heavily armed First Nations occupied them for months on end while heavily armed police stood in bold defiance of any white who would object. More and more whites left for the bigger cities.

But the racist white flight of racist whites just made it that much easier to implement an especially courageous decision from Trish at the Forest Hill Human Rights Commission. All the white men in Canada, she decreed, were to be rounded up and sent to internment camps.

It was the obvious solution to an age-old problem: Evil. The way to banish it was to banish white men. Heterosexual white men, that is. English-speaking heterosexual white men. Not to put too fine a point on it, but English-speaking heterosexual white men who weren't Jewish.

They had already been redundant anyway, ever since Jennifer at the Rosedale Human Rights Commission ruled that white men were not entitled to jobs. That decision simply enshrined a practice that had been taking hold for decades. But as the camps were being set up, Becky at the Upper Shaughnessy Human Rights Commission pointed out that white men weren't entitled to food and shelter either, so the least they could do was work for it. With such surprising efficiency that some people almost thought the plan was already in the works — in fact it was an idea whose time had long since come — a nation-wide network of armed camps was established where white men slept in guarded bunkhouses before being sent to work every day in whatever industry needed them. That was most of the industries in Canada, it turned out.

And plenty of others that relocated from abroad. A population of docile men who worked for food and shelter became Canada's economic advantage as countries like India, China and Vietnam outsourced their less desirable jobs.

In most cases the white guys went quietly. Some of them were grateful, as they should be, for food, shelter, work and relative safety.

As if they were in any position to resist. They were vastly outnumbered by white women and non-whites, any one of whom could snitch on any white guy fugitive. Anyone who actively resisted could face the firepower of First Nations, police, gangs or military.

First Nations had already taken over some of the less populated regions. The police hadn't employed any white guys for years. Most of the gangs practised ethnic solidarity and, anyway, they couldn't have used white guys if they wanted to. They were far too conspicuous.

There were white guys in the armed forces, lots of them. But they were all fighting overseas, leaving a domestic military comprised of women, non-whites and, by far the majority, Quebecois. None of them would ever go near combat so this was a welcome opportunity to show off their courage, not to mention their automatic weapons.

At any rate, with multiculturalists all across Canada rising up against the racist white guy menace, the camps were safer. They even had 24-hour suicide watch.

The Toronto Star's white guys were bused in under armed guard from a camp a few miles away, then bused back when their work was done. They were guarded by Koreans these days, which cut back on the absenteeism which some of the white guys tried to blame on injuries and death. Cut away all that racist sensationalism, Mackenzie knew, and you'd find the Guyanese guards had been commendable for their enthusiasm.

That was one of the things that kept the newsroom white guys in line. They knew that Mackenzie or any other white woman could have any one of them transferred to any other camp at any time. They might work out their final days anywhere from a sewage plant in Toronto to an asbestos mine in Quebec to a chemical plant in New Bhopal, Saskatchewan. They might live and toil under guards from Jamaica, Somalia or Ipperwash. Any white guy could be transferred to any of those fates at any time.

But the Star did need a core of competent white guys to put the paper together. So it would be irresponsible to keep transferring them on whim, especially when there were more amusing ways to keep them in line. Any newsroom white woman could reduce any white guy to quaking fear and outright despair just by threatening him with those two simple words, the two simple words no white guy ever wanted to hear: sensitivity training.

Mackenzie smiled at the thought. From the way white guys reacted, you'd think they'd rather be thrown to the Jamaicans. No wonder. No white guy ever had a spark left in him after a two-week sentence in sensitivity training. That's all it took — two weeks of total immersion in the details of white male racism, sexism, Islamophobia, homophobia and anti-Semitism as related by blacks, white women, Muslims, homosexuals and Jews, two weeks of constantly confessing and apologizing, re-confessing and re-apologizing, two weeks of wallowing in the filth of their own historic guilt, with the prospect of one or more two-week extensions to begin the process all over again. That's all it took to reduce any white guy to a sad, simpering subhuman mess. With a quick look around the newsroom Mackenzie could spot a few white guys who had already reached that stage. The rest didn't have far to go.

Mackenzie watched their skinny frames in their baggy orange camp uniforms as they hunched over their computers putting together the lead items she chose for the day's paper. Most prominent was a photo of the Prime Minister's Wife with Namibian schoolkids in Camrose, Alberta, and an editorial calling for more Holo-



caust memorials in the suburbs. Top stories related Canada's formal apology to the Roma, a gripping account of a girl who defied the almost insuperable barriers of sexism to take guitar lessons, the most recent stats on white guy hate crimes and, of course, the headline story reporting today's proceedings of The Trial.

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With more shocking revelations. It transpired that when Smith committed his outrage he was on leave from a camp. Apparently there had been some sort of loophole which sometimes allowed white guys to get a one-day absence. That's since been eliminated, thank goodness. But even more shocking was the next revelation. Smith's wife — yes, some of those lower-class whites were still married even though they lived apart from their spouses — had given him permission to be with his daughter.

The fact that some white women were still married and had children somehow bothered Mackenzie on a really deep level. It was all lower-class women, of course. All white women above the socio-economic line just knew that marriage was so outmoded. It was fine for non-whites, of course, and for lower-class white women who married non-whites. But the fact that some lower-class women remained married to the guys in the camps and that the women had had children — white children — showed they were oblivious to all the progressive ideas of recent history.

What did they think they got out of it, anyway? Early in her career, Mackenzie interviewed a white woman who had once been married. It was the story of one woman's descent into sheer, unmitigated hell.

That was so long ago that some white guys still had jobs. But it was recent enough that when a white guy lost his job he couldn't get another. So what was a wife supposed to do with an unemployed husband?

There were no camps at the time but wives could always report their husbands for abusing their children. That was kind of unfair for this woman, who had no children. But then Tiffany at the Rockliffe Park Human Rights Commission decided that childless men could be guilty of abusing their children too.

Of course only a sexist would deny a woman's right to change her mind, so sometimes the complaint was withdrawn after a few days or so, although not necessarily soon enough to forestall a prison beating. The husband might return with a few injuries, like broken legs in this guy's case. Then who wants a cripple cluttering up the house so naturally the woman picks up the phone, re-activates the charge and back the husband goes.

So finally she was rid of the guy but how was she to make ends meet? Now she had to make do with a smallish condo, drive a car that was nearly four years old and work at a job that was tiring. "It's like he's constantly getting his revenge on me," she said.

Of course non-whites married all the time, but that was different. So was the

fact that they had children, even though they went about it through an archaic ritual that pre-dated the sexual counter-revolution. But, as with so much else, such restrictions didn't apply to non-whites.

As a proper Toronto girl, Mackenzie did have sexual counter-revolution-compliant sex with other women at J-school. She found the experience kind of icky. But the idea of actually having sex with men, like the multicultural baby factories did, normally made her incredulous. She did listen with fascination, though, when some of her friends said male blacks have bigger penises than other species. She could also remember, back before all the white guys became skinny, noticing the muscles on some car wash employees. At times like that she felt a sense of horror, something she could scarcely admit even to herself, that she might, she just might — shudder to think of it — have an atavistic tendency towards heterosexuality.

Best put such thoughts out of mind and leave that stuff to non-whites, Mackenzie knew. Plus non-white men weren't sexist. And non-white children were the hope for Canada's future.

Some of those kids were really cute too, especially the black ones. Every time an earthquake or something hit Africa, more and more of Mackenzie's friends had the Special Forces go over and scoop up some kids.

At one time Mackenzie considered adopting too. She thought long and hard about the responsibilities of motherhood, the paperwork involved in getting government grants to hire a staff of round-the-clock Filipina caregivers and the prestige of owning black children. But in the end she settled for puppies — Jack Russells, very well bred with excellent genetics.

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“Stupid.” That’s something that should be added to the index of proscribed words. It should have been the first one on the list, Mackenzie thought. She’d bring it up at the next Female Victims of Oppression meeting. Most of the federal cabinet were members.

There were certain words you just did not apply to white women, at least those above the socio-economic line. “Bitchy,” “bossy,” “sulky,” “snotty” and “spoiled” were banned outright. So were “diva” and “prima donna,” but the Criminal Code allowed “princess” when it referred to a member of the royal family. “Precious” was out, apparently. Mackenzie didn’t quite understand at first. She always thought of herself that way. But Mr. Gold explained that, although she most undoubtedly was precious, it was better not to say so.

