

NEWS & VIEWS

Charismatic Cornett and rebel priest Lacaille to provide “community education”



Mike Cohen

You may be familiar with the name of Norman Cornett. He is a former McGill University professor celebrated by scores of students appreciative of his unconventional yet powerful teaching methods who was controversially dismissed from his teaching duties in 2007 allegedly for unorthodox teaching methods. A feature documentary on him was produced for the National Film Board of Canada by Alanis Obomsawin.

“For me the classroom became a theatre of learning, without any restrictions,” Cornett says. “It has been eight years since I was let go by McGill and I have yet to receive an answer why.”

Cornett, born in Texas and educated in California, has called Montreal home for decades. He is a speaker much in demand across North America, which is why his upcoming three-part “dialogic” series with the collaboration of Father Claude Lacaille sounds so appealing. Sessions will take place on September 14, 21 and 28 at 6:30 p.m. at Saint Columbia House ([www.saintcolumbiahouse.org](http://www.saintcolumbiahouse.org)) in Pointe St. Charles very close to the Charlevoix Metro station.

With a federal election campaign well underway, Cornett wishes to emphasize that he

did his Ph.D. on the relationship between religion, culture and politics. Father Lacaille has led a fascinating life. His book, *Rebel Priest in the Time of Tyrants, Mission to Haiti, Ecuador and Chile* he recounts his years as a missionary priest in the Caribbean and Latin America during a period when dictators like Papa Doc Duvalier and Augusto Pinochet ruthlessly exploited the powerless and impoverished.

“I want this series to be accessible to everyone, from students to seniors,” Cornett told me. “That is why I am only charging \$5 per event. This is what I call ‘community education.’ During the first two sessions we will explore the book and documentary about Father Lacaille through the ‘dialogic’ method I have developed. These are not lectures since the seminar members will actively engage the book and documentary so that they come well prepared to ‘dialogue’ with Claude Lacaille when he joins us in person at the third and final ‘dialogic’ session. This is a man who truly wants to make this a better world. This dialogic series, like all of my work as a religious studies scholar, examines ‘where the rubber meets the road in religion.’

Cornett, 65, has a flair for organizing lectures with high profile speakers such as political heavyweights Lucien Bouchard, Preston Manning, Ed Broadbent and Paul Martin, actor Ethan Hawke, jazz legend Oliver Jones. He re-

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**COMMITTEE**

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organization, the activist said he spoke to

federal Infrastructure Minister Denis Lebel about the issue.

Refurbishing the hospital "would continue the legacy of (Ville Marie/Montreal co-

founder) Jeanne Mance and at the same time solve one of Montreal's major problems," the activist wrote. "The re-dedication of the Hôtel Dieu as such would be a wonderful

way to celebrate both the 375th anniversary of Montreal and the Hôtel Dieu.

"There is no secret that the solution of the homelessness problem is simply to provide homes to the homeless," Levine's letter adds. "This solution was first implemented in the beautiful State of Utah 10 years ago. Other jurisdictions have since followed their example. Medicine Hat, Alberta is the first Canadian city to solve the problem, and Montreal can be the first major Canadian city to do so. I have been advised that it costs society four times as much to have a homeless person on the streets, than to provide them with housing. Imagine solving a humanitarian problem and actually saving money by doing so." ■

**COHEN**

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sides in Verdun, but spends a lot of time in Vaudreuil where he has many friends.

Log on to <http://haveyouexperienced.wordpress.com> to learn more.

**BUILDING A BETTER WORLD:** As action heats up on the federal election trail, interesting community programming is being organized. On Wed. Sept. 9 (7 p.m.) the Temple Emanu-El Beth Shalom on Sherbrooke Street West in Westmount will be hosting an event entitled "Building a better world at home and abroad: A Canadian Debate". The panelists will be Liberal MP Stéphane Dion and candidates Allison Turner from the NDP and Rudy Husny from the Conservatives. There is no admission charge. Senior Rabbi Lisa Grushcow will serve as moderator.

**STROLL FOR KIDS:** Co-founders Jodie Frenkiel, Alana Geller and their committee are starting to gear up for the first edition of Stroll for Kids on Sunday, September 27 (9:30 a.m.) at Pierre Elliott Trudeau Park in Côte Saint-Luc. About 150 families will take part in a walk-to raise funds to purchase life-saving medical equipment and to fund research into childhood conditions at the Montreal Children's Hospital. Only 10 percent of the hospital's annual equipment and research budget is funded by the government. Entertainment will include Adam Stotland, Funky Feet, Sportball, Loony Lorny, Emmy Aronovitch, Art by Jordana Fleischer, face painting and famous mascots. Info: [www.strollforkids.com](http://www.strollforkids.com)

Have something to share? Email me at [mcohen@thesuburban.com](mailto:mcohen@thesuburban.com) or leave a message at 514-484-9203, ext. 307. Follow me on Twitter @mikecohens1 and at <http://blog.the-suburban.com>



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