

HUMBER

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Russia ignores G7 demands for opposition leader's release

Sofia Rusyn
NEWS REPORTER

ZBARAZH, Ukraine — The G7 countries along with the European Union are demanding the release of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny who was jailed by a Moscow court for two years, eight months on Tuesday.

"We, the G7 foreign ministers of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States of America and the High Representative of the European Union, are united in condemning the politically motivated arrest and detention of Alexei Navalny," said an official statement released Jan. 26.

The Kremlin saw this as an intrusion into their inner politics and an "unfriendly action."

The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs rebuffed the G7 demand the following day, saying the economic group didn't have any grounds to interfere in Russian events, especially after it "irrevocably lost its authority on the international affairs..."

Russian officials announced the expulsion of Polish, Swedish and German diplomats Friday for participating in "illegal protest" supporting Putin's critics.

Navalny was poisoned with the nerve agent Novichok in Russia in August 2020, apparently by agents from an elite unit within the Russian Federal Security Service, formally known as the KGB. Russia denies the accusation.

But the critic of Russian President Vladimir Putin was airlifted to Germany for treatment. While recovering, Navalny and his team started working on a documentary movie about Putin called "Putin's Palace."

Navalny returned to Russia after medical treatment and

was immediately arrested on Jan. 17, 2021. Two days later the film was uploaded on the opposition's YouTube channel, and within a week it reached nearly 100 million views.

"Navalny, of course, is an incredible phenomenon," Peter Solomon, a politics professor at the University of Toronto, said. "He has developed his audience [with anti] corruption activity. But I still think, the poll of people, from who the protesters come in Russia is much smaller [than in Belarus]," he said.

Navalny called people to the streets on Jan. 23 to protest against government corruption and abuse of authority. Protesters from more than 100 cities peacefully demanded Navalny's release.

But they were confronted by police and more than 3,000 people were arrested, with more injured.

Support for Navalny has been building in Russia since Saturday, with the Union of Film Directors announcing their support and demanding his release.

Solomon said while more than 50 per cent of the population continue to support Putin, the highest level of dissatisfaction comes from the intelligentsia and young people.

"At the days when protests are planned children must be in school, and it doesn't matter whether it is Saturday or Sunday," said Anastasia Yartseva, a recent Humber graduate from the law clerk program

Yartseva, who is now visiting her family in Krasnodar, nearly 13,000 kilometres south of Moscow, said the government is trying to crack down on youths attending protests by forcing them to be school while they take place.



ALEXEI NAVALNY

Demonstrators, top, seen protesting in support of opposition leader Alexei Navalny. Navalny was sentenced three and a half years in jail. Navalny, seen above entering Russia with his wife Yulia, will be jailed for just under three years for "violating parole."

She said if they don't attend class they must provide an explanation of where they were and why.

European and American pol-

iticians argued with the Kremlin's decision and called for new sanctions against Russia. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky cut off three television

channels owned by pro-Russian politician Viktor Medvedchuk at about 11 p.m. on Tuesday following a meeting of the National Security Council.

Canadians find unique ways to celebrate Black History Month

Cassandra McCalla

NEWS REPORTER

Black Canadians are delving deeper into celebrating their ancestors and culture in observing their history in February, but one expert says exploring the community shouldn't be limited to one month.

"Black History extends beyond February," Kimberley Tull, a director for the Community of Learning Partnerships and engagement manager at the Scarborough's University of Toronto, said. "There is no reason to only limit it to that."

She said celebrating each other's accomplishments is a form of Black Excellence.

"Black Excellence to me is self-determination. It's about being able to stand on our own and standing outside of these oppressive systems," Tull said.

George Elliott Clarke, a Canadian poet and arts and science professor at the University of Toronto, said it is worth celebrating as people of colour come in all forms, which combines to create the mosaic that is Canada.

"Diversity is our strength as diversity is also the strength of Black Canada," Clarke said. "Canada's strength is diversity and multiculturalism."

African-American history overshadowed the story of Black Canadians, who have overlooked their story.

The story of Black Canadians has largely been overlooked in



GIOVANNA RICCIO

George Elliott Clarke, a poet and University of Toronto professor, said diversity and multiculturalism are Canada's strengths.

the long history of oppression, with scholars focusing instead on the United States. The earliest records of slavery were in the early 1600s in New France, the old North American colony of France that stretched from today's Quebec to Louisiana.

There were 500 to 700 slaves in Upper Canada (Ontario) before the Anti-Slavery Act in 1793 was adopted. Slavery was then abolished in the British Empire in 1834.

"The African-Canadian struggle for equality in Canada is different from the struggle for equality in the United States,"

Clarke said. "Canada has the largest northern Black population on Earth."

The U.S. appears to be working towards confronting the issue of racial divide, with the development of Black Lives Matter movement in response to police brutality and racism, especially after the death of George Floyd last May while being arrested in Minneapolis, and Breonna Taylor, who was shot dead during a March 13, 2020, no-knock search warrant in Louisville, Ky.

Clarke said Canadians of African and Caribbean descent are struggling with income

equality lower-paying jobs, and often face the downturn of the economic crises harder than other communities.

A study by Verlyn Francis, a Toronto family lawyer, found Black communities were targets of employment discrimination in Canada.