They knew these things, people like Mr. Gold. Mackenzie didn’t always understand them and wasn’t always sure she even heard them correctly. Once, after a press conference with an especially massive Canadian Broadcasting Corporation presence, she almost thought she heard Mr. Fertig say something like: “Those Frenchie divas are so precious they make you seem down to earth.” Although Mackenzie wasn’t quite sure what that would have meant, she had a feeling that it was somehow something that Mr. Fertig couldn’t have said. Much as she thought she heard it, she obviously couldn’t have. Could she?

But she was pretty sure what Mr. Caplan said this morning. He actually called her stupid. Well, maybe not her, but her idea.

It had been nearly a week since the Star’s last anti-racism campaign and Mackenzie suggested a program that she thought elegant for its simplicity. Three simple statements displayed on a set of three billboards, one after the other, placed all over the city. Three simple statements popping up over the Star’s web pages. Three simple statements repeated on TV and radio spots and throughout the Twittersphere. Three stark newspaper headlines repeating the three simple statements:

BLACKS ARE NOT RACIST

BLACKS ARE NOT SEXIST

BLACKS ARE NOT VIOLENT

Just three simple statements, utterly unarguable. Three basic ways in which blacks are superior to white guys. But for some reason Mr. Caplan didn’t like it.

He just sat there, silent for several seconds, seething. When he started to speak his throat tightened so much that the first few words sounded like an angry growl. All Mackenzie caught was the last part: "... too fffffffssshhhffff stupid for words."

That was more than enough to have a white guy attending to AIDS patients' needs, medical and otherwise. But anyone who knew the first rule of Toronto journalism knew that no Toronto journalist ever, under any circumstances, challenged anything said or done by a member of the Canadian Jewish Council.

The rule made sense when you thought about it. At least, Mackenzie assumed it made sense. Actually, when it came right down to it, she didn't think about it. No one in Toronto journalism did. Probably because they were too busy. It took all their time, all their strength and energy, every facet of their being to continually challenge the status quo, stand up to the power structure and fight oppression. They couldn't waste themselves by questioning basic truths that everyone who was anyone knew were undoubtedly true — the basic truths expressed by the CJC.

As a matter of fact Mackenzie was grateful to the CJC, as was everyone else in Toronto journalism. Mr. Caplan, for example, didn't even work at the Star, let alone run the place. But he and the rest of the CJC were always willing to spend their time and leadership skills directing the content of the newspaper. They did the same for the rest of the Toronto media too. As a result, Mackenzie could rest certain that what she was doing was right. If the CJC said so, it was so.

Again, Mackenzie didn't always understand people like Mr. Caplan and wasn't even sure she always heard them correctly, no matter how loud they were shouting. But as long as she did what she was told, she could continue to fight the status quo.

Like other Toronto journalists, Mackenzie was never without her special-issue cellphone featuring a distinctive ring tone that distinguished incoming CJC calls from the others. That ring tone couldn't be muted.

Which could be embarrassing. One evening, just after putting the newspaper to bed, Mackenzie attended an emergency press conference given by Toronto Mayor Barinder Johal. That was before the disturbances became daily events, and therefore no longer emergencies. The media were listening in silence while Barinder was going on as usual, saying, "Oh no, no, no, nothing to worry about, certainly not downtown, no, no, no, everything very good there..." when that loud, piercing ring tone suddenly cut him off.

It came from Mackenzie's phone. All the reporters, photographers, TV crews, government aides, the mayor himself, turned to look at a deeply embarrassed Mack-

enzie. Blushing crimson, she turned and rushed out of the room while answering the call in a voice that trembled almost as much as a newsroom white guy: “Mackenzie Tayler Mitchell speaking.”

“*Don’t you understand anything, Mitchell?*” screamed a voice from the other end. It was maybe Mr. Miller, Mr. Abraham or another mister. They tended to sound the same at that volume.

“It’s a ruckus, Mitchell,” the CJC voice bellowed. “Not a riot — a ruckus. A RUCKUS! Understand? There was no arson, Mitchell. A few fires, a few city blocks burnt down does not constitute arson, Mitchell. A few deaths, some injuries do not constitute swarming, wilding, random attacks or mob violence. Just a little ruckus, Mitchell. A few kids blowing off steam. Get your facts right, Mitchell, or get out of journalism.”

Click.

That was a night Mackenzie didn’t want to repeat. She discretely wiped away a tear and waited a minute to get her voice back to its usual tone of steely resolve. Then she started phoning around, giving out orders: Take down the website, stop the press run, trash anything that’s already been printed, get the white guys back from the camp, tell them to re-do the offending stories. Once back at the newsroom she kept a stern watch over them until they finished, scrutinizing the tired, frail-looking drudges for the slightest sign of negativity. Mackenzie Taylor Mitchell wasn’t someone who tolerated disrespect.

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At times like this, Mackenzie wished she could go back to the Faculty of Social Work and gouge out the eyes of some of her journalism instructors. They didn't even teach the basics. Now she had to make up for it.

"Try to make your lips look normal, Mackenzie darling. Stop baring your lower teeth. Now let's try that sentence again with the right emphasis."

Mackenzie repeated the line: "More shocking news today as Statistics Canada reported a *four hundred thousand per cent* increase in *hate crimes* over last week."

"Gooood, your delivery is fine, just fine. Teenage girls will really identify with your intonation. But we still need some work on your facial expressions."

Facial expressions. J-school just didn't teach the basics. And that wasn't all that stood in the way of Mackenzie's TV debut. Her hair wasn't quite right, either. It wasn't blonde.

Ricky suggested the obvious, but Mackenzie resisted. There was nothing phony about Mackenzie Taylor Mitchell, never was and never would be. No way would she ever dye her hair for any person or any reason at all. Not unless it was an absolutely necessary career move.

And if she made it without dyeing her hair — wouldn't that cause a sensation in Toronto media circles? A white woman who wasn't blonde becoming a TV newscaster? She would be the first within living memory.

Well, there were a few others, maybe, but they weren't quite white. They were Italian or something, fairly dark and the kind of people Mackenzie and her friends sometimes called "basic." So basic, and just dark enough, that they qualified for ethnic status and their men were exempt from the camps. One of CITY TV's ethnics, Marcia Calabria, had actually taken maternity leave.

She wasn't quite sure why white newscasters had to be blonde. Maybe it was to provide visual contrast to all those Asians, Orientals and blacks. But she supposed it went back, as did so many other things, to the Holocaust. She knew all about it, having seen a National Film Board documentary in her history course at J-school.

Those were the darkest days of World War II, when Hitler was on the verge of world domination. All the regular Canadian soldiers had disappeared in combat. So an elite Canadian army unit consisting entirely of black men landed in southern Europe and fought their way north. Meanwhile another elite Canadian army unit, this one consisting entirely of blonde-haired middle class white women, landed in northern Europe and fought their way south. They met halfway, where they rounded up the surviving Nazis. Then came the big surprise.

Stripped of their fearsome Nazi weapons, Nazi helmets, Nazi insignia and Nazi paraphernalia, it turned out that many of the Nazi Germans weren't German after all. They were white guys. Canadian white guys.

Yes, unlike black men and blonde-haired middle class Canadian white women (not to mention the Quebecois, the film carefully explained), Canadian white guys never fought the Nazis at all. They joined them. They helped carry out the Holocaust. It was a proven fact.

Maybe that accounted for so much of what Mackenzie saw on TV — the courage, intelligence and integrity of black men and blonde women compared to the cowardice, stupidity and dishonour of white guys. Whatever accounted for it, it had to be true. All those movies and TV shows couldn't be wrong.

Brunette or not, Mackenzie felt she was with those women in spirit and, as she sat in her class transfixed by the documentary, in body too. She felt she was actually there, fighting Nazis herself, standing shoulder-to-shoulder with white women and black men to save the world. So strong was her identification with them, so confident was she of her abilities, that she almost knew she had fought evil there on the beaches of central Europe. Obviously the next step would be to continue the fight from the newsdesks of Canadian TV.

“Mackenzie, are you listening? Earth calling Mackenzie Taylor Mitchell...”

“Yes Ricky, what now?”

“Do try to stay focused, dear. Just because you're a journalist doesn't mean you can drift off into la-la land. Not on TV, anyway.”

TV. She just had to be there. For there were two types of journalists, Mackenzie knew. Those on TV and everyone else.

