

SPECTRUM



Forest Breeze

Urban Forestry:
A Possible Link

by
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The term urban forestry at first seems to be a contradiction of terminology. Who would ever think that an urban area could be considered a type of forest? Urban forestry deals with any vegetation that exists within an urban area, so it deals with shrubs, trees, and the association of the trees in a whole community.

We all like to save an antique that will remind us of our ancestors. These items are kept to remind us of how they lived and the hard work they endured. We can look at urban forestry in the same light. Anthropologists report that Homo Sapiens have been on the earth for approximately 40,000 years living as nomadic hunters and gatherers. It was not until 10,000 - 15,000 years ago that the first attempt at agriculture occurred in the Middle East and North Africa. For 25,000 years our population was dispersed across the landscape where people dwelled with their families and small bands. Ecosystems controlled their livelihood and existence.

Not until 3,000 BC were the ancient cities built that included pyramids and other monuments. From a scientific point of view, natural surrounding have played an extremely important role in the evolution and adaptation of H. Sapiens. If we compare the time that humans have spent in an urbanized environment to living in a rural setting we really have not been exposed to urban life for long. Our mind and spiritual needs have not yet adapted to urban life; therefore, we require natural surroundings to feel at ease. We show this by putting plants in our home, going hiking, visiting parks, going camping, and other activities that include vegetative surroundings. We can view urban forestry as a part of our history by remembering the role forests played in the evolution of humans.

Not only does urban forestry play a large role in spiritual easement, urban forestry contributes a lot more to city dwellers. Trees in the city provide shade, protection from wind, habitat for wildlife, decrease noise pollution, increase air quality, aesthetics, recreation, heritage, educational opportunity, etc.

Many cities were built near significant ecologi-

cal links within the landscape (ie. rivers, mineral outcrops, estuaries, flood plains, etc.) because of the resource richness in these areas. These links play a vital role in the ecological systems, so with the cooperation of urban forestry and landscape management we can help reduce the break in the links of the ecosystems.

Many city dwellers may never gain the opportunity to learn about landscape forestry and are only exposed to the urban forests in the parks and greenbelts that surround their city. They are then asked to make political decisions about our natural resources. I do not think it is fair for the city dweller to have to make such a critical decision when the forestry division is not supplying them with more information. I think it is in the best interest of foresters to contribute more effort and interest in urban forestry as a powerful communication link between the public and the rural forest sector for the management of our forests. More effort and links between the public and forest industry can be developed through urban forestry. And not only will we view urban forestry as an antique for the history of humans, but a positive view to the future of our forests.

Freedom of Speech in: The Pigeon's Right Wing

by Peter W.C. Seely

A new ideology has placed campuses under siege right across North America. This ideology otherwise known as political correctness has students and faculty in fear of losing their education or employment if they so happen to express an opinion conflicting with the common line of thought. This has brought about an environment where excellence is discouraged and rampant mediocrity reigns supreme. Although some good was undoubtedly brought about in the early days of this movement, especially in the form of better understanding between races, religious groups, cultures and sexes, some are beginning to question whether or not it has gone beyond what was intended, especially now that left-wing extremist organizations (such as the CFS, that YOU help pay for through student fees) are lobbying to have this doctrine put on the law books. Recently the NDP party in Ontario, has forced the Universities to implement far reaching hate codes that have gone so far as to prohibit research on welfare policy on the basis that it denigrates this group. Those who want to legislate political

correctness want to control the forms of language you use and your mode of expression. I suggest to you that this is only the beginning, eventually they will want to eradicate everything they see as undesirable about you.

You should wonder who will make these decisions about what is correct and what is not. After all, the world is a very diverse place and what may be offensive to one person may seem completely harmless to another. The result, according to some academics, is a loss of academic freedom and a threat to scholarship. Mind you, this isn't an excuse to willfully say or write malicious things for the sole purpose of harming somebody, for harm's sake. However, you should be aware that there is a serious danger involved in any attempt to socially engineer society.

