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For each issue of Arts Insights, the image we choose for the cover is deliberately striking and has a direct relation to one of the articles in the issue. For this issue, we chose an image of “the Bomb”. While the Bomb was devastating, the fallout from it made people think. As Thomas Jundt writes, “after the unprecedented destruction of the War the impulse for preservation was great”. What emerged from this tragedy was the beginning of the movement that is now global in its reach and might just save our planet: environmentalism.

Throughout our history, mankind has faced challenges and today is no exception. Those challenges have arisen and arise from a myriad of forces and events: from developments and changes in technology to shifts in political regimes, from economic instability to seismic events. Throughout our history and still today, when faced with these challenges, we rise to the occasion and react to reshape our world, to better it for generations to come.

The Faculty of Arts at McGill has risen to these challenges in a variety of ways, not the least of which is a continual and ever-probing scrutiny of our changing relationship to our physical world and to one another. In the following pages you will read about how some of the Faculty’s newest members explore the nature of community and the role individuals and collectives play on local, national and international stages.

In the spirit of celebrating community, for this issue only, we have changed the back cover. Immediately following the devastating earthquake in Haiti on January 12th, spearheaded by the Arts Undergraduate Society (AUS), Arts and McGill students sprang into action. I invite you to read AUS President Karina Gould’s letter of thanks to the McGill community. Providing you with the opportunity to read her letter is our way of expressing gratitude and respect for the tremendous effort made by our students for the people of Haiti.

Welcome to this issue.

NATHALIE COOKE
Associate Dean, Research and Graduate Studies
Faculty of Arts
Ever since we have been an Independent nation,” declared Alexander Hamilton in 1795, the United States has “appealed to and acted upon the modern law of Nations as understood in Europe.” Strictly speaking, Hamilton was right. The document that announced the American republic into existence in 1776, the Declaration of Independence, directly appealed to that same “law of nations.” One of its primary goals was to enable potential European allies to lawfully assist a sovereign nation, rather than compelling them to give aid to mere rebels and outlaws. During the ensuing war of independence, the Continental Congress beat back the occasional proposal to hire arsonists to burn parts of London or to retaliate for British outrages on the bodies of British prisoners. Instead, Congress explicitly adopted the law of nations in commercial, diplomatic, and military affairs. So did the first treaties made by the United States (with France, Prussia, and Morocco) during the 1780s. The first Federal Congress, seated in 1789, adopted parts of the law of nations into federal law, a position endorsed by both state courts and the Supreme Court of the United States by the end of the eighteenth century.

For most members of the revolutionary elite, in fact, abiding by the law of nations – a European code of conduct made up since the Thirty Years’ War in the early 1600s – was a prerequisite to membership in the coveted fellowship of “civilized nations.” To be a nation of laws was, in large part, to obey the law of nations, which in practical terms meant refraining from aggressive war, respecting the rights of neutrals, and sparing the lives of prisoners and non-combatants. Far from an idealistic foray into multilateralism, this founding-era regard for what we now call international law was part of a larger effort to assert national and federal control over the unruly states and their incorrigible settlers. That goal was especially pressing in the realm of foreign affairs – relations with the European and Islamic powers, on the one hand, and the native peoples of North America, on the other. And yet the global upheavals brought on by the French and Haitian revolutions in the 1790s, along with the refusal of the British Navy to fully recognize American independence, made this commitment seem too kind-hearted, too credulous, for the brutal and dangerous neighborhood known as the world. As Hamilton’s own declaration suggests, the initial lawfulness of the American nation gave rise to a powerful counter-narrative rooted in a sense of indignation and a desire for revenge.

My new book, *Avenging the People: Andrew Jackson and the Ordeal of American Democracy*, explores the ascent of that narrative and of its most vehement spokesman, Andrew Jackson. Born along the southern borderlands, where formal laws mattered much less than the ability to deploy violent force, Jackson called for “just vengeance” against cynical Europeans, brutal natives, and craven government. In so doing, he rejected the premise not only of international law but of civil society, inserting the sovereign claim to violent retaliation into the very root-fibers of popular democracy. Indeed, a natural, pre-political right to vengeance for both the nation and its citizens would become a vital component of American national identity in the early decades of the nineteenth century.