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The bass, the relentless bass, had everyone's nerves on edge that evening. All the newsroom women seemed snappier than usual. All the newsroom white guys seemed more skittish and, for some reason, they were coughing a lot. Mackenzie found it harder than ever to cope as one crisis popped up after another. The latest was an emergency call from the daycare centre.

Marley and Mandela were biting each other again. Mackenzie had to drop everything and place a couple of emergency calls, one to have her Filipina pick them up and another to have the vet sedate them. Mackenzie wanted those dogs calm by the time she got home, which this evening would be earlier than usual. She just had to get out of the newsroom and she could watch the president's talk in her living room.

Something big, very big, was about to happen. On very short notice the president announced that he would address the public on TV tonight.

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“Your series was called *Barn!*?”  
“Sure was.”

Larry Lansdowne was looking down at his notes, not at the camera and sure as hell not at his guest. If the Big L showed his annoyance, he no longer cared. Ever since Lansdowne@Nite bottomed out in the American talk show ratings his show had become subject to ongoing ridicule from his competitors, who lampooned his guests as has-beens, never-had-beens, would-bes and wannabes blabbering with an all-around nobody in front of a live audience of louse-infested street people.

This guy, Barney Bozaretti, was some former actor Larry had never heard of, slotted in as a last-minute replacement for a Bolivian ventriloquist who unexpectedly found a paying gig for the night.

“Actually I don’t remember seeing it, but you played the role of a patsy in an Italian neighbourhood, didn’t you?”

“Sort of. The show did pretty good too. We got some pretty positive letters. But halfway through the first season the network didn’t want to...”

“They dumped you halfway through the first season?” Larry looked at him for the first time.

“Well, I wouldn’t say dumped. I didn’t really care and then I got the dog food commercials...”

“Yup, you had quite a run for a while there. So what are you doing these days?”

“Well I just happen to be president of...”

“That’s right!” Larry turned to his notes again. “You’re president of Canada or something.”

“Quebec. Or as we say up there, kay-beck. It’s French.”

“French? Do you speak French? Parlez-vous français?”

“Oui. Yes, I do. But...”

Scattered clapping came from the half-full spectators’ section as the applause sign lit up to acknowledge this linguistic performance.

“Thank you, everybody, thank you so much. Thank you. But, as I was about to say, the English up there are just a bunch of Francophobes and...”

“That’s so fantastic it’s incredible! We’ll be right back with Suzie Fuckyou and the Emetics.”

It wasn’t the most conventional discours à la nation ever heard. Only four words of French were spoken, three of them by an American talk show host. But that just emphasized the new president’s appeal. Barney Bozaretti, an Italian-American

who once had his own American TV show and was now the Alpo dog food guy, was really Franco-American. Which was sort of Quebecois. That made the rest of the Quebecois almost as good as the Americans and a damn sight better than the Anglos any day.

At first his announcement drew disbelief. After co-starring with a St. Bernard in a commercial filmed at a Laurentian ski resort, Barney called a press conference. A handful of local reporters showed up. Casually, with the low-key modesty of a real star, he announced that he had been born in Maine and his last name was really Caron, “which is French, you know,” while his first name was actually Bernard — “although unlike my co-star, I’m no saint, ha ha ha.” The reporters looked puzzled.

Then he dropped his bombshell.

“This is kinda an out-of-the-closet situation for me but it’s gotta be one of the proudest moments of my life. I am here today to announce that I am Franco-American. You know, French-Canadian, like. Kaybeck-wah.”

Stunned silence struck the small throng of reporters. Then they pulled out their phones and the tumult exploded. All across Quebec, TV and radio stations interrupted their programming; newspapers stopped their presses. Traffic froze as strangers called to one another out of car windows, young people danced in the streets, old women wept, drinkers rushed out of taverns, customers out of shops and workers out of offices as the entire province joined one huge, spontaneous party. TV cameras caught the mood of the nation when, backdropped by exultant celebrations, a young woman repeatedly and fervently kissed a little hand-held fleur-de-lis flag, stopping just long enough to proclaim: “For the first time in my life, I know what it is to feel truly unashamed.”

Centuries of degradation were wiped away as Barney Bozaretti allowed the Quebecois to realize their ancestral dream: to be recognized in the United States of America.

Sure, others had achieved success south of the border. There was the Cirque, which spent decades touring the continent with its heart-warming story of a government-subsidized clown whose child-like innocence showed up the hypocrisy of English-speaking white men. Then there was their singer, who topped the international charts several times.

But they were still Quebecois. Barney was different. He was sort of Quebecois, but really American.

The consequences proved dramatic, and not just because Alpo immediately

became Quebec's best-selling dog food. The charismatic leader of the Parti Québécois, who used to lead the Parti libéral du Québec before heading the Bloc Québécois until his leadership of Action démocratique du Québec (after briefly returning to the Nouveau parti démocratique du Québec), had just become Quebec's president following the resignation of the charismatic head of Action démocratique du Québec to form a new party with charismatic former members of the Bloc nouveau démocratique and the Action libérale du Québec but who instead joined the Nouveau parti démocratique du Québec when a charismatic new leader teamed up with the charismatic former leader of the Parti Québécois libéral du Québec to create the Nouveau indépendant libéral démocratique et charismatique bloc parti du Québec libre.

But all bets were off once word got out that the Alpo dog food guy was Franco-American. He was offered the presidency immediately.

And not a moment too soon. It was a crucial point in the negotiations to bring Quebec back into Canada. Reparations had been multiplied and white guys were pulling double shifts in the factory camps to reduce the Quebecois work week from three days to two, enlarge the CBC a thousandfold and provide a federal government subsidy for absolutely any and all types of activity undertaken by a Quebecois. But those gestures fell sadly short of Quebec's minimum requirements. Everyone on both sides agreed that Canada must do more, much more, to woo the most important part of Canada back into Canada.

Negotiations would resume shortly between the heads of the two states. Translators were already on standby to bridge the two solitudes represented by the new Quebec president who, despite what he told Larry Lansdowne, couldn't speak French, and the Canadian Prime Minister's Wife's husband, who couldn't speak English. He was Quebecois himself.

And a shining example of the magnanimity of his people, Mackenzie knew. Even though they had separated from Canada completely, permanently and unequivocally, they agreed to continue running the Canadian government, bureaucracy, Crown corporations and everything else remotely associated with government. For how could you have a French-speaking country without French-speaking people?

Seated in her fortified condo with sedated dogs snoring in the background, Mackenzie phoned the newsroom to compose her page one editorial: "President's address a searing indictment of white Anglo male bigotry," she recited as a white

guy quickly typed. "Quebec calls out to Canada but is once again rebuffed. Centuries of oppression, stuff about their national humiliation. Poetry in their soul. Betrayed by Anglicanism on the Plains of Waterloo. Here's a really good one, maybe the headline: It's no accident that Canada rhymes with Ku Klux Klan. You fill in the rest. Make it good. I hear they're looking for guys at Chernobyl West."

Mackenzie popped a tranquilizer herself. Her nerves were shot. And no wonder. She was out there on the front lines, facing the enemy in all its stark reality.

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The bass, the relentless bass, boomed louder, deeper, stronger than ever as it reverberated through the newsroom. The walls quivered and so did Mackenzie. She tried to talk, tried to shout, but the bass drowned her out. The other newsroom women were gone. The white guys seemed strangely oblivious to her and everything else, even the bass. Was Mackenzie the only one who heard it? Her body felt sluggish, as if she was moving in slow motion. Meanwhile new work kept rushing in, faster than she could assign it to the white guys. Urgent, top-priority dispatches brought in up-to-the-second reports about the Prime Minister's Wife, the Holocaust, the glass ceiling, hate crimes and Smith.

Then the relentless, monotonous bass suddenly rumbled to a climax and the wall, the barrier between the two sections of the current Toronto Star building, collapsed in a pile of bricks.

And there they were. Blacks.

Mackenzie wanted to run. But her body froze. Her body froze stiff, paralyzed. She couldn't move yet her thoughts raced. Surely they wouldn't... Surely they wouldn't do it to her. Not her. She had been lynched herself. Holocausted. Had her land stolen. Forced to speak English. Stuck in a closet. Sentenced to slavery on the cotton plantations of southern Ontario. She was one of them. She was a middle class Canadian white woman. Surely they wouldn't... Surely they wouldn't make Mackenzie Taylor Mitchell prove she's not racist.

