



## President's Message

Dear Readers,

As winter approaches, Ukrainian Canadian students look forward to wrapping up exams and unwrapping gifts. And yet, amidst the holiday cheer, our thoughts drift overseas to the ongoing struggle for a truly independent, democratic and peaceful Ukraine. This struggle has reverberated through Ukraine's recent past, perhaps best exemplified through several revolutions, including the "Revolution on Granite", the "Orange Revolution", and the "Maidan Revolution of Dignity". In each of these revolutions, Ukrainian citizens have demonstrated their desire to live freely, rejecting subjugation by foreign powers, oligarchic clans, and corrupt dictators.

It's remarkable to think about how much Ukraine has changed over the past year ... New political leadership, an immense wave of social activism, and glimpses of pro-European reforms come to mind; as do territorial annexation, economic hardship, and an ongoing war. Although difficult to comprehend and assess from afar, these events, among others this past year, have transformed Ukraine. And despite the fact that, at any given point in time, the situation may seem bleak, I am certain that Ukraine will triumph. I am certain because of what I saw, heard, and felt at Maidan myself, one year ago - witnessing millions of people from all walks of life making a unified civilizational choice for their future left me with an impression I'll never forget, and one that both humbles and inspires me to continue my support for Ukraine. I am also certain that this conviction is shared by those active in our Ukrainian Canadian community - those who, collectively, have done so much for Ukraine over the past year. On behalf of SUSK, I'd like to extend my sincere wishes to all of you for a happy holiday season and look forward to working with you for the betterment of Ukraine in the new year.

Merry Christmas! Happy New Year! З Різдвом Христовим! З Новим Роком!

З повагою - Regards,

*Christine Czoli*

*SUSK President*





## The Bear's Nightmare – Putin's Struggle to Revive the Soviet State

"I guess I'll shake your hand but I have only one thing to say to you: You need to get out of Ukraine."<sup>1</sup> These were the words used by Prime Minister Stephen Harper to the President of Russia, Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin, in their initial meeting during the first day of the 2014 G20 summit. This was

Canada's official response to what has been a devastating year for Ukraine, which began with the ousting of a Moscow-backed corrupt president and was followed by the annexation of Crimea. The situation then evolved into a continuing invasion of eastern Ukraine by Russian-backed mercenaries and soldiers, all for the purported purposes of stamping out Nazism and protecting the Russian ethnic population from the Fascist-Banderites<sup>2</sup> (Banderites are Ukrainian ultra-nationalist groups used in the Russian governments propaganda machine to assert the claim that the entire country is under a pro-fascist regime). In the fog of war, Russian-backed terrorists utilizing a Buk anti-aircraft system<sup>3</sup> managed to knock, the now infamous, Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 forty-thousand feet out of the air and murder all two-hundred ninety-eight people on board.<sup>4</sup> What started as direct aggression between Russia and Ukraine had, through this atrocity, brought itself to the attention and focus of Europe, and of course the West.

Now that Ukraine is in the spotlight, the question faced by the international community is: what should be done? But in determining what must be done, it is necessary to understand what has already happened. The West is aware of what is happening now, but Ukrainian history tells a longer and more convoluted story. To fully appreciate some of the rhetoric Putin has used over the course of this past year to legitimize blatant breaches of international law and order, the historical context

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/stephen-harper-at-g20-tells-vladimir-putin-to-get-out-of-ukraine-1.2836382>

<sup>2</sup> A "Banderite" refers to admirers of the late Ukrainian nationalist figure Stepan Bandera, who fought alongside – and later against – the Nazis in the 1940s. (<http://www.jta.org/2014/04/25/news-opinion/world/a-neologism-used-as-a-weapon-in-the-fight-over-ukrainian-jewry#ixzz3Jo9Xpdk6>)

<sup>3</sup> <http://in.reuters.com/article/2014/07/18/ukraine-crisis-airplane-intelligence-idINKBN0FN2QK20140718>

<sup>4</sup> [http://edition.cnn.com/2014/09/09/world/europe/netherlands-ukraine-mh17-report/index.html?hpt=hp\\_t2](http://edition.cnn.com/2014/09/09/world/europe/netherlands-ukraine-mh17-report/index.html?hpt=hp_t2)



between the two countries is discussed in this article. In considering this history, I stress that we, as Canadians, must understand our attachment to this conflict.