JASON OPAL is Associate Professor in the Department of History
When European monarchs claimed the right to rule over portions of the New World, it did not automatically follow that the indigenous peoples living there would be dispossessed and that their land would fall into the hands of settlers from overseas. That transfer of ownership, a central aspect of the history of colonization, has been extensively studied but poorly understood. Few today would subscribe to the common Enlightenment view that the institution of property was the hallmark of civilized peoples: Europeans had it, Indians lacked it and thus the progress of humanity was served when the former displaced the latter. Yet there remains a vague sense in the historical literature that Europeans came to America with a fully-functioning system of land tenure and confronted Natives whose ways of claiming territory were somehow weak, defective or inadequate. A good recent monograph on the Creeks describes those southeastern Indians as possessing only “usufruct” rights to their fields, not “the land itself.” But can anyone ever own “the land itself” given that “land” is not a thing (unlike real objects, it cannot be destroyed, diminished or relocated) but a set of access rights to a designated portion of the natural environment?

No one in Early Modern Europe could claim absolute ownership over land. In spite of the resurgence of Roman law, western Europe’s lands remained subject to a bewildering array of communal rights and seigneurial overlays. A given patch of ground, delimited rather vaguely, might belong to one peasant to grow wheat on, but after the harvest it was open for grazing to all the livestock in the village; meanwhile, the lord of the manor had the right to hunt there and to collect various rents and dues. Only in certain areas could one speak, and then only in highly qualified terms, of the emergence of “private property” in land. The Spanish, English and French colonizers therefore brought to North America a welter of legal concepts and cultural prejudices which they drew on as they confronted an alien environment and Native Americans who had their own complex concepts of land and property. Out of this confrontation emerged new, American, forms of tenure in the various colonies, property systems that continued to evolve as settlement spread and as different classes of settlers vied for advantage. The general thrust of this development was in the direction of eliminating Indians as proprietors of the land. Property then was not simply imported from the Old World, it was invented and reinvented in the New World and that process of invention, as elaborated in New Spain, New England and New France, forms the subject of my study.

ALLAN GREER is Professor of History and Canada Research Chair in Colonial North America
A fundamental marker of modernity around the world has been, and remains, the emergence of sexual freedom and visibility and formal recognition of sexual difference as basis for individual identity in particular, and for national membership in general. In China, homosexuality has long been a contentious topic. The current official view regards homosexuality (tongxinglian) as moral deviance, mental illness, and, by and large, un-Chinese. Sexual difference, like many other forms of difference in China (ethnic, religious, political), is considered a threat to social stability and political power; any attempt at organized gay life is therefore rigidly controlled and censored.

While homosexuality retains an aura of stigma and silence, and remains legally unprotected and poorly understood, there has been a veritable explosion in informal and semi-public gay networks since the turn of the millennium. This is in part an unintended effect of three decades of socio-economic modernization and opening up to the outside world. Much scholarship on modernity and intimate life imply a progress narrative that assumes a development toward a Western-style liberation and public recognition; other practices are seen as evidence of repression and tradition. Are there alternative roads to living and thinking modern identity in a globalizing world, one that does not posit sexuality according to an either out-and-proud or closeted-and-repressed framework?

A fundamental question that my work addresses is the relative importance of sexuality in shaping Chinese women’s sense of their identities as, indeed, Chinese women. I spent two years conducting anthropological fieldwork in Beijing among a population of women participating in social networks labeled “lesbian”, or lala in vernacular Chinese. The project is ongoing as I conduct annual re-visits, and I seek to develop a cross-city project that investigates the intimate and social lives of women of all ages and backgrounds who affiliate with lala networks.

My research suggests that same-sex relationships and identity are not inherently transgressing social norms, and that sexuality is best considered a social category that is shaped by a variety of factors, such as gender, age/generation, class, marital status, and so on. Tacit compliance with familial expectations structure same-sex intimacies and identities in important ways. Compliance at face value, or, giving off the impression of conformity – for example by marrying a gay man in a convenience marriage – allows for different practices at home, or in semi-private lala space. For most of my study participants, conformity and compliance are simultaneously desired and derided: desired because they grant access to ‘normal’ status (e.g. wives and mothers) and, hence, social acceptance; they are also derided because they limit the actual possibilities for realizing personal desires. Narratives of personal experience and social networking emphasize the importance of balancing these different domains as key to being a “good person” (hao ren), a concept that merges traditional Chinese filial norms with new interpretations that emphasize the importance of personal access to the consumer economy and a cosmopolitan urban lifestyle as a means to realize “the good life”. Desirable ways of being lala merge competing versions of Chinese identities: older, traditional principles of filiality, socialist nationalist imperatives, and urban, middle-class individualism where relative access to symbolic and material resources define the ability to balance said social expectations against personal desires.