Then, like an alarm wailing high above the relentless bass, came the piercing sound of the CJC ring tone. It stopped abruptly, replaced by a tinny but loud, mocking voice that scorned her from her cellphone: "No TV for you, Mackenzie. No TV for you, Mackenzie. No TV for..."

Mackenzie woke up. She was soaked in sweat but, it took a moment to realize, safe. Her bedroom was silent, the security monitor showed no sign of intrusion. Barred windows, iron doors, steel gates and armed guards kept her home and the entire neighbourhood safe. It was all just a dream, just a bad dream, a very bad dream. But Mackenzie was brave, tough, resilient. She would continue to fight the vast, oppressive power structure represented by white guys.

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**B**ut this was no dream. This was real. The newsroom was in chaos, utter chaos the next morning. People in haz-mat suits were bustling all about her, lugging tools, building supplies and camera equipment. For a while Mackenzie couldn't tell whether they were ethnics or just white guys, so she didn't know how to talk to them or even look at them. Eventually she decided they must be ethnics. They were too confident and, even in their moon landing costumes, seemed healthy enough.

The coughing that Mackenzie noticed yesterday among the white guys was much worse today. Their numbers were down too, for the second day in a row. Mackenzie phoned the camp's guard station but couldn't get through to anyone who spoke much English. She did learn that the missing white guys were dead. That could be serious, if some kind of communicable disease were going around. The newsroom white women were all checking their inoculation records.

Of course, it might just be that the new guards (they seemed to be Hispanic now) weren't particularly vigilant about suicide watch.

Even so, the newsroom women were no longer joking about the sepulchral palor of what they had laughingly called the "pale skins." The white guys were looking especially frail lately, downright sickly as their increasingly skinny necks and almost skeletal faces stuck out of their baggy orange coveralls, which seemed to get baggier every week.

Mackenzie wasn't the only person starting to wonder how their diet might affect their immune systems. At an emergency meeting that very morning, she and the other women decided there was only one thing to do: Quarantine the white guys. Seal off their work area. Install plexiglass walls, separate air circulation systems and, at every possible angle, CCTV cameras with extra-sensitive audio to pick up any hint of racism, sexism, Islamophobia, homophobia or anti-Semitism. In the meantime, the women would run the paper from the day spa up the street.

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Could we call this the Second Coming, Mackenzie wondered. Reclining in one of the spa's whirlpools, she pulled over the swivel stand holding her laptop and looked again at her latest editorial. It was about the Syrians and how ineffably wonderful they were. But, having written hundreds of similar pieces, her words seemed to be getting a bit stale. So wonderful were the Syrian Airlifts that maybe she should refer to them as the Second Coming, after Canada's wonderfully wonderful experience with Jamaicans.

Except of course for middle class white women, Jamaicans had always been Canada's most wonderful people. Then came the Syrians, and any Canadian who knew anything knew their arrival marked a momentously wonderful event. So were Syrians now more wonderful than Jamaicans and equal to middle class white women? Or were Jamaicans still more wonderful than Syrians and equal to middle class white women? Or was everyone more wonderful, except for white guys?

Vexing issues, and the kind of thing that the CJC could normally advise on. But the misters didn't seem so outspoken lately. Mackenzie thought she noticed something at Mr. Roth's last press conference. He was his usual self at first, as he angrily denounced Canada for not meeting its annual quota of Holocaust memorials fast enough. Unexpectedly a foreign reporter cut in, asking him about the Caliphate of Flin Flon.

Of course everyone knew that the caliph had ordered the destruction of all the Holocaust memorials in his domain. The bulldozings and bombings were all over YouTube. But Mackenzie didn't understand why anyone would say anything about it, especially here.

She didn't think it was such a big deal anyway, only about 56 or so memorials out of a nation-wide quota in the thousands. But Mr. Roth slumped his head and fell silent for several seconds. Then he seemed to mumble something before regaining his composure. Even so, his shouting about Canadians and the Holocaust lacked its usual intensity. Mackenzie was starting to wonder about the rest of the CJC too, especially after some people started saying bad things about that Zionism stuff. Pretty well unthinkable in the past, the misters seemed uncharacteristically subdued.

It must be fatigue, Mackenzie thought. It must be such hard work supervising Toronto.

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Hard-working journalist that she was, Mackenzie didn't get her nails done as often as she should. So it was doubly fortunate that the Star's editorial department had relocated. Mackenzie didn't think anyone did nails quite as well as the day spa Fijians. As she lay back, the jacuzzi's hot, swirling waters soothed away her stress. Ricky was setting up his TV coaching studio next to the sauna. By the time Mackenzie had to return to that newsroom, the Star might have installed soundproofing as well as germ-proofing. Or, better yet, the Star will have moved into a separate building away from the bass.

Or even better, Mackenzie might finally get her TV debut. Mr. Wein called today to discuss a few related points, like her availability in the near future. He didn't say anything definite, but Mackenzie couldn't help feeling encouraged. Maybe Ricky was exaggerating her need for remedial facial expressions. His type tended to overdo things, she often thought.

Meanwhile, the white guys would have to put in longer hours until they stop dying. Mackenzie still hadn't found out why they kept doing that. But it might have something to do with their diet after all. It turned out that Stacy at the Aurora Human Rights Commission had ordered another 20% reduction in white guy nutrition.

Of course death, Mackenzie reflected, the thought of death, the presence of death, puts a lot of perspective on things. She once discussed this with Allison MacAllister, Canada's top war correspondent. She expressed it profoundly: "It, like, changes you?"

Well it sure changed Allison. Showing the deep influence of her killing fields media tour, she hit the big time with her own line of designer fashions in the coolest pastel-coloured military camouflage patterns.

In Mackenzie's case, she longed for the idyllic future Canada would achieve once the white guys became extinct.

At one time she and her friends considered themselves the transitional generation, the people who grew up among white guys but would outlive their evil presence. That seemed to be the case with the first shipment of 72s.

Part of a complex agreement arising from Canada's formal apology to the Islamic State, the younger white guys, those too young to work, were shipped to various Religion of Peace countries 72 at a time. At one point a diplomatic crisis erupted when the House of Saud determined that some of their 72s weren't virgins. Amends were made, fortunately, and the shipments continued. As a result, Canada's historic problem seemed to be passing as white guy kids were sent away

and white guy adults passed away, with convenient coincidence right at the end of their working lives. Mackenzie and her friends exalted.

Then Mr. Levine mentioned that as the older 72s were reaching adolescence, some Middle Eastern countries were breeding them with women from Ukraine or somewhere. “Once they’re old enough, the offspring will go on the world market,” he said. “We’ll probably end up buying some ourselves — that is, unless the cloning project starts making progress.”

“But why?” Mackenzie asked. “Why would anyone want white guys?”

Mr. Levine just kind of snorted. Then he seemed to say: “If white guys didn’t exist, we’d have to invent them.”

To work in the camps, he no doubt meant. Oh well, Mackenzie thought as a Filipina brought her coffee and cake. It would be ideal if they could die off and get the work done too.

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White women, those below the socio-economic line, were also dying off. The circumstances were a bit different, in Toronto usually involving gunshots or severe beatings. Their bodies kept turning up in dumpsters or sometimes the middle of the streets, often around the Regent Park area. Police were still looking for the white guys responsible.

Regent Park was another of those old Toronto neighbourhoods that had been saved by black immigration. Back at J-school Mackenzie had read *My Struggle: Tales from the Trenches of the Frontlines of the Fight Against the Dark Days of White Canada*, a memoir of legendary Toronto social worker Deborah McDonaldson. Her book described Regent Park and its white people as rougher than Parkdale. At some point all the rundown little white people's homes were demolished and a brand-new American-style housing project was built, Toronto's first. It was a good start, McDonaldson wrote, but it still housed whites.

On attending social worker conventions in the United States, McDonaldson and her colleagues were ashamed to admit that their city didn't have a single black ghetto. There just weren't enough blacks. Consequently social work in Toronto lacked the drama that characterized it in the States. Then came the first influx of Caribbeans and Toronto social workers rejoiced.

Now, in Mackenzie's time, Regent Park was one of Toronto's quieter districts, in the sense that the ruckus never took place there. Of course, high-spirited sounds blared out of His Magnificence's complex day and night. But, with the occasional woman's corpse awaiting the twice-daily pickup, a foreboding mood prevailed as one ventured fairly close to the home of His Magnificence, according to those who had ventured fairly close.