Celebrating Black History Month is going to be difficult during the pandemic. Virtual events are one way to celebrate along with book clubs and readings, which offer intimate spaces for community members to connect.

"I plan to wear my hair nat-

urally in braids and wear my African prints," said Tina Nalova, a post-grad journalism student at Humber College.

Nalova, who was born in Cambodia, said she considers it special to learn how Canadians of African descent helped contribute and make Canada what it is today.

"It's a moment of getting to know more and being proud of being Black," she said. "It's a celebration where I want to connect with people and hear their experience."

The gruelling events of 2020 and the acknowledgement of systematic racism within Canadian institutions pushed schools to make changes in their curriculums, including courses focusing on Black and Indigenous history.

Tull said these changes are one step closer in the right direction but there still is a long way to go.

"Some of the courses I took in my undergrad years ago introduced me to Bell Hooks and Patricia J. Williams right away," she said. Hooks and Williams are American Black intellectuals figures and activists for women's rights and social justice whose works are being taught in post-secondary education.

Tull thinks not everyone is fortunate to have diverse courses. She said people need to seek out BIPOC teachers, courses and interaction with all communities, to develop a fairer country and it's long overdue.

Military takes Myanmar in coup, claiming election fraud

Eli Ridder

NEWS REPORTER

Myanmar's road to democracy crumbled this week when the military arrested the country's elected leader and took over the government in a matter of hours.

Claiming an election that returned Aung San Suu Kyi and her National League for Democracy to power in November was fraudulent, unproven allegations by the opposition for a rerun of the election were backed by the military who declared a year-long state-of-emergency.

Myanmar's election com-

mission said there was no evidence of widespread fraud, and democracies around the world condemned the claims while recognizing the legitimacy of the elected government. Aung was charged with breaching import laws and illegally owning walkie-talkies.

"Canada is deeply concerned by the Myanmar military's recent actions, which jeopardize the peaceful process of democratic transition," Marc Garneau, Canada's foreign affairs minister, said in a statement.

For Myanmar, the Feb. 1 coup was just the latest in a series of

actions by the military to stifle democracy. Despite the military's claims it will hold a "free and fair" election once the state-of-emergency is over, its record indicates the opposite.

Between the years of 1989 and 2010, Suu Kyi spent 15 years under military captivity and was notably awarded the Nobel Peace Prize while under house arrest in 1991 as she campaigned to bring democracy back to Myanmar.

People of Myanmar voted overwhelmingly against military control and in favour of Suu Kyi's NLD party in 2015, the first

democratic election in 25 years.

Despite her gains in establishing a democracy, Suu Kyi had to deal with a military junta that maintained control over the entirety of the security forces and permanently controlled 25 per cent of the parliamentary seats.

Suu Kyi's reputation suffered in 2017 from the treatment of Myanmar's minority Rohingya, a group that has not received citizenship in the country.

Military crackdowns on the ethnic minority resulted in the deaths of thousands while nearly a million Rohingya fled to Bangladesh.

Suu Kyi was forced to appear before an international court in 2019, where she staunchly defended the nation against allegations of genocide.

Even though she experienced a rocky first term, Suu Kyi and her party were re-elected with a supermajority in 2020.

Now, she remains in "good health," according to a Facebook post from her aide Toe Kyi.

The leader encouraged her supporters to engage in protests, but instead, her party seeks to find a "peaceful" solution, reported The Associated Press.

India supplying COVID vaccine to neighbouring countries

Manan Nijhawan
NEWS REPORTER

NEW DELHI — India has is supplying area countries with the COVID-19 vaccine developed by Serum Institute of India offering support and foster bilateral relations its under the “Neighbourhood First” policy.

India launched the world’s largest vaccination drive on Jan.16 to vaccinate 300 million people by the summer, starting with 10 million health-care workers. India currently has the second highest number of COVID-19 cases but the daily number of cases have been decreasing significantly since last fall.

Consignments of the Covishield vaccine have been dispatched to Nepal, Bhutan, Maldives, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Seychelles and Mauritius as part of a donation program.

The Serum Institute of India

entered into an agreement with the University of Oxford and AstraZeneca to manufacture Covishield in December. Distribution began domestically for doctors and frontline workers shortly after the deal was made.

“I have not yet experienced any side effects of the vaccine,” said D.Y. Medical superintendent Dr. Priti Bansal, who was vaccinated in the early weeks of January.

However, it is still uncertain when the vaccine will be available for the general public.

“I am going to be vaccinated but I think everyone needs to get it whenever their turn comes,” said Dr. Rajesh Bansal, the senior consultant in Nephrology at D.Y. Medical, .

As of now, India has supplied Bhutan with 150,000 doses, Maldives with 100,000 units, Bangladesh with two million doses and Nepal with one million doses of the Covishield vaccine.

“I think it’s great that we can

help others but I hope that we will be able to produce enough for our own population,” Bansal said.

Myanmar received its consignment of 1.5 million doses of the Covishield vaccine under the Neighbourhood First policy.

Apart from neighbouring South Asian countries, India has also provided Brazil and Morocco each with two million doses of the vaccine under commercial agreements with the countries.

The government calculated India is to have a surplus and is in a position to share, creating a form of vaccine diplomacy with other countries.