ELISABETH ENGEBRETSEN
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Pour y parvenir, il faut d’abord distinguer deux modalités d’écriture. La première, personnelle, sanitaire, amène l’auteur à poser sur le papier (sur l’écran) les mots qui lui ventilent l’esprit des aléas du vécu. J’écris parce que : la mort de mon chien m’attriste ; je suis joyeux d’avoir gagné une compétition sportive ; je fais face à un gros dilemme. Là, l’écriture est *libération*, entreprise de liquidation des intensités quotidiennes, des drames qui nous structurent comme des silences qui nous hantent.

Arriver à utiliser l’écriture dans cette perspective libératrice, c’est déjà beaucoup. Sauf que, comme dirait l’autre, ce n’est pas de nos oignons.

La seconde façon de considérer cet acte curieux concerne, à l’inverse, un travail d’*occupation*. Occupation du langage, des formes, des traditions. On emploie ou on invente les outils qui nous conviennent. On se pose (ou non) la question du devenir politique de sa pratique. On réfléchit aux moyens de traduire son expérience sans tomber dans les complaisances des récits de soi.

Au seuil de cet engagement, les voix commencent à se multiplier. On ne sait plus tout à fait qui parle. La brise est fraîche, le temps fuyant. Quelque chose de nouveau peut apparaître. Ça sonne à la porte, je l’ouvre; tiens, «il y a longtemps que je ne m’étais pas revu». Sais-tu ce que c’est que d’écrire de la littérature? Je crois que oui. Je ne sais pas.

Il s’agit d’une occupation étrange à considérer comme l’élaboration constamment reconduite de la fiction d’un geste : regardez, j’écris. Écrire vraiment, dans l’amour désintéressé de cet acte, c’est aussi développer une méthode de négociation avec les contingences du réel. En inventant un monde à côté du monde, une version de plus, on pose une action qui produit un objet complexe. Échappant aux catégories du bon et du mauvais, du vrai et du faux, le fruit de ce travail trouve sa place dans cette autre fiction qu’on nomme réalité.

Espace de désir et de jeu, l’écriture est simultanément expérience de vie et de mort. Observer-vous écrire : vous n’êtes pas au parc à regarder les oiseaux ou en train d’entendre votre enfant s’esclaffer parce que vous le chatouillez frénétiquement. Vous êtes assis, le corps figé dans une posture. Bientôt, vous allez développer des problèmes de dos.

Malgré tout, cet espace qu’invente l’écriture est un des rares lieux, en ces temps consensuels, qui tolère les paradoxes. C’est gênant, parfois dangereux, peut-être aussi parce qu’il y a une sorte de lâcheté à vivre des vies par procuration.

Écrire, c’est aussi bâtir sa fiction de l’écriture, en se battant, parfois malgré nous, contre celles faites pour intimider. La plus communément admise, la plus castrante prétend que la «création littéraire» est remarquable et géniale, réservée à quelques élus. Pourtant, la littérature se construit toujours par ce qui lui est l’extérieur, dans une désinvolture à l’égard des attentes qu’on lui assigne.

Savoir d’un drôle de type, la littérature résiste, enfin, par l’invention, la critique et l’indépendance aux mensonges du pouvoir. Art du langage qui sait qu’être fort c’est aussi savoir se montrer faible, la littérature rappelle que nos prétendus rois se pavanent derrière des dais invisibles et que leur discours de vérité ne cachent en rien leur nudité.