A set of luxury highrises built on the site of the original housing project, New Rotherham was said to be one of the most sumptuous residential estates outside the United Arab Emirates. It was a showpiece of black Torontonians' achievement.

A well-deserved honour, too. His Magnificence had faced so many trials and tribulations in his efforts to create jobs and enrich our culture. For this modest, soft-spoken victim of oppression to even come to Canada was an almost ineffable act of benevolence. Yet he had actually been ordered back to Jamaica countless times. Once he faced eight separate deportation orders the same week. He had been accused of all sorts of simply impossible allegations. Once he might even have been imprisoned, had not Toronto's news and entertainment glitterati rallied around him. The campaign's highlight was the hit single *They Crucify Me*, with

His Magnificence himself on lead vocals backed up by Toronto's undeniably talented singer/songwriter/guitar-player community and a hundred-voice girls' choir put at his disposal by the Toronto School Board.

That was way back when there were still a few white guys on the police force. So, considering the source, the allegations weren't surprising. They said he led a gang of heavily armed robbers that raided small businesses staffed by white women and then, after getting the money, stuck around long afterward to sexually humiliate the women. They claimed that he got involved in drugs and, as if they were reciting some really hoary racist myth, that he moved into prostitution. They said he rose to become Toronto's most powerful drug dealer and pimp after exterminating his rivals.

Anyone with an iota of sophistication knew that it was all too stereotypically racist to be true. In fact His Magnificence stopped the gang wars, an appalling period in Toronto history that tragically included black-on-black violence. Through grit and determination he created jobs and enriched our culture, chiefly through a cross-racial outreach project for white women and girls below the socio-economic line, with an especially active program in junior high schools.

When Tracy at the Oakville Human Rights Commission ruled that His Magnificence and his lieutenants must have accommodation suiting their stature, the government spared no expense to build New Rotherham. Everyone agreed it was Toronto's greatest black success story and a brilliant rebuttal of racist mythology.

There, in the splendour of a true monarch, resided His Magnificence, his lieutenants, his women and his girls. And their children.

There were so many of them that the Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services had to open a separate department, the Ministry of His Magnificence's Affairs, to process their social assistance cheques and provide essentials like food, electricity, heat and limos.

And yes, the limos were essential. Blacks looked up to His Magnificence. He was their role model. Could, under the racistly disingenuous guise of fiscal responsibility, a government expect him to ride around in anything less than a fleet of gleaming white super-stretch limos? Anything else would be an insult to black self-esteem. Moral responsibility obliged the government to show how His Magnificence proved the success of black immigration.

That undeniable success, in turn, justified the first 25,000 Syrians, the following 25,000s and all the rest of the Airlifts.

And to think that His Magnificence, of all people, had to suffer Smith's hate crime.

Mackenzie sat up in the jacuzzi and pulled over the swivel stand holding her laptop. The monitor showed today's coverage of The Trial. Another disturbing episode in the sordid story of Smith, the headline read. The story quoted evidence from one of Canada's top intelligence agents. "Smith's cancerous web of hate spreads its tentacles all over society," she said. "We only see the surface. It's like an iceberg, two-thirds subterranean."

Mackenzie looked over the other top stories. A photo feature of the Prime Minister's Wife with Ashanti teens in Marsh Lake, Yukon, a chilling exposé about how Nazis wrote memos on paper from British Columbia forests, Canada's formal apology to MS-13, a gripping story about a girl who defied the almost insuperable barriers of sexism to ride a motorcycle, a survey of some of the most prevalent hate crimes in Canada and, of course, the lead story about The Trial.

Mackenzie complimented herself again on keeping the Star focused on the most urgent issues of our time. That was hard to do when she was bombarded with so much trivia.

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Not just Parkdale and Regent Park, not just Toronto, but other parts of Canada were being rescued from their racist past. As part of the reparations, the Atlantic provinces had been ceded to Hydro-Québec, along with the region's white guys, most of whom now worked on construction mega-projects building dams, wind farms, tidal stations, generating plants and transmission networks to bring electricity from Quebec's most easterly provinces to the powerhouse nation's customers in the U.S.

The Airlifts continued to bring multiculturalism to northern and western Ontario, the Prairies and the North, planeload by planeload, one village, one tribe, one clan and one faction at a time.

Beyond that, across the Rockies in British Columbia, the situation wasn't so clear. Mackenzie had been there years earlier, as journalists from all over the country arrived to cover the beginning of First Nations self-government, presided over by Grand Chief Willie Joe's life skills coach. Soon after, Lacey at the Point Grey Human Rights Commission decided it was time to give B.C. back to the aboriginals. A land mass of nearly 370,000 square miles with resources worth trillions was given to less than five per cent of the population. Still the First Nations remained in desperate poverty.

The provincial government, having become largely a social service agency for drug addicts, then arranged with B.C.'s owners to create a network of environmental preserves for ecologically correct drug injection centres. Mackenzie had thought it strange that B.C. did so much for drug addicts especially, in those pre-camp days, when so many of them were white guys. She mentioned that once to Mr. Cohen. He laughed and she had another of those *did-he-actually-say-that?* moments when she thought she heard something like: "Vancouver went ga-ga over junkies because it didn't have blacks."

So the B.C. government borrowed billions to pay aboriginals to allow addicts to do drugs on their land. Still the First Nations remained in desperate poverty.

The first of the ecologically correct drug injection centres was planned for Moresby Island, a pristine wilderness of old-growth forest off B.C.'s northern coast. But when a white-guy construction crew arrived, the forest was gone. In its place was mud, slash and stumps. The waves lapping against the shore were black with oil.

The five white guys drew the immediate attention of the First Nations, dozens of whom trudged through the mud to welcome them to their spiritual land and inquire, by the way, about spare change. The white guys claimed they had no money

because they lived in a camp and worked only for food and shelter. They deserved what happened next. After all, the First Nations lived in desperate poverty.

Demonstrating the strength of aboriginal initiative, one heavily armed tribe set up a roadblock, a tradition that had long been understood as the RCMP's cue to deliver badly needed provisions. But Canadian police no longer had jurisdiction in B.C. After a few weeks when no Mounties, food, beer or smokes arrived, the natives moved to another highway junction. There they encountered another heavily armed tribe setting up another roadblock. A dispute erupted over who owned the land, not easily settled among people with no concept of land ownership. Similar confrontations flared up all over B.C. with escalating violence.

Survivors of these disputes accused other tribes of genocide. The United Nations sent peacekeepers. But whenever First Nations tried to explain the spare change protocol to the newly arrived soldiers, the Somalis beheaded them.

Nevertheless B.C. underwent the most breathtaking development boom in its history. The previous impediments of government reviews, environmental activism and native opposition gave way to rapid, unprecedented progress in forestry, mining, oil and gas, hydro electricity and other resources. All this reflected the new certainty of ecological awareness. Miraculously, foreign corporations finally came to agree with the longstanding tenet of environmentalists that First Nations were the ideal stewards of the land. But no amount of strip mining, clear-cutting or offshore drilling could change the fact that those First Nations remained in desperate poverty.

As takeovers swallowed one corporation after another, rumours suggested that B.C.'s foreign investment was now coming from a single source. Then came the puzzling news that white guys weren't the only people in B.C.'s camps anymore. They weren't even the majority.

Finally, a Greenpeace yacht trying to investigate one of the oil spills left an oil spill of its own after being sunk by the People's Liberation Army. Premier Chung Li Khan went on TV, waving the historic document that had given B.C. back to the First Nations. It was now the property of China, he said, which had bought B.C. He held up a receipt, signed by Grand Chief Willie Joe, for trillions and trillions of dollars.

Still the First Nations lived in desperate poverty.

Nor did things go well when the grand chief applied for foreign aid. He missed a crucial meeting after his white guy servants deserted him to seek amnesty, leaving him to lie helplessly in his vomit and excrement in a Port-au-Prince hotel room.

About the same time, vague reports from B.C.'s Lower Mainland said Chinese military had taken up positions outside the breakaway state of New Punjab and some territory ruled by one or another Hispanic cartel.