“We should at least provide for their doctors and frontline workers if we have a surplus,” said Dr. Sharat Latta, head of the Ear, Nose and Throat section at Jaypee Hospital in Noida, India.

India is still awaiting confirmation of necessary regulatory



AMIT DAVE/REUTERS

Policeman receiving a COVID-19 vaccination in the city of Ahmedabad, India

clearances concerning supplying Covishield to Sri Lanka and Afghanistan. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated in a release it will continue to supply

countries all over the world with vaccines.

“This is a very proud moment for Indians around the world,” Bansal said.

U.K. B.1.1.7 variant strikes Canada amidst vaccine shortage

Daniel Lonic
NEWS REPORTER

Canada’s already overstrained healthcare system has been put further into jeopardy as a deadlier and more transmissible COVID-19 variant has arrived.

“The fight against the virus will continue regardless of how deadly the virus is, but it may mean that more people may die before it is brought under control,” said Dr. Tony Maz-

zulli, microbiologist-in-chief for Mount Sinai Hospital.

The B.1.1.7 variant originated in the United Kingdom in September and has appeared in numerous other countries since. Ontario currently has 43 confirmed cases of the variant, more than doubling the prior week’s recorded numbers.

This gave reason to assume Ontario was exposed to the strain for some time before its discovery. Other variants appear to headed

to Canada, including Brazilian and South African strains.

“It is important to recognize that as the virus multiplies within an infected person, it will continue to mutate,” Mazzulli said. “Therefore, protecting people with the current vaccines will prevent new infections.”

Mazzulli acknowledges Canada’s scarcity of vaccines is alarming.

“The faster we do this, the more of the population will be

protected,” he said. Identifying novel virus carriers early and vaccinating them will avert a mass transmission.

Along with washing your hands more thoroughly and wearing a mask extra tight, not much more can be done from an individual standpoint. With a 50-to-70 per cent increased transmission rate, the call for social distancing is integral — now more than ever before.

“The Impact of further mutations is not known, some will have no impact on the properties of the virus, while others may further add to its ability to evade the immune system,” Mazzulli said. “In addition, it may make it harder to diagnose.”

Another mutation circulating in South Africa was recently discovered to be slightly resistant to the Pfizer vaccine. This does not yet pose a need for a modified vaccine, but BioNTech and Pfizer are anticipating that outcome.

“I know that we are always going to be working within the guidelines set by the government, and so right now, during the stay-at-home order, we will not be offering in-person classes,” said Sandra Gerges,

Humber College’s pharmacy technician program manager and pharmacist.

In light of B.1.1.7 cases rising, tighter restrictions were placed on air travel. All travelers entering Canada are required to quarantine at a prearranged hotel. They will also cover expenses, a measure to prevent non-essential travel.

“Whenever it seems there’s a glimpse of hope of returning back to normality, something new gets thrown into the mix,” said Nia Rajnish, a York University student. “At this point, I forget what it’s like to be in a classroom and it looks like I won’t know any time soon.”

Experts say everyone must proceed with vigilance in the precautions they take. All outings should be kept to a minimum and reserved for essential purposes only.

“I am not sure what the future holds, but I know that we all have to do our part to keep our families and communities safe,” Gerges said. “I am really hoping that our supply of the vaccine is replenished and that we can continue to vaccinate our communities.”



LEAH HANNEL/FLICR

Nurse prepares to vaccinate a patient in Calgary, AB. Ontario recently had a spike in cases of the UK variant a few weeks ago



BARBAROS KAYA

Turkish lawyers protesting in front of the European Court of Human Rights, in Strasbourg, France, for the arrested journalists and opposition to the government. Roses were laid for the arrested.

Lawyers demand justice for Turkish journalists

Nur Dogan

NEWS REPORTER

Attorneys who became the victim of persecution in Turkey stood vigil for journalists who were arrested on Working Journalists Day.

A non-profit organization in Europe, Kosulsuz Adalet — which means unconditional justice — has peacefully protested since Nov. 27 reported Turkish human rights violations of journalists in front of the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, France.

Near the ECHR building is the European Parliament where some parliamentarians are following the organization's vigils calling on the ECHR to take action, said Barbaros Kaya, a reporter with Nokta Magazine who has been jailed in Turkey.

Exiled Turkish lawyer Hasan Said Şaz, a member of Kosulsuz Adalet, said the oppressive environment and the regime's unlawful practices brought the protestors together.

"The discussion of 'what can be done, how can a resistance be shown' on this subject pushed us to the idea of justice watch," he said.

Elif Koçer, a lawyer and researcher assistant, said law-

yers are exposed to political pressure by the judiciary in Turkey. The courts have not ruled on human rights violations in Turkey for many years, she said.

"That is why we have established this organization," Koçer said.

Turkey marked Jan. 10 as "Working Journalists Day" since 1961. However, many journalists either were arrested or unemployed or forced to flee the country because of the anti-democratic regime. A crackdown on the judiciary intensified since the failed so-called coup attempt of July 15, 2016.

"Today, Turkey ranked 154th out of 180 countries in the press freedom. We are one of the countries with the highest number of arrested journalists in the world," Şaz said.

According to Reporters Without Borders (RSF), at least 721 journalists were arrested during the 18 years of the Justice and Development Party's (AKP) rule. And despite the pandemic, 145 journalists have been imprisoned and at least 260 journalists' lawsuits are in progress.