**ALAIN FARAH** est professeur adjoint au Département de langues et littérature françaises

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**ARTS INSIGHTS**

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**QUAND J’ÉCRIS JE, QUI PARLE?**
A policy of multiculturalism is an integral part of the state’s commitment to protecting group life. Yet it also tests the limits of accommodation and interrogates the state’s own ideology and its commitment to principles of religious freedom and equality. In policies of multiculturalism, the status of women has been most often the site of contestation and negotiation. In particular, the question of the legal status of Muslim women is one of considerable controversy and debate around the world. Practices such as veiling, under-age marriage and religious family law test the limits of tolerance, raising issues of gender justice, minority rights, family law reform and the accommodation of difference. In India, controversy rages over claims to reform Muslim personal law. These debates raise similar questions of the appropriate role of the state, the tension between religious freedom and gender equality and the limits of reasonable accommodation. My objective is to further develop an understanding of multiculturalism that respects group difference while upholding women’s equality within the framework of constitutional rights.

Whereas the Indian Constitution guarantees equality and freedom from discrimination in the public sphere, Muslim women are explicitly discriminated against in the private sphere of the family. The public-private dichotomy underpins a separation of the religious and the secular, which insulates families and groups from the constitutional requirements of the wider society. This contradictory embrace of equality and discrimination in India’s Constitution makes India a particularly interesting lens through which to explore understandings of multiculturalism. The complex interface wherein constitutional law impacts the private life of Muslim women, together with their location at the intersections of gender, religious community and nation, makes them a compelling category of analysis.

My endeavour is to explore conceptual methods and new directions in the understanding of multiculturalism, bringing together discourses of equality and religious freedom, to realize their transformative potential. Hopefully, my work will contribute to a stronger legal protection of Muslim women in India; and to a stronger cross-cultural understanding of legal and social issues in the reasonable accommodation of difference. Moving away from a focus on the competing rights of religious communities, my aim is to bring Muslim women to the centre of a contextual analysis that situates the material reality of their inequality within particular state policies.

VRINDA NARAIN is Assistant Professor at the McGill Institute for Gender, Sexuality and Feminist Studies and at the Faculty of Law.
Since its inception in the late nineteenth century, movies have been obsessed with the representation of children. Indeed, many of the most significant films in history pivot on the representation of the child: The first feature length narrative film, D.W. Griffith’s *The Birth of a Nation* (US, 1915) celebrated the emergence of the Ku Klux Klan through its notoriously racist depiction of the attempted rape of an innocent child by an African-American male. Thereafter, popular silent stars like Lillian Gish and Mary Pickford distinguished themselves by continuing to play innocent and imperiled child characters well into their adult years. The first sound film in Germany, Fritz Lang’s *M* (1931) chronicled the pathology of a child murderer with an astonishing attention to the details of emerging systems of visual surveillance in the metropolis. Meanwhile, American films of the same decade rendered the type of irresistible children pursued by Peter Lorre’s infamous pedophile one of their central spectacles. What types of discourses inform this paradoxical relationship between the onscreen fetishization of the child and the demonization of the child-lover?

In 1934, Hollywood began enforcing the Production Code, a method of self-censorship designed to correct the corruptive influence of movies on minors – or at least convince the outraged Legions of Decency that defamed cinema that the studio system didn’t need to be subjected to local, state, or federal regulation. Imbedded in the Code’s copious list of “Do’s and Don’ts” was a host of clauses that rendered the explicit representation of adult sexuality illicit. Forbidding the type of lascivious performances, suggestive dialogue, and unsavory references that had made the full-bodied Mae West the most popular star of the pre-Code era, the Code inadvertently supplanted the adult’s body with the child’s. Replacing West as the most popular star of the 1930s, Shirley Temple became the biggest box-office draw of Depression America. And while lewd images of children’s bodies were also prohibited by the Code, Hollywood went out of its way to showcase its precocious stars’ assets, insisting – in the case of Temple – to keep her skirts high and the revealing shots of her underpants ubiquitous. During the classical age of Hollywood, celluloid children became the unlikely figures upon which many of society’s anxieties – about race, class, gender, and sexuality – were projected. By reclaiming the Romantic invention of childhood innocence that had been undermined by psychoanalysis’ insistence upon infantile perversion, American movies enlisted the alluring bodies of its child stars as ideological weapons. And when the Code began to be challenged in the late 1950s and 1960s – by foreign films boasting more mature sexual content than their prudish American counterparts – Hollywood responded with an increased exploitation of the erotic potential of childhood – and an increased campaign to demonize viewers whose tastes included the type of pedophilic material it had helped to commodify. In our moment, the era of *Pretty Baby* (Louis Malle, US, 1978) and *Taxi Driver* (Martin Scorsese, US, 1976) has given way to the flourishing of an independent American cinema whose central preoccupation seems to be the explicit documentation of sexualized kids and the adults who are drawn dangerously towards them (*Kids*, *Happiness*, *Capturing the Friedmans*, *The Woodsman*, *Little Children*, to name just a few examples.)