Was Mackenzie supposed to fill a newspaper with stuff like that? She glanced at a few reports from other parts of the country. Some hijackings and kidnappings after the Somali peacekeepers were Airlifted to Saskatchewan. A human rights complaint from the Winnipeg Assembly of First Nations that Airlifted gangs decapitated all the native gangs. A local disturbance in the Northwest Territories after the Tutsi had been Airlifted a little too close to the Hutu. An Airlift reception centre somewhere or another in Manitoba torched to ward off evil spirits. A few machete attacks in Alberta when an Airlift tribe demanded that their welfare be paid in American dollars. Some kind of conflagration way the hell up north after Airlift refugees discovered they were being served Pepsi instead of Coke. Sharia declared over Thunder Bay. The usual litany of beheadings and bride burnings elsewhere.

Really, junk like that hardly merited attention. Except for visits by the Prime Minister's Wife, pretty well nothing newsworthy ever happened out there.

And now she was back in Ottawa, her western tour having ended abruptly due to a sudden outbreak of co-ordinated incidents. Reporting from Moose Jaw, CBC analyst Kimberley McCloud cast light on the perpetrators' real motives.

"Let's not mislabel these individuals," she emphasized. "They're criminals, pure and simple. They revel in the power of holding and humiliating hostages, they delight in filming and publicizing hostages' self-abasement before beheading them, they kidnap and gang-rape women, even forcing their gang rape victims to phone their families and describe their ordeals in minute detail. They bomb, maim and murder women and children, turning homes, schools, hospitals, public places into hellish scenes of utter carnage. Words fail to describe the people who commit such atrocities but they don't reflect the Religion of Peace at all. They're unbridled psychopaths with an extraordinary capacity for cruelty and a bloodlust that knows no bounds. They just say they're Muslim to scare people."

But the Prime Minister's Wife and her entourage were safe, that was the important thing. Moreover incidents like these, co-ordinated or not, have to be discussed, if at all, in a nuanced manner. It's only with a nuanced approach, nuanced understanding, nuanced sensitivity that we can get to the root causes. And Mackenzie was looking at some root causes now, toiling nervously in their orange coveralls.

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Now this was newsworthy. Toronto's media elite was all abuzz. And the buzz was all about Mackenzie Taylor Mitchell.

The first she heard of it came when Ricky phoned. "Mackenzie dear, I'm cancelling our training sessions and I'm positively delighted to do so. Congratulations! You're in."

She could hardly believe it. No more remedial practice in facial expressions. No more Toronto Star newsroom, even if it was now a day spa. Mackenzie Taylor Mitchell was finally going on TV.

And as an anchorperson, not a reporter. Mackenzie was going to be a star and all she had to do was read a script. It was the most exalted position in Canadian journalism.

And she wasn't even blonde. Mackenzie Taylor Mitchell would be the first bona fide white woman without blonde hair to become a newscaster in living memory.

She wouldn't have dyed her hair anyway. Mackenzie Taylor Mitchell was no phony. She did things on her own terms. The world would see that the night of her TV debut. She'd wear her leather biker jacket.

She'd been thinking about that all the time she'd been training with Ricky. But she didn't tell him or anyone else. She didn't want anyone to steal her idea.

Lots of Toronto media women wore them, but not yet on TV. The biker-style garb showed they were tough. Independent. Free-thinkers. Fearless adversaries of the power structure. Multi-zippered black leather jackets were one of the most common ways Toronto journalists showed their individuality. Mackenzie got hers at her J-school grad ceremony, where each student was presented with a jacket by the Prime Minister's Wife, who sported one herself.

"Dis hare is for da long-time da sym-bull of da re-bell, da pair-son who shal-lenj l'authorité. As you go out dare to fight d'oh-pre-SHUN, you will cum-FOR d'affleek-TED an' af-FLEEK da cum-for-ta-BULL."

Yes, comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable, the maxim that Canadian journalists live by, expressed in the poetic cadence of Quebecois English and exactly what Mackenzie was destined to do. What a sensation she would cause in doing so. And on what a momentous day. She would debut on the final day of The Trial.

That she learned shortly after Ricky's call, when her CJC ringtone went off. For once Mackenzie answered enthusiastically.

"Congratulations, Mackenzie, you're CITY TV's newest news anchorperson." Mackenzie was so excited she wasn't even sure which Mr. was calling. They never

identified themselves. You were just supposed to know.

“You’re going on tomorrow and it’s going to be big, very big. We’re moving the guilty verdict sooner.”

“The guilty verdict?” Mackenzie couldn’t help asking.

She heard something like fffffffssshhhffff, one of Mr. Caplan’s trademarks, before his tone turned to an angry scold. “Yes, Mackenzie, the guilty verdict. Don’t you know there’s a Trial going on?”

Embarrassment suddenly deflated Mackenzie. She was relieved there was no one else in the sauna to see her blushing.

“Listen, it’s short notice, but if you want maximum exposure, well I mean maximum exposure in a sense, this is your chance. You’re going to make media history. The Trial ends tomorrow. You’ll announce the guilty verdict.”

The Trial ends tomorrow! The culmination of a country’s examination of the deep, dark secrets of its shameful past, the confrontation of fearless crusaders like Mackenzie herself against the vast, oppressive face of evil. What an incredibly fantastic career move!

“See me tomorrow, three o’clock sharp. Then you can head to the studio and get ready for your big night. You’re a hero, Mackenzie.” Click.

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A momentous day for Mackenzie Taylor Mitchell and for the cause of justice, she reflected on looking at one of the Toronto Star advertisements. The ads were also on TV, the Internet and, from the limo window, she saw they were on billboards too. They were all over town in three different versions, identical except for the second line.

Mackenzie Taylor Mitchell  
The face of multiculturalism on CITY TV News

Mackenzie Taylor Mitchell  
The face of diversity on CITY TV News

Mackenzie Taylor Mitchell  
The face of inclusion on CITY TV News

But no face, Mackenzie kept noticing. Everything happened so fast, she guessed there was no time for photos.

The limo turned onto the expressway, safely bypassing the suburban housing projects, then left the city behind. To avoid the ruckus, The Trial took place at a country club about 30 miles west of Toronto.

As a news anchorperson, Mackenzie didn't have to cover the verdict herself. But she had a free day before her evening debut and she wanted to be in on both of the day's historic events. Not just anyone would be there. Beyond a smallish circle, word hadn't got out that the guilty verdict would come today. There just wasn't time. Besides, the lack of notice would make it doubly unlikely that another one of those misunderstandings might occur.

According to Mr. Rose there was some kind of tacit agreement with His Magnificence that he would no longer attend public events. That resulted from the really appalling rumours that circulated when Canada's Minister for Marginalized Women presented His Magnificence with the B'nai Brith Human Rights Award.

Some people who should have known better simply weren't paying attention and, until the CJC ring tones started going off, part of it was shown on live TV. That led to the most dreadful rumours, really ridiculous, just purely racist allegations about how His Magnificence announces his entrance, how he expects women to behave in his presence and what he supposedly did.

Well, as a matter of fact the award ceremony didn't go all that well. One woman was dead, having been shot six times. Another, the Minister for Marginalized Women, had been beaten into a coma. Surely that had nothing to do with His Magnificence.

Truly a model of humility, His Magnificence now eschewed the limelight. He didn't even testify at The Trial.

Such was his magnanimity. What a contrast with Smith, that odious white guy. To have done such a thing to a black man, to a Jamaican, to His Magnificence of all people.

There was His Magnificence reaching out across the cultural divide, the generational divide, the racial divide, reaching out, just reaching out. Reaching out to a girl who was what, 12, 13 maybe, and obviously below the socio-economic line, judging by the fact that she was actually accompanying her white guy father somewhere. They were standing at a bus stop.

As his fleet rolled by, His Magnificence, riding in the fifth or sixth limo, ordered everyone to stop. He actually ordered his entire fleet to stop, just to talk to someone, to reach out to someone, and to someone like this wretched little girl with her white guy father. All His Magnificence did was lower the window and ask a question. Just one simple question.

Then Smith opened that racist mouth of his and said it. He actually said it. He even admitted it later. He actually said it.

“Fuck off, nigger.”

He actually said it. The most unspeakable thing any white guy could say, this Smith guy actually came out and said it.

And how did His Magnificence respond? He didn't shoot Smith in the face or anything. He just stared at him for the longest time. Then he kind of laughed and told his lieutenants to arrest him.

They had him tasered and hog-tied in no time. The girl was beside herself, crying, screeching, in obvious shock. And no wonder. What must it be like to have a racist for a father?

A stinking, vile racist, someone who would say something unsayable, even to someone as wonderful as a Jamaican, even to a Jamaican trying to cross the racial divide by asking Smith's daughter a question. Just one simple question.