Ukrainian nationalism, or Ukraine's existence as an independent state, has been a sore spot; a source of resentment, a source of contempt, for a century of Soviet rulers, who are now represented by Putin. Before 1991, when it proclaimed its independence after the formal collapse of the USSR, numerous attempts and campaigns were waged by the Soviet authorities to stamp it out. The worst of this effort—not unlike the German attempt to exterminate the Jews during the Holocaust—is now known as the Holodomor. As Kramarenko states, during this period between 1932 and 1933, “Stalin and his

henchmen annihilated the Ukrainian intelligentsia and nationally conscious party members, who were all viewed as potential leaders of a possible Ukrainian uprising, under the guise of communist farming collectivization and killed half the Ukrainian peasantry by famine.”<sup>5</sup>

Many different estimates range on the scale of death by hunger imposed on Ukraine by Stalin. From as low as two million<sup>6</sup>, to as high as twenty-eight million<sup>7</sup> people died in Ukraine during this Soviet created genocide, depopulating huge swaths of the center and eastern regions of the country<sup>8</sup>. While largely suppressed by the Iron Curtain, there were Western journalists who reported on it.<sup>9</sup> Gareth Jones was one such western journalist who published eye witness accounts and was assassinated by the KGB in 1935 for his exposé on this genocide.<sup>10</sup> The official state response by Stalin's was to deny to the world that there was any famine in Ukraine. To support this assertion Russia continued to export millions of tonnes of grain – more than enough to have saved every starving man, woman and child.<sup>11</sup> The same playbook being used in today's continuing invasion of Ukraine.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.ukemonde.com/holodomor/actofgenocide.html>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.euronews.com/2013/11/22/ukraine-s-enduring-holodomor-horror-when-millions-starved-in-the-1930s/>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.day.kiev.ua/en/article/close/why-isnt-world-recognizing-holodomor-act-genocide>

<sup>8</sup> <http://ideas.time.com/2013/12/17/how-to-explain-whats-happening-in-the-ukraine/>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.weeklystandard.com/keyword/Eyewitness-to-the-Holodomor>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-south-east-wales-18691109>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.holodomorct.org/history.html>



This genocide led to the creation of a nationalistic guerilla movement called the Ukrainian Partisan Army, or UPA. The UPA functioned as the military arm of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), of which Stepan Bandera became the leader. Bandera's leadership of the OUN is, to this day, a very contentious political and historical topic. Putin's current use of his name to stir up anti-Ukrainian sentiment was due to the fact that the UPA did, in fact, align itself with Germany in World War II when Germany invaded Ukraine to fight the oppressive Soviet forces. The UPA fighters were responsible for countless attacks on Russian troops, officers and supporters during this period leading to thousands of Russian, Polish and Jewish casualties. When the war started to turn against Germany, the UPA declared itself against both the Russian and German army. At that point, Bandera was himself imprisoned in a German concentration camp at Sachsenhausen<sup>12</sup> when he became of no use to the Germans. Ultimately released from the German camp in 1944, Bandera was assassinated by the KGB in Munich in 1959.<sup>13</sup> To this day, he has remained a contested figure in Ukraine, representing, to many in Western Ukraine, a central figure who defended Ukraine from Stalin and, in Russia, a Nazi collaborator who killed thousands of Russians during World War II. After the invasion and annexation of Crimea, Putin welcomed Ukrainian Crimeans into Russia by declaring that he was saving them from new Ukrainian leaders who are the "ideological heirs of Bandera, Hitler's accomplice during World War II."<sup>14</sup> In today's context, the current supporters of this group have been used as a critical tool for Putin to drum up support in Russia for the continued invasion and its economic costs.