My current research project – a book-length study entitled *The Pedophilic Imagination: Children, Sex, Movies* examines the fraught history of Hollywood in an effort to uncover what is at stake politically in our simultaneous obsession with screen images of erotic childhood and the demonization of pedophilic viewers.

ARA OSTERWEIL is Assistant Professor in the Department of English

*Why Has the Representation, and Repression, of Child Sexuality Been So Integral to the History of Hollywood Cinema?*
After the systematic looting of Constantinople's most precious treasures during the city's Latin occupation, the streets of the once magnificent Byzantine capital on the Bosphorus were empty, outbreaks of famine and plague common, and imperial funds depleted. Lamenting the harsh economic realities of his day, the mid-fourteenth century Byzantine historian Nikephoros Gregoras observed that there was nothing left in the imperial treasury “but air and dust and, as one might say, the atoms of Epicurus.” Laments such as this, thoroughly imbued with nostalgia, have shaped not only contemporary perceptions but also most modern scholarly assessment of what has come to be known as the Late Byzantine or Palaiologan era, the period between the Crusader occupation of Constantinople (1204-1261) and the final conquest of the imperial city by the Ottomans (in the year 1453). Nostalgia is a seductive sentiment. How can we not be moved by the fact that the imperial crown of the era was inlaid with mere colored glass, the original gems having been pawned to the republic of Venice? Notions of decline and twilight, however, overshadow the more nuanced cultural relations of the period. Amidst this economic and political decline, classical education and intellectual life flourished. Indeed even in lamenting the sad state of the treasury, Gregoras betrays his learned status and ties to a vibrant Hellenic heritage by eloquently describing bankruptcy (emptiness) in terms Epicurean. With a number of recent “blockbuster” exhibitions at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Getty in Los Angeles, and Royal Academy of Arts in London, it is increasingly clear that the visual arts thrived as well.

In an attempt to re-evaluate the role of the visual arts in this politically and economically impoverished era, my research examines the intersection of two key thematics – the imperial image and the gift – as they are reconceived in the final two centuries of the Byzantine Empire. Through the analysis of art objects created specifically for diplomatic exchange alongside imperial imagery, my book traces the circulation of the image of the emperor – in such diverse media as silk, gold, and vellum – at the end of the empire. Drawing on diverse visual and textual materials that have traditionally been eclipsed in favor of the arts of earlier Byzantine periods, this project interrogates the manner in which previous visual paradigms of sovereignty and generosity were adapted to suit diminished contemporary realities. Situated at the convergence of art, empire, and decline, this investigation promises to expand discussions of cultural exchange and boundary crossings by prompting us to question how the concept of political decline re-figures categories of wealth and value, categories that lie at the core of cultural exchange.

CECILY HILSDALE
is Assistant Professor in the Department of Art History and Communication Studies
Although green consumption is often thought of as a relatively recent phenomenon, it was the Bomb during World War II that first set the nation on its course to environmentalism and the creation of what I term the green middle class. After the unprecedented destruction of the War the impulse for preservation was great. Once humans realized that they were capable of destroying the planet, other ways that they might be accomplishing the task were made comprehensible. Fallout from Bomb testing that polluted the environment and made its way into the food chain appeared to cause cancer in humans and animals. The ever-increasing air and water pollution resulting from the ever-increasing production practices of corporations aiming to meet ever-increasing consumer demand that were once considered a nuisance, after the War appeared ominous. Population growth, and the constant push to develop “unnatural” human landscapes where once natural landscapes stood, appeared as though it was going to overwhelm the planet’s carrying capacity ultimately leading to mass-starvations, resource wars, chaos, and apocalypse. But, competing for apocalyptic honors was the revolution in synthetic chemicals that growing evidence suggested might be devastating both the earth’s environment and its inhabitants. The sense that there was something fundamentally wrong with the way Americans were living was becoming inescapable.