Sure, the question was of a gynecological nature, but who did Smith think he was? Some old-fashioned white patriarch protecting his daughter or

something? How ridiculous. Outmoded. Racist. Just a simple-minded rationale for hate.

And now, as Mackenzie's limo whisked along the tree-lined driveway to the Georgian facade of the country club, she would finally see the odious Smith face to face.

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“Mackenzeeee!”

Applause, cheers and squeals broke out as she entered the banquet hall. Here they were, the elite of Canadian politics, activism, journalism, entertainment and the arts, those who proudly called themselves Toronto’s cream della cream. Yes, these were the people whose social consciousness, profundity, creativity, innovation and sheer verve, Mackenzie knew, would one day put Canada on the map.

“Mackenzeeee, I’m so happy for you.”

“I saw the tweets and I’m like ‘It’s a haiku heralding something awesome.’”

“Like the sun is shining through the glass ceiling.”

“Another great leap forward.”

“I just can’t wait to see your radiant face on TV.”

“Mackenzie, you’re an inspiration to all of us who struggle against injustice.” This, from the new Minister for Marginalized Women, was the most welcome compliment of all.

Hugs, kisses and congratulations continued as Mackenzie held the centre of attention. The crowd numbered about a hundred, some wearing golfing outfits, having just come in from a game. Others wore their work clothes, largely consisting of suits, punk outfits or, for the few men present, the lavender look. The Canadian novelists wore their usual long tweed skirts with or without baggy trousers. Some of the media women wore their black leather biker jackets. Just wait until they see me tonight, Mackenzie thought.

Banquet tables and chairs sat empty as the crowd stood up front, gradually turning their attention from Mackenzie to the upcoming proceedings. On the stage at the front of the hall sat the judge’s dais, the Crown prosecutor’s desk and the prisoner’s box. TV crews stretched along the walls for the entire length of the hall, CBC on one side and everyone else on the other. Mackenzie was just as glad the misters didn’t send her to the CBC. To function in this sexist society women do need lots and lots of self-esteem. But, she confided to herself, Quebecois women had a little too much. And Quebecois men were allowed to shout back at you.

The verdict would be filmed, not broadcast live, so that footage could be edited for maximum impact. With that in mind, The Trial’s final session would be held entirely in English, someone told Mackenzie. The normal procedure, of course, was that English was translated into French to meet the requirements of the Official Languages Act, then back into English for the sake of the people actually taking part, whose English-language response was translated into French and then back

into English for the participants. Trials held in other languages, equal in status to English and second only to French, simply added another layer of translation to each exchange. Canada's gift to the world just might be its language policy, a model of common sense.

The mood of conviviality shifted to expectation. Mackenzie just managed to grab a glass of champagne as Burmese servers threaded through the audience. Then chatter stopped dead as Smith's daughter came in. The crowd stared. Two grim-looking court officers led her to a seat at stage-front. Some people shook their heads with pity. With a racist for a father she was no doubt a victim of child abuse.

Then another officer pushed in the wheelchair. At first no one in the audience realized what it was. But as the head-to-toe body cast was wheeled into the prisoner's dock, Smith's daughter started shrieking.

So that was Smith, evidently very badly injured now.

"He tried to escape," someone whispered. "He must have tried to escape."

"Maybe he said it," suggested another voice. "Maybe he said it again."

With excited whispers, audience members offered other possible explanations. Then a propane motor sounded and the crowd hushed as an oversize forklift drove up from stage right. Its reinforced steel prongs carried a large upholstered chair, more the size of a small couch, turned sideways. Seated on it, facing the audience and weighing 500 pounds was Right Honourable Madam Chief Justice Big Grrrrl.

Recently appointed to the bench as the Supreme Court's first Women of Weight representative, she was best known for writing the previous year's feminist bible, *I Can Have As Many Desserts As I Want*.

The heavy-duty forklift strained to lift Big Grrrrl to her place behind the dais. Cheers, even louder and longer than those greeting Mackenzie, rang out as the judge raised both fleshy fists in the air and the audience saw her, in all the majesty of justice, wearing a massive, jumbo-sized elephantine T-shirt emblazoned with that stirring slogan: *Canadian Girls Kick Ass*.

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“When they told me The Trial was over I was glad. Know why? Because it’s been really, really stressful. Just being in the same room with you. So before I pass sentence, I intend to read my own victim impact statement. But first I wanna tell you something.”

Madam Chief Justice Big Grrrrl leaned forward to scrutinize the body cast. “You know what, Smith? I don’t care.”

The judge paused, then asked: “Know what I don’t care about? I don’t care if a person is black, brown — or *pink with purple polka dots*.”

She paused again and looked around the banquet hall, at the TV cameras and the people in the audience, allowing them to savour her wit.

“I don’t care if a person is *pink with purple polka dots*,” she repeated. “My country is all about inclusion. There is no place in this country for a racist like you. And if God was here she/he/it/whatever would tell you what I’m telling you now. You’re full of hate. You committed the worst hate crime Canada has witnessed for generations. And against a Jamaican.”

An angry murmur came from the crowd.

The judge’s voice rose steadily. “But you don’t seem to have much to say for yourself, do you? So just tell me, tell me what have you ever done for Canada.” With rising volume, she pressed on. “Tell me how you ever created jobs. Tell me how you ever enriched our culture. Or brought diversity.”

Smith didn’t respond. The angry murmurs grew louder.

Almost laughing for a moment, she added, “Tell me how you ever fled from oppression.”

Smith still didn’t respond. Exasperated groans joined the angry murmurs.

“I’ll make it easy for you, Smith. Just tell me one way you created a job. Or one way you enriched our culture. Just one.”

More angry noises, grunts came from the audience. With still no response from Smith, the judge resumed, louder yet.

“Let me tell you, I’ve been thinking about this sentence since The Trial began.” She was nearly shouting now, as her speech quickened. “You’re going to be so glad when you finally go to the gallows because I’ve got a punishment for you that nobody’s faced, not for hundreds and hundreds of years. You’re going to be so sorry...”

“You go, girl!” Shouts of encouragement came from the audience. “You go, girl!”

“... so sorry for the shameful, the really shameful...”



“Shame!” Someone shouted. Others repeated it. “Shame! Shame!”

“...for the truly shameful...”

“Shame! Shame!” More people joined in.

“... the really, really, truly shameful...”

“SHAME! SHAME! SHAME! SHAME!” The entire audience picked it up, overwhelming the judge’s amplified voice. Smith’s body cast still sat there, silent, impassive. Infuriatingly impassive.

“SHAME! SHAME! SHAME! SHAME!”

A champagne glass hit the side of the wheelchair. Still Smith didn’t move. More glasses flew threw the air, crashing all around the prisoner’s dock and its impassive, infuriatingly impassive, occupant. The chant broke up into even louder, angrier shouts and threats, some women howling with rage.

Then the crowd surged forward, screaming.

The first to reach the prisoner’s dock, a celebrity anti-racist activist, swung her arm sideways to deliver a long, hard, sweeping slap to the side of the plaster-encased head.

It flew off.

Incredibly, grotesquely, the head flew off. It actually flew sideways and shattered against the judge’s dais.

The crowd froze, incredulous. The hideous, almost supernatural sight of a flying, smashing head shocked them into silence. Then something far more shocking sounded from outside the front entrance.

**BITCH! BITCH! BITCH! BITCH! BITCH! BITCH!**

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The almost unbelievably loud, deep, booming voice sounded clearly above the six simultaneous gunshots. Just outside the door women's screams, hysterical screams, were quickly drowned out by even louder, unified, menacing male voices: BEHOLD! BEHOLD! BEHOLD! BEHOLD!

And His Magnificence swaggered in, leading his chanting parade of about two dozen lieutenants. He strutted with the gait of a proud black man, resplendent in the gleaming white of his custom-tailored designer basketball uniform and the dull shine of the gold chains, gold rings, gold piercings and gold teeth that adorned his six-foot-plus frame.

Mackenzie started shaking. But she felt strangely, inexplicably detached. She seemed to watch herself from a distance, watch herself kneel down as she knew she must, kneel down with the rest of the women as His Magnificence approached.

As he strutted up the hall women, on their knees, moved back to give him room. His lieutenants took up another chant, just as loud, just as menacing:

MIGHTY! MIGHTY! MIGHTY! MIGHTY!