"The aim of our protest for journalists was both to raise awareness about the Turkish

reporters imprisoned and intense political pressure faced by the media workers in the country," Koçer said.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan labelled all opposition media as terrorist organizations and journalists have also been labelled as terrorists. Many were detained without any evidence, and there was an outcry when the President of the European Court of Human Rights, Róbert Spanó, visited Erdogan's palace in September 2020.

Kaya was imprisoned for 21 months in Silivri Prison and was sentenced later to nine years jail because he worked for the publication.

"I learned in the courtrooms that my trial was theatrical," he said. "In the first minute, the judge asked, 'have you worked at Nokta Magazine, which propagates a terrorist organization?'"

Kaya said the judge did not allow a defence, and tossed his lawyer out of the court.

"The judge dictated only what they wanted to hear in defence to the file," he said.

Kaya told the judge his question whether the magazine is a terrorist organization was "very manipulative."

The judge shouted demanding



BARBAROS KAYA

Former Turkish MP Selahattin Demirtas protesting in France for the arrested.

that he answers the question without comment, Kaya said.

Kosulsuz Adalet members continue to boost awareness about ongoing arrests and trials of media employees in Turkey. The attorneys hope the ECHR will act on the journalists' files that have been sitting idle for years.

"In a country where the press is not free, neither democracy

nor the rule of law will prevail," Şaz said. "This is exactly why we defended the freedom of the press to the end and tried to raise the issue before the ECHR."

Kosulsuz Adalet members have been working on a report about human rights violations in Turkey. When the report is completed it will demand an appointment with the court to explain the report's findings.

EDITORIAL

Ontario schools not prepared going back to in-person classes

Despite the province's recent success in fighting COVID-19, schools are not yet at the stage where children can return for in-person learning.

One of the province's most debated and contested decisions during the pandemic has been its stance on getting children back to school in person. Education Minister Stephen Lecce announced Wednesday the plan is for children to return to school on Feb. 8 except for Toronto, and Peel and York Regions, which will reopen on Feb. 16.

The timing of the announcement makes sense; cases per day are starting to decline and the government is hoping the good news will protect them from the criticism their back to school policies normally produce. The plan, or lack of one, is another attempt to misrepresent medical professionals and to try to appease a base that has



REUTERS / CARLOS OSORIO

Ontario Premier Doug Ford watches a healthcare worker prepare a Pfizer-BioNTech coronavirus vaccine at The Michener Institute.

too much power in the province. While the province has addressed some concerns like supplying masks, officials failed to provide a solution to the lack of air flow in schools. This was one of the biggest issues in the fall term and it still hasn't been addressed.

Part of the problem is Doug Ford and his staff's reputability when it comes to issues surrounding COVID-19. In the fall Ford bragged he was following Ronald McDonald House guidelines when he wasn't. The CEO of Registered Nurses Associa-

tion of Ontario has called for Dr. David Williams to resign after comments on how healthcare workers have become "casual" with COVID-19 when 10 have died in the province.

Needless to say the good will seems to have run dry.

Online schools can work, but require preparation, something Ontario was sorely lacking. This has led to a shoddy system and desperation to get kids back in class. But an idea executed badly isn't necessarily a bad idea. There is real concern that going back to school is.

The pandemic has exposed shortcomings in the online learning system, in everything from actual learning to children's mental health. We should be spending our resources to try and fix the system we already have in place as opposed to kinds back into the classroom to soon.

Instead, we have a plan that has ignored professional medical experts, hasn't addressed issues still present since the fall, and the families who choose to stay online will face an uphill battle. We've somehow managed to find the worst of both worlds, and soon we may not be able to fix it.

OPINION

Hobbies are a lifesaver during COVID lockdown



Nathaniel Marksman

ARTS EDITOR

They can be great ways to get you through hard times.

The importance of hobbies is evident during COVID-19, saving us from the boredom and confinement of the four walls we're forced to look at every day.

I turned to my favourite hobby during this pandemic which involves playing, learning and experiencing video games in various ways.

I have been a gamer for 18 years and my passion for video games has never wavered in the slightest. I enjoy all aspects of video games, watching, playing and general discussion. Broadening my knowledge, through different media platforms which cover gaming content and seeing these developers work from home and showcase their work, is what I look forward to every day.

This pandemic has already taken a lot from me. Online classes lose the critical in-person



UNSPLASH/EHL EXPRESS

experience school provides and it doesn't feel like it's worth the money.

I lost my previous job as a soccer coach, which was my main income. After that, I worked at Toys R Us as a seasonal employee but was furloughed right after being hired as a part-time worker. All I am trying to do is help my family. My mom isn't working due to an illness and my father is the sole breadwinner right now. But COVID-19 has made it so I can't even do that.

Video games helped me relieve

some of that stress and fear, taking a weight off of my shoulders. By getting to play with friends who I can't see in person we stay connected, keeping each other company. It has also helped me reconnect with family and friends, some of who I haven't spoken to in 15 years. I've met people across the globe, all because of online gaming.

Playing games like Smite, Dead Island, and Call of Duty, which I rarely play, have grown on me, thanks to playing with friends. Even games such as Pokémon Stadium 2 and Golden

Sun let me relive my past.