Freedom of speech is one of the most vital cornerstones of any democracy. If we become apathetic in the face of having our rights trampled upon by what would be thought police; what will be the condition of democracy in Canada when today's student becomes tomorrow's leader. I urge you not to stand idly by and let this happen.

no one knows i'm gay

By darren elliot

I recently attended a wedding with my friend Jeff who is in the process of coming out to his family and old friends. Many of you reading this article may be involved in this same process, whether you are the friend or family member of a person who is gay or bisexual, or the person coming out. The message of this article for the closeted individual is, give people a chance. If they are trying to deal with it, that is all you can ask for, give them time and understanding.

At the end of the wedding weekend, Jeff was mildly pleased about how things went with his friends and family. I felt things went great, they really could not have been expected to go any better than they did given the human factor. I'll admit they were not perfect, but how many things in life are? We always want things to be just as we imagined or dreamed they would be. Why did Jeff and I have quite different evaluations of the weekend? Simple, we came from completely different perspectives.

When interacting with these persons I was coming from a position of indifference. These were people I had never met, therefore they were not particularly important to me. My life would continue completely unaffected if they were to reject my friendship, so there really was nothing at stake. I may or may not ever see these people again depending on whether I decide to visit the little community again or not. The only person who is important to me from this group is my friend Jeff.

Jeff had a much different perspective than I of this entire situation. These are people with whom he has established friendships from the past. These are his family who, for better or worse, love him and he them. These are people whose opinions and acceptance are important to him. He approached the weekend with ex-

pectations and needs and wants and hopes for his relationships. This was Jeff's perspective.

Jeff imagines the ideal, where his relationship with his boyfriend would be considered no different than his sister's relationship with her boyfriend. He would like to see the issue no longer an issue, to be able to talk openly and freely about his life and feel that he can share with his parents the same way his sister can. To know that his parents are not ashamed of his lifestyle, are not ashamed of him in any way. In the words of my friend Rus, "Wake up and smell the coffee." Jeff's vision may eventually come to be but his parents cannot be expected to be perfect. They are people. People are not completely rational beings, then they'd be machines. Dealing with issues such as ones sexual orientation

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may take time and effort on both parts. If your parents have not pushed you away and told you never to contact them again, then they are trying to adapt. Even if they did reject you, they may come to their senses soon but you may need to fight for it to happen. Your position may not seem fair, but that's life. It is up to you to try to make a difference.

A delicate balance of communication is essential when dealing with coming out issues. You want to keep the lines of communication open, but sometimes more is not always better. A person may need some time to deal with things, to adapt his/her mind-set to present reality. To force communication at this point may be destructive when they convey their feelings of hostility, resentment, confusion, lack of understanding, or whatever they're dealing with. A person

may not say what you need to hear. Both sides may convey messages they later regret, unfortunately one can not take back communication once it has occurred. One may repair it's impact, but the impact itself is irreversible.

I thought Jeff's Mom was great. Although she did not want to talk about the issue, she openly demonstrated acceptance all weekend. For one, she assumed that I'm gay and still went out of her way to make me feel comfortable and 'a part of the family' when I stayed at her home. She insisted that I sit with the immediate family at the wedding, disregarding what onlookers might have wondered about that. She also reserved my seat at the reception to be with the parents and grandparents, ie. immediate family table. I felt that her behaviour all weekend was incredibly loving and sincere. Jeff thought things went all right, they hadn't lived up to his dream expectations.

Jeff hasn't come out to his Dad. His Dad has the small town mentality, hasn't really seen a whole lot of variation in lifestyle from what I could tell. He will definitely have some problems dealing with this issue, but I think he is probably ready to try. He made some comments and prods regarding girls. Jeff saw them as being accusatory, I saw them as his Dad's attempt to find out if Jeff is gay or not. To me this was a display of a certain degree of openness on his Dad's part. I feel that if someone asks, they are probably ready to be told. Probably.

If you are feeling discouraged with coming out issues, try stepping back to see the issue from other perspectives. Your own interpretation of the situation may be coloured by your own intense involvement. Try to understand that people are not perfect, even your parents. There has to be give and take on both sides.