Mackenzie caught a ferocious glare from one of his lieutenants, who raised his truncheon. She joined in:

MIGHTY! MIGHTY! MIGHTY! MIGHTY!

A loud, crashing, splintering noise came from the stage, where 500 pounds of judicial majesty fainted, fell forward, smashed through the dais and spilled offstage.

MIGHTY! MIGHTY! MIGHTY! MIGHTY!

Mackenzie shook, her hands and head moving wildly, uncontrollably, as she struggled desperately just to stay kneeling. She called out as loudly as her quaking voice allowed, as if her life depended on it, as if it was the only thing she could do to avoid getting seriously hurt:

MIGHTY! MIGHTY! MIGHTY! MIGHTY!

Everyone was chanting now, everyone but Smith's daughter who had resumed shrieking when the head flew off. Mackenzie saw a few women lying unconscious, having fainted or been smashed by truncheons.

Then she heard another woman's voice, shaking with terror but rising above the noise.

"THE GIRL! THE GIRL! GIVE THEM THE GIRL! JUST GIVE THEM THE GIRL!

It was the Minister for Marginalized Women.

This is too much, Mackenzie thought, it's finally become too much. With all

the courage she could muster she got to her feet and rushed towards Smith's daughter, knocking into the Minister and the celebrity activist at the same time. Together they groped, struggled, fought to seize hold of the girl.

His Magnificence was already striding towards her. A half-dozen cops and court officers reached the girl, yanking at her arms and legs, now tightly wrapped around a pillar. More women stood up and ran over to help. Three or four pundits and a couple of singer/songwriter/guitar players pushed and pulled her shoulders and hips, a variety show co-host joined the women's studies instructors tugging at her head and a professor of journalistic ethics grasped her right knee while an acclaimed Canadian novelist and one of Mississauga's top DJs crouched down to work at each ankle. Desperate to break the child's grip, Mackenzie grabbed her wrists and bit the girl's fingers repeatedly, chewing right to the bone.

The mob grew as university chancellors, sitcom stars, CSIS agents, documentary filmmakers, performance artists, rape relief counsellors, Juno award winners, immigration and refugee adjudicators, stand-up comics, truths and rights reconciliation co-ordinators, talk show personalities, writers in residence, gender assignment consultants and a regional distributor of social licence grappled with each other to shove their way forward. Meanwhile an outer layer of Liberal, NDP, Bloc and Green MPs elbowed out the Conservatives trying to take part. But not even a human rights commissioner tearing the girl's hair could detach her from the pillar. Finally Ontario's Secretary of State in Charge of Smashing the Glass Ceiling squirmed into the crowd from behind, hooked her right arm around the girl's neck and fastened a chokehold, pressing left hand against right wrist to tighten the vise and squeeze out circulation. Eyes bulging and face almost bursting red, Smith's daughter instinctively let go of the pillar in a futile effort to free her neck.

Then her ankles came loose and they had her. With three or four sets of arms locked onto each of the girl's limbs, the women handed the writhing, convulsing body to His Magnificence.

He wrapped his long, muscular arms right around her, tightly, pinning her face-first to his chest. Then, leering widely as his lieutenants fell back into procession behind him, he carried his still-struggling trophy out of the hall. This time His Magnificence himself began the chant:

PUSSY! PUSSY! PUSSY! PUSSY!

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At least that's what seemed to have happened. But it couldn't have happened that way. It couldn't. These things just didn't happen, they were too stereotypically racist. Jamaicans just did not... Mackenzie's thoughts drifted off.

Then they returned: Surely she didn't... But she couldn't have. She was a tough woman, a Canadian journalist. She'd never, not in a thousand years... And her thoughts drifted off again.

That afternoon family physicians, psychiatrists, psychologists and counsellors all across Toronto took in emergency appointments to hear similar worries from similar women. The therapists listened, comforted and prescribed as they painstakingly re-built their patients' normally enormous self-esteem.

There there. There there, the caregivers kept saying. You couldn't have done that. Not you. Surely not you. You couldn't have acted that way. Not you. Surely not you. It was a daydream. An hallucination maybe, although that's not to say there's anything the least bit wrong with your sanity, far from it. The whole thing was caused by stress, the stress of being in the same room as Smith, the exponent of absolute evil. No wonder you're upset. It's natural for good people to get upset about Smith. And you're a good person.

Mackenzie had a session herself but her sedative was a mild one so she'd be fully alert by evening. Then she headed straight to the day spa, relieved to know that events didn't unfold the way she had almost thought they did. Or at least she thought events didn't unfold the way she had almost thought they did. She sure hoped so, anyway.

Many others felt the same way — knowing, or at least thinking they knew, or maybe hoping they knew, or hoping they thought they knew that events didn't unfold the way they had almost thought they did.

Mackenzie's phone kept ringing as women continually called each other for reassurance, more reassurance and further reassurance. It just didn't happen like that and they just didn't respond like that, everyone told everyone else to everyone else's agreement. Then they phoned still others to hear still more reassurance.

But if final word would come from anyone, it was the men at the CJC. No one else spoke with such authority on any subject under the sun. Mackenzie's three o'clock appointment drew near, a chance to sit down and talk to Mr. Caplan.

In the meantime, she hoped the whirlpool would soothe her sore knees.

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**B**ut when she got to Mr. Caplan's office there was nowhere to sit and no one to talk to. He didn't provide chairs for visitors and he was too busy yammering on the phone to even look at Mackenzie.

"... wasn't supposed to come but in a way I'm glad he broke it up. They had to go and tear that body cast apart. Fact is, there was nothing in it."

Mackenzie stood still, trying not to look uncomfortable. The receptionist walked in, placed a coffee in front of Mr. Caplan and walked out.

"Naw, just a plaster shell. Coupla nights ago some ditz thought it'd be funny to put him under Jamaican guards. Beat the living shit out of him. Make you puke to look at him, doc said. A shame, a real shame. I wanted him alive, in a cage and on permanent display."

Mr. Caplan listened briefly to his caller. He still hadn't looked at Mackenzie.

"Yeah sure," he continued. "Sure, some little bimbettes got their fucking feelings hurt. Fuck 'em. They go directly from being spoiled little girls to befuddled old ladies without ever having been sentient adults in between. Hey, that reminds me. Hold on."

He looked at her for the first time.

"Okay, Mackenzie, I forgot what I wanted to see you about but it doesn't matter. Just wanted to wish you luck, maybe. Off you go. See the wardrobe girl absolutely first thing. Oh yeah, I just wanted to say no arguing. Got it?"

With that he turned back to his phone, his voice trailing off as Mackenzie left. "Yeah yeah, Maxie, I'm still here. Nothing, just another sop to the Religion of Peace. Never, never did we think..."

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“No I’m sorry Mackenzie, you just can’t wear that leather jacket on camera.”  
Now, more than ever, she expected a position in life that didn’t include people telling her what she can or can’t do, especially little people like this. But Mackenzie had to hold her temper. It turned out wardrobe girl was acting on orders from above.

“Mr. Caplan distinctly said you were to stick to the garments they chose. But there are seven outfits in there and you’re totally free to choose whichever one you want.”

Mackenzie ignored the scornful tone of that last sentence. There’d be plenty of opportunity later to sort out underlings. Now she had to get changed for a quick studio check before rehearsing her script. Then came her big debut. If she had to make a slight concession, what of it? The main thing is the world was about to see the real Mackenzie Taylor Mitchell.

She walked past the green room where a number of women, all experts in their fields, were waiting to take part in a post-Trial symposium on hate. Her dressing room was right next door separated by, it turned out, a very thin wall. She heard them clearly. Well, at least she was finally rid of that relentless bass, she thought. Then she opened the door to her walk-in wardrobe.

And there, suspended full-length from seven clothes hangers were seven outfits, identical in style and colour, from the voluminous folds of the baggy black body-length gowns up to the black hoods that were attached to the shoulders, the hoods with their little slits for the mouth, nostrils and eyes: seven solid black burqas.

Meanwhile, conversation wafted in from next door.

“... and all I can say is the old Canada represented pure evil and white guys were the reason.”

“That’s right. That’s why we needed multiculturalism and lots and lots and lots of totally foreign immigrants.”

“The more foreign the better.”

“Absolutely. Absolutely the best thing that ever happened to this country.”

“Truer words were never spoken.”

“Yup. You can say that again.”

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