There are things that were accessible before this pandemic happened that I miss, and I do reminisce when I sit in front of my screen playing a game. I miss the excitement of going to gaming expos with friends to experience new consoles and games that developers have worked on months and years.

If we all do our part, stay indoors, only leave the when necessary, wear face masks and take precaution when outside, doing the daily activities we love will be within our grasp again.

It has been an year since COVID-19 halted the regular flow of life and changed our day-to-day. Everything, from work to school has been altered in one way or another.

The stress is even higher for those who can't partake in their favourite past time.

The list of hobbies is endless.

TALES FROM HUMBER

The journey of my life mapped out by the game loved around the world

Nathan Abraha

GUEST REPORTER

When my mother and I stepped onto Canadian soil in 2006, the only English words I knew were "pass" and "here," words learned not from books but from a love affair.

The seductress who had me in thrall was soccer, or as the sport is known in other parts of the world, football.

Football gave me more than a few words. It gave me joy. Days turned into late nights dribbling a ball around the neighbourhood. The crannies of our apartment became the victims of rocket shots, a crowd of one jeering from the kitchen: "Crazy kid! That's my good vase!"

In football I charted the map of my life.

One of my few memories of my father is him explaining to me the genius of Brazilian defender Roberto Carlos.

My first contact with my Canadian classmates on my first day of school in a new country was through a sloppy drawing I made of Zidane's infamous headbutt on Materazzi.

My new friends understood it as a shy boy's plea to belong. And I've been seeking belonging ever since.

One day, at 18, I was riding the subway home. I stood near the doors, looking out at the rain. I saw my reflection and had a moment of clarity. I would chase my football dreams.

Not having played since I was a child, I had a tall mountain to climb. I found a coach via Kijiji, signed up at a gym and began to train. It was gruelling at first, but I began to see improvement.

I decided that in order to find myself as a player I had to find my home again. That little pocket of land in eastern Africa. Eritrea.

The moment the plane touched down at Asmara International Airport, I suddenly missed my mother's cooking. I missed my friends. I missed Toronto winters, the same ones I loved to complain about.

I stayed with my uncle and his family. It was a different world. The power would go out for days on end. Water would run short.

My new teammates, scrappy kids from all corners of Asmara, were young men playing for



FLICKR/JARRETT CAMPBELL

pennies and pride. Their welcome was cool.

But as we trained in the mud and rain for hours a day, and went for ceremonial tea after each practice, we began to bond.

Football is a game of the poor and I rediscovered its true form on the streets of Africa. I was inspired by teammates arriving on bikes, stomachs empty, for morning practice. They came to believe in me.

They ran across that dirt pitch with me, welcomed me into

their paradise, broke bread with me in a shabby cafe.

I was nearing 21. My game was at its peak. I won my first man-of-the-match, chosen by my teammates and coaches. I was playing regularly.

But on my 21st birthday, when I wasn't selected for the national team, I knew my time in Eritrea was up. I left for Ethiopia. No luck. I tried Sweden. No better. It was time to go home to Canada.

The moment I entered the familiar Toronto apartment I felt

blessed to be with my mother again. But I had to find a new dream.

The search led me to Humber College and the possibilities of journalism.

Just as in football, where a player is a vehicle for the thousands whose dreams he carries, a journalist can be the vehicle for the thousands who wish to be heard.

Now, instead of reaching the stars with a ball on my foot, I aim for them, instead, with a notebook and pen.

NEWS

Exercise plays critical role in maintaining good mental health

Ayesha Raizada

NEWS REPORTER

Exercise has many health benefits, but it's especially true while people are confined because of the coronavirus pandemic, helping them maintain mental and physical well being, experts say.

Research from Mayo Health Clinic found exercise combats health conditions, diseases and helps prevent many health concerns including stroke, Type-2 diabetes, depression, anxiety, and high blood pressure.

Jonathan Wade, a health and fitness trainer with LA Fitness and Goodlife Fitness, said the biggest issue is the carbohydrate-rich North American diet coupled with long periods of sitting and a lack of routine exercise.

Wade said people sitting through pandemic and poor postures causes upper and lower crossed symptoms. Strength and training exercises help alleviate muscle tension, pain and tightness caused by poor sitting and posture mistakes.

"When you are strength training you are strengthening resistance, emotions, and the controlled environment within your life," he said.

Wade said proper strength training improves cortisol levels which helps in metabolism, reducing stress, muscle building and weight management.

"Resistance training gets you in control mentally and physically, helps combating what we're dealing with daily," he said.

WHO launched its "Every Move

Counts" campaign with the guidelines for all adults to do a minimum of 150 minutes of vigorous physical activity per week as it is vital for well-being and mental health in the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Increasing physical activity not only helps prevent and manage heart disease, Type-2 diabetes and cancer, it also reduces symptoms of depression and anxiety, reduces cognitive decline including Alzheimer's and improves memory," Ruediger Krech, WHO director for health promotion, said at a news briefing.

A study by the College of Kinesiology at the University of Saskatoon found out that the COVID-19 pandemic impacted university students' dietary and exercise habits.

Peter Agafie, a fitness coach,

and independent personal trainer with Goodlife Fitness said exercise has many health benefits. Regular exercise and staying active especially during pandemic are of utmost importance to maintain mental and physical well being.