Metanoia by John Walk

A Little Less Than God:

"God created humans not to be lowly, snivelling and despicable. God created humans a little less than God; lesser gods if you like—creative, powerful and imaginative."

One of my favourite readings in the Hebrew Scriptures is Psalm 8. I consider it is one of the most profound pieces of sacred literature. It thoroughly puts humans in their place.

That place is not, as one might think, narrow, restrictive or insignificant. This passage does not belittle humans, limit freedom and liberty, or offer no meaning for our modern context. It does the exact opposite. It elevates humans—to a position a little less than God.

Psalm 8 makes sense, however, from only one perspective: that God exists. That's the only hitch and, admittedly, a big one. One must believe that God exists. To believe that God exists means one has a particular way of looking at, and living, life.

One cannot, of course, "prove" that God exists; either scientifically, empirically, rationally or logically. Theologians and others have tried to do that over the centuries, but generally to no avail. Of course, one cannot "prove" either that God does not exist. In that sense God-affirmers (theists) and God-deniers (atheists) really shoot past each other, groping for "proofs" to denounce the other.

Psalm 8 does not dispute the existence of God. The psalmist sees the "hand" of God everywhere. From the seemingly insignificant gurgling of nursing babies to contented children singing, all are really choruses and songs about God. These ought easily to drown out the doubting and jeering babble of atheists and agnostics.

But perhaps such gurgling and singing fail to persuade. What then of the midnight sky? From whence comes the myriad of stars and planets, the awesome expanse of space, the mysteries and

complexities of the universes? From cosmological accident—cold and dark, and ultimately destined for an eternal black hole?

For the psalmist, that is much more difficult to accept. Preferable is the belief that it all originates from a benevolent and loving God, who invests our world with destiny and purpose. Meaning is not what we make of it; meaning is built into the very structure and fabric of the universe.

The Psalmist has no pessimistic or hopeless outlook. There is no despair, no nihilism, least not for humans. They are neither insignificant nor inconsequential. Relative to God, they are little gods, responsible for taking charge of this earth. They are to rule all that is on and in the earth; benevolently, wisely, mercifully and justly—just like God. They are to develop the earth as they develop themselves, in a creative and imaginative manner that will bring out the best in all living things. Humans, operating in conjunction with God, have a very important task in their living. They are to develop and unleash their potential.

Meaning and purpose in life is, therefore, not maximizing pleasure, accumulating personal wealth, exploiting fellow humans, squandering human and earthly resources, and destroying the environment. It is the opposite of these: it is sharing and caring.

Many people around us, in fact, do much of that. We all know friends, acquaintances, even neighbours, who lead a "godly life". And, many good causes arise as a result: care and concern for the safety of our children, our cities, the elderly, the disadvantaged, the environment.

Sometimes, however, that care and concern becomes overwhelming. Increasingly problems today appear insurmountable. We easily become cynical, throwing up our hands in disbelief. Youthful optimism turns quickly to pessimism, hope to despair. And meaninglessness sets in, as does a spiritual vacuum. Suddenly we are beset with insignificance, worthlessness and hopelessness, all in spite of our North American material abundance and high standard of living.

The Psalmist encourages a reality check. Nihilists claim as inevitable our slide into nothingness, but not the psalmist. Meaning and purpose exist, but we must have eyes to see it. That necessitates at minimum an acceptance of a Being greater than ourselves, and not a passive and remote God, but an active and caring God, ultimately expressed in life, death and resurrection of Jesus. God created humans not to be lowly, snivelling and despicable. God created humans a little less than God; lesser gods if you like—creative, powerful and imaginative. And what does God require of us? To do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God. (Micah 6:8)

Is that enough to drive despair meaningless and hopelessness far from us? At the best of times it may still be difficult. But the scriptures, if nothing else, does give hope in the face of hopelessness. The sacred literature of the past, and the communities who abide by it in the present, are our encouragement.

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