The question that came to light in the blast of the Bomb was who and what would America be following the War? How would the nation define itself as a people and a nation? Environmentalism emerged as an ideology to respond to such metaphysical questions; an alternative vision to a mainstream America increasingly dominated by the military and corporations. For some, the Bomb inspired a rare moment of American self-reflection – one that its corporate and political leadership quickly moved to undermine – leaving citizens who were unhappy with the trend toward America as a supercorporate superpower searching for an alternative vision; they found it in environmentalism.

My research explores the intersections of cultural, intellectual, social, political, and environmental histories, and seeks to provide a fresh perspective not only on how Americans responded to the Cold War, but on the rise of environmentalism and the role of consumers in modern society. In addition to the usual political and legal maneuvers employed in an effort to affect change to protect the environment was a revolutionary consumer response beginning in the mid-1940s that saw citizens increasingly turn to what they deemed environmentally-friendly consumption practices. Their goal was not only to protect themselves and their families from harm, but to achieve social change at a time when growing numbers of Americans believed the polity was increasingly out of balance, with government placing the desires of business before the needs of its citizens. In the end, continual political compromises with corporate power meant limited legislation, leaving many citizens feeling they had no alternative but to seek refuge in an alternative “green” middle class culture that grew to occupy a prominent place in American society.

**Thomas Jundt**
is a Faculty lecturer in the Department of History

Above: detail from painting by Louise Moillon (1610-1696), “The Fruit and Vegetable Costermonger” (1634, oil on panel, 48 x 65 cm)
I am completely and utterly humbled by the tremendous support and generosity of the Faculty of Arts and greater McGill community in our Help 4 Haiti campaign.

Initially, we were shocked, like the rest of the world, about the devastating tragedy that rocked Haiti on January 12th of this year. It only took one voice, that of Jenna Gogan, to push us into action. A committee was formed: Jenna Gogan and Zoe Prowse took the lead, and councilors Sean Lynch, Connie Gagliardi, Tobie Cusson, Maia Frieser, Charles Knox and myself, all got on board. We researched charitable organizations, decided on Oxfam’s work in Haiti, and aimed to raise $6,000 or $1 per Arts student by January 25th.

Without a moment to spare, we sent word through the AUS listserv, Facebook, and to all of the faculty associations across campus. The response was overwhelming. Volunteers canvassed in the Leacock lobby, in classrooms, and at the Roddick gates. We organized an insightful talk by Prof. Catherine LeGrand, PhD Candidate Pierre Minn and Haitian Arts Student Kenson Félizier, held a Bar des Arts where all revenue was donated to the effort, and had a bake sale and a clothing drive. In one day we donated over 250 garbage bags full of winter clothing to Jeunesse Soleil for the 6,000 expected Haitian newcomers to Montreal. The clothing drive was organized by Tatiana Nesviginsky.

We fundraised for eight days. By January 20th we had already reached $7,950 prompting us to double our initial goal. By January 22nd we broke our second goal and had raised $12,096.50. We decided to aim higher, instead of $1 per Arts student, $1 per Student at McGill, $20,000, still by January 25th.

Our final count, I am incredulous to say, is $19,673.29! Furthermore, since the money will be donated before February 2nd, it will be matched by the Canadian government bringing the total to: $39,346.58.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone involved in this unbelievable process, from the student volunteers who came out in droves, to McGill Security’s support, the interest taken by the campus media and the wonderful support we received from the Dean, Associate Deans and staff in the Faculty of Arts. None of this could have been possible without you.

As Kenson Félizier put so strongly, when we have finished fundraising and have returned to our day to day lives, people will still be living through the aftermath of the earthquake and will still be suffering in Haiti. I applaud SSMU’s commitment to the long-term relief in Haiti and hope that the McGill community will be just as strong in their support of this next initiative as it was of ours.

Thank you for coming together.”

Help 4 Haiti was spearheaded by the Arts Undergraduate Society (AUS).
Here are excerpts from the letter of thanks ALUS President Karina Gould wrote to all those who volunteered or helped in any way.