Agafie said even small amounts of mild to moderate exercise helps a great deal. A little bit of exercise, workouts, squats, lunges, push ups drips, treadmills, goes a long way.

Sophie Hotchkiss, a fitness expert, and personal trainer with Endurance Performance said the whole world of fitness entails different pathways. Movement is important: walking, aerobics, biking, push ups, pilates, strength training, these are unlimited pathways to dive into.

Hotchkiss said regular exercise and sticking to a schedule is especially important for mental and physical well being.

"Brain releases endorphins when we exercise it helps with depression, anxiety and helps elevating mood," she said.

Bernedette Ho, a fitness manager with Fit Factory Fitness Toronto, said health is the top priority around pandemic. Bootcamp - a mix of aerobics and strength training, hit classes, moderate to high intensity interval training helps boost metabolism, building strength, burn more calories to help in weight management.

Ho said exercise improves mental health, reduces depression, negative mood swings, and improves self-esteem.

DesignTO supported Black designers with distanced exhibits

Christian Collington

ARTS REPORTER

DesignTO gave exhibitors such as Roxanne Brathwaite an opportunity to share a powerful message amid the pandemic.

"It felt great to be included," Brathwaite said. "It's a good place to showcase your work. Especially if you're an emerging artist."

The festival, which was held in the span of the last 10 days in January, displayed digital exhibitions online as well as window installations.

Brathwaite was always interested in furniture growing up. Often she would create furniture to furnish her three dollhouses.

"I didn't have enough furniture to furnish all three dollhouses, so I just started making furniture from stuff that I had on hand," Brathwaite said. "I've always liked furniture, and that was my first introduction to miniatures."

Brathwaite launched a furniture company, Hollis Newton Canada, in 2018 where she reimaged antique and vintage furniture, but stopped later production. She shifted to miniature dioramas to stay preoccupied.

"It was a way to stay creative," Brathwaite said. "Part of my background is fine art history so I've always had an interest in iconic designs."

Brathwaite had three miniature suites on display during the



GUERSHON KITSA

A mural displayed on the wall of University of Toronto's John H. Daniels building. Curator Tarek Mokhalalati said Black Lives Matter was a source of inspiration for the project.

festival.

Each suite tells a story about a social issue that has been impacted by the COVID-19 lockdown.

"One of them was domestic violence," Brathwaite said. "The other was law enforcement interactions with people suffering from mental health issues, and the third was child abuse."

Brathwaite wasn't the only one who had artwork display powerful messages during the festival.

The Daniels Art Directive's

"Support Black Designers" mural was displayed across the north wall of the University of Toronto's John H. Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape and Design on Spadina Crescent.

Tarek Mokhalalati, a curating executive at Daniels Art Directive, noted the Black Lives Matter movement was a source of inspiration for their project.

"We wanted to do something about the Black Lives Matter movement," Mokhalalati said. "Specifically, the nature of the spaces provided for Black students and faculty."

He noted during a consultation session, a professor that was supposed to judge dropped out due to the representation of Black designers in the final product.

However, it struck a chord with him. "She said that you shouldn't be having non-Black designers getting paid for a mural about Black designers," Mokhalalati said.

It made sense. Why would we monetarily reward primarily white people for making pixels celebrating Black culture?"

Mokhalalati decided to revamp the mural, to not have non-Black artists and not offer to pay the artists.

"We decided that because it wouldn't be supporting Black

designers, it'd be supporting designers," Mokhalalati said. "And that would defeat the whole purpose of the mural."

Most artists did not feel comfortable having their work on the mural as is, and became a reflection of the nature of the space and the faculty itself.

"We had a lot of voices telling us their lived experience being Black students and what professors and students tell them," Mokhalalati said. "And we realized, let's make sure the truth comes out."

Mokhalalati believed the meaning of the mural being a representation of what the faculty wanted was the most important to him.

"It was what the faculty wanted to say, the students specifically, rather than the administration," Mokhalalati said.

Being included in DesignTO was a surprise for Mokhalalati, however, he notes it was all a team effort.

"I didn't really comprehend the nature of how big DesignTO was until I saw people reaching out to me who became interested in the mural," Mokhalalati said.

Deborah Wang, the artistic director of DesignTO, believed this year's festival embraced a broad spectrum of artists and

their work.

"It gave a platform for other people's projects," Wang said. "Not having a theme gives a lot more options for a lot of projects."

The transition to a distanced audience was an easy transition for Wang and her colleagues since they didn't always work in the same room in the past.

"We utilized our strong digital presence and the window exhibitions were something we did in the past that we brought back," Wang said.

Moving forward, Wang hopes their online programs will continue even after the pandemic, in the meantime, they plan to continue with their Ask Me Anything program, as well as their partnership with the Ontario College of Art and Design University in Toronto.

Meanwhile,

Brathwaite, plans to capitalize on the popularity of miniatures and continue making them and sharing them on Instagram while incorporating social messages into her work.

Mokhalalati and the Daniels Art Directive want to create more murals in the future, but more importantly, they want to create spaces where artists get paid to create art as professionals.



DWAYNE EVANS

Roxanne Brathwaite, a designer for the event, made miniature dioramas to stay busy.

Reelworld program benefit BIPOC filmmakers

Nicholas Seles

ARTS REPORTER

Offering BIPOC filmmakers a chance to hone their craft and grow as filmmakers, is what the Reelworld

Producer Program grants. The program, presented by Bell Media, is a year-long venture where selected candidates can learn the ins and outs of choosing projects and seeing them through to completion.

Among those selected this year was Yusuf Alvi, an account manager who attended Humber's Film and Television Production program in 2014.

"It's a great opportunity that I'm thankful to be a part of," Alvi said.

"As a young filmmaker who isn't white, it can be hard to find those ins to establish yourself, so the program is a great way to learn, get started, meet professionals and expand your skills.

"I'm excited to learn the exact process of pitching a story, you know, the core steps needed to even get to a pitch meeting,

and then securing funding and seeing the project through to completion," Alvi said.

He was one of 12 candidates chosen out of hundreds that



REELWORLD SCREEN INSTITUTE

The candidates in Reelworld's Producer Program including former Humber student Yusuf Alvi, who is on the bottom row in the flower shirt, prepare themselves for a year-long journey.

applied, each coming from all walks of life,

including a former entertainment lawyer, some who have acted as independent producers and another who is an illustrator.

"We're going to take these people that have these transferable skills and are going to have them go through a program that is a year long," said Barbara Mamabolo, the programming manager at Reelworld.

"I think there are still a lot of gatekeepers in the industry and I think that there are still a lot of people that in conversations will say,

'Well, I don't know where to find

so and so,' that's why we'll have access Reelworld, which is a database for Black Indigenous people of colour in the film industry, from creative roles to crew," she said.

"So now, when somebody says I don't know where to find anybody that is from that background to support their project there's some place that they can go," Mamabolo said.

February is Black History Month and as it's the forefront of most people's minds, a program that focuses on BIPOC talent in the film industry remains a hot-button topic.

"Oftentimes it's about you (getting) in based on who you

know," said third-year film student Kijhai Boreland.

In her second-year, Boreland directed a documentary titled *The Lone Wolf*, which told the story of the abduction and murder of

Jammar Allison as well as the emotional aftermath.

Allison's remains were found in Hamilton in 2020, two years after he was kidnapped from Toronto.

"Sometimes we just don't even know that there is an industry, and a network of filmmakers in Canada,

in Toronto and in the cities, because it's just not common

amongst amongst our people, I guess you can say," she said.

"So even though there could be crazy amounts of talent out there we don't know anybody,

or we don't know people who are in high enough positions to get us in the door,

or to even hear about those opportunities that are out there," Boreland said.

The Reelworld Producer Program launched virtually on Jan. 28 with Prime Time Online and will run until Feb. 10.

From there, chosen candidates will participate in online workshops to learn the ropes of producing their content.

OPINION

We have damaged our own enjoyment of watching TV series



Nicholas Seles

ARTS REPORTER

We've all heard the age-old complaint that a show is "too slow" or "moved too fast," but those points can't always hold up.

There are arguments to be

made for shows like HBO's *True Detective*, which had a first season that excelled in slow storytelling.

It did so in a way that kept the viewer captivated by the mystery of the murders which was complimented by Matthew McConaughey and Woody Harrelson's performances.

Before Netflix took binge-watching into the form it is today, all viewers had were week-by-week viewings.

There was the option to wait for home video releases and binge-watch then, but if you wanted to be on top of a show from its premiere, you tuned in weekly.

While Netflix has been a revolutionizing service, it created an enemy of its own in

the streaming wars. Disney+, Amazon Prime Video, Hulu,

Peacock and more all now offer streaming content of their own, and the release models vary greatly.

Some will be like Netflix and drop all episodes at once, and some, like Disney+, aim for a week-by-week release.

Amazon was soundly criticized when its second season of *The Boys* aired in fall 2020.

The first season used the all-at-once type release model, but the second season dropped one episode at a time.

This triggered an immediate online response from fans.

Of course, waiting wasn't as bad as the season unfolded with some shocking moments, primarily in the final two episodes.

Had Amazon released them all at once, those moments could be spoiled within hours of release.

What many people don't see in the benefit of slowing down a release for a TV show is keeping the discussion alive.

Television doesn't garner the views it once did.

When services like Amazon, Disney+ or Netflix release episodes weekly, the episode ends but the discussion spills out onto social media for most of the following week.

Then the next episode releases and the cycle continues for seven to 12 weeks.

If they release the entire season at once, yes, discussion happens but for a much shorter window as most people get through the show in a weekend.

On Disney+, the new Marvel series *WandaVision* is already under fire for being too slow and boring.

In actuality, the show is dropping small hints and clues as it builds its story.

Episode three turned the show on its head and the fourth began to tell the wider story.

The episodes are 30 minutes on average, so the two "slow" episodes only take up about an hour's worth of time.

Both seasons of *The Mandalorian* were also labelled as slow yet all of the storytelling served a purpose with each passing episode.

The shows aren't always slow. People are just impatient.

In storytelling, it's all about the ride, not the destination.

Insular online communities make at-risk youth hard to reach

Hannah Clarke

NEWS REPORTER

Children and teenagers identity and association with groups have amplified with social media. However, that has dangers if not correctly monitored.

"The thing we start[ed] to see was a group that was really more 'ethnocentric,'" said Stephen Duggan, a Criminal Justice professor at Humber College. "These were groups that really hung around together because they lived in the same area."

But Duggan said some teenagers self-isolate themselves

from friends and family, show signs of aggression and violence, have difficulties with school or their home lives, and even drop out of school entirely, some of the common symptoms of being a part of youth or street gangs.

"All gangs can be dangerous," he said.

But even using the word gang can be a little bit overbearing.

"Gang is a word you have to be careful of," said Irwin Waller, a Criminology professor at the University of Ottawa. "Some people talk about it as being a little bit more like their family. I think that's a truer, stronger word."

Doug Thomson, another Humber College Criminal Justice professor, agrees teenagers involved with these surrogate families are using modern technology and social media as a part of their recruiting process.

"It's always difficult to work out whether the people doing stuff on social media, are doing it because they're teenagers," he said. "And that they want to seem more powerful than they are, or that they're actually involved."

Duggan also agrees.

"People are basically sheep," he said, "They will follow the lead sheep, and go, 'Okay, we'll

follow you.'"

But it might not be easy to uncover.

"It's a coding system, where you can write certain things on [social media]," Duggan said. "You can write in a code, and only your peer group understands what you're actually doing."

Unless you were the police officer to read between the lines and figure out the post's context, no one is going to be able to take proper action to stop these teenagers.

However, Waller, Thomson, and Duggan all said the only way to help these teenagers and their

use of social media is to have police and social services be there to guide them, especially in and around middle and high schools.

"The only way you can [stop these youth gangs] is by front-end loading," Duggan said. "Front-end loading means that you put all your resources to the front end."

Duggan adds this especially applies to those that start out as victims — or the fuel — for gang activity in the future, the ignition.

"Just because you belong to a gang doesn't mean you're actually doing anything," Thomson said.

GTA students share mixed feelings about virtual education

Angelo Ventura

NEWS REPORTER

Students say there's good and not-so-good points about online learning.

The way education in Ontario is delivered has flipped on its axis since the COVID-19 outbreak last year — a pandemic with no real end in sight — by making virtual classrooms a new norm.

It hasn't been a smooth transition for students or teachers in this unfamiliar territory of learning. It has left 2020 GTA high school graduates such as 18-year-old Raquel Santos without key milestones in her school experience, such as attending prom or her graduation.

They were events she anticipated for more than a year before her class was caught in the first wave of the virus.

Online learning has brought some pros and cons, affecting each student differently. Some students say they can work at their own pace, on a more flexible schedule. Others say they miss their interaction with friends.

Grade 9 student Salvatore Cairone of Cardinal Carter Catholic High School in Aurora said the flexibility "helped alleviate some of the pressure" transitioning from middle school to high school.

Nicholas DeGiorgio, a Grade 7 student at Villanova College in King City, said he has more time

to be physically active when he's not in class and enjoys those options.

Cairone's younger sister, Giulia, a Grade 6 student at Father Frederick McGinn Catholic elementary school in Richmond Hill, said she feels comfortable within her home. She prefers staying in her pajamas and not having to wear masks every day. Where most students feel trapped at school with minimal flexibility or freedom, learning online can help these students be at ease.

But Giulia said being at home doesn't mean it hasn't affected her.

"Mentally I would say I feel frustrated, drained, bored and stressed more than I was at school," she said. "At some points I feel down. On the other hand sometimes I have so much energy bottled up."

"My routine has changed in a way where it's a lot less exciting to get up in the morning. Sometimes I feel like I could just skip school and stay in bed," Giulia said.

The three students said the shift in their routines is distracting and losing social interaction and in-class engagement makes it easy to drift off or lose interest in what they're learning.

The constant changes or inconsistent routine results in distractions. They also said they experienced some loneliness and miss the daily interaction with their friends.



CARL RECINE/REUTERS

Elementary and secondary students in the GTA say that while online learning offers flexibility, they also isolated and lonely.

"Hanging out with my friends gives me an escape from everything else and not having that has been very hard," Salvatore Cairone said.

DeGiorgio said social interaction and being around people during school helps him learn better and boosts his confidence.

Not being around classmates or in a classroom environment influences the way students process information and affects their ambition to attend online classes, said Amanda Boyd, a resource consultant who has worked with elementary students before and during the online classroom era.

Boyd said the longer online classrooms continue, the more

it'll affect students who need the social and physical aspects of school to develop them as they grow. She said she believes social interaction is even more essential for children with neurological issues as it could be almost impossible for them to learn virtually since they need extra attention.

DeGiorgio said he prefers reduced class times while Salvatore Cairone said he would like online sessions to be like a classroom rather than seem like a meeting.

Meanwhile, Giulia Cairone said she wants teachers to avoid overloading her class with work. She wants the teachers to talk to the students more and make

sure they're not struggling.

"It would be nice if everything wasn't as serious and the classroom could be more uplifting so it could project onto everyone and help us learn better," she said.

Boyd said she's impressed with the way teachers handled online learning, saying it is a difficult transition from a classroom, and are doing the best they can with what they're given under the circumstances.

She said many children adapted quickly and "they rose to the occasion."

"At the end of the day all children learn differently with different needs but overall, it's just not the real thing (classroom)," Boyd said.