Canada's connection to Ukraine has been that of a nation with deep Ukrainian immigrant roots. As stated in the Canadian Encyclopedia, "[a]ccording to 2006 Census of Canada figures, Ukrainian Canadians number 1,209,085 (3.9 per cent of the country's population) and are mainly Canadian-born citizens. This makes them Canada's ninth largest ethnic group, and means Canada has the world's third-largest Ukrainian population."<sup>15</sup> This undeniable relationship, along with a majority of Ukrainian Canadians living in Western Canada, has no doubt made the recent events a decisive issue for Canadian politicians looking towards the next federal election. The PMO (Prime Minister's Office) has been especially occupied in building a stronger relationship with Ukraine and in September hosted the newly elected president, Petro Poroshenko in Ottawa.<sup>16</sup> In addition to the PMO's office, Canada

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> [http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/a-ghost-of-world-war-ii-history-haunts-ukraines-standoff-with-russia/2014/03/25/18d4b1e0-a503-4f73-aaa7-5dd5d6a1c665\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/a-ghost-of-world-war-ii-history-haunts-ukraines-standoff-with-russia/2014/03/25/18d4b1e0-a503-4f73-aaa7-5dd5d6a1c665_story.html).

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/ukrainian-canadians/>

<sup>16</sup> <http://pm.gc.ca/eng/news/2014/09/17/pm-welcomes-successful-visit-ukrainian-president-petro-poroshenko-canada>





has been on the forefront of assisting Ukraine in casting off the endemic corruption formerly found in elections and sent over 300 observers for the 2014 presidential elections. Canada has played a pivotal role in the current state of Ukraine as an independent nation and was the first Western nation to recognize and affirm its sovereignty in 1991.<sup>17</sup> It also played a role via NATO in the 1997 NATO-Ukraine Charter<sup>18</sup>. This Charter was preceded by the 1994 Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances.<sup>19</sup> By entering into this memorandum, Ukraine became the first and only nuclear power to completely disarm.<sup>20</sup> This was done on the promise of the signatories' respect for independence and sovereignty and the existing borders of Ukraine<sup>21</sup>. The signatories included: Ukraine, the United Kingdom, the United States, and, most importantly, the Russian Federation. While, it is needless to say this treaty has been breached Putin has continued to categorically deny Russia's involvement in the invasion in Ukraine. This lying, not only during the invasion and annexation of Crimea but the continued invasion of Eastern Ukraine<sup>22</sup>, is a geopolitical travesty and a use of double speak that even George Orwell would cringe upon hearing.

While it can be understood from a geopolitical perspective that Russia is struggling to maintain its regional grip, it cannot be given a pass as to the methods and tactics it has been using. From Ukraine's sovereign perspective, it is legitimately choosing to turn away from Russia, the endemic corruption it represents and the old power structure which had been installed and supported by Russia. After a people's revolution banished a superbly corrupt president, who had amassed a personal fortune in the tune of billions of dollars (up to \$36 billion were stolen by Yanukovich)<sup>23</sup>, Ukraine has made its claim that it is willing to fight for its own truly independent future.

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<sup>17</sup>[http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=atpMYRcYBM4C&pg=PA371&dq=December+1991+recognize+Ukraine%27s+independence+Canada&hl=nl&sa=X&ei=KKgVUenPLpS00QXv-YGgBA&redir\\_esc=y#v=onepage&q=December%201991%20recognize%20Ukraine's%20independence%20Canada&f=false](http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=atpMYRcYBM4C&pg=PA371&dq=December+1991+recognize+Ukraine%27s+independence+Canada&hl=nl&sa=X&ei=KKgVUenPLpS00QXv-YGgBA&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=December%201991%20recognize%20Ukraine's%20independence%20Canada&f=false)

<sup>18</sup> [http://www.state.gov/1997-2001-NOPDFS/regions/eur/fs-nato\\_ukr\\_charter\\_970619.html](http://www.state.gov/1997-2001-NOPDFS/regions/eur/fs-nato_ukr_charter_970619.html)

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.rferl.org/content/ukraine-explainer-budapest-memorandum/25280502.html>

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/globe-debate/ukraine-gave-up-its-nukes-and-got-broken-promises-in-return/article17194829/>

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.cfr.org/arms-control-disarmament-and-nonproliferation/budapest-memorandums-security-assurances-1994/p32484>

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/11/21/us-ukraine-crisis-biden-idUSKCN0J51IH20141121>

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/feb/27/ukraine-search-missing-billions-yanukovich-russia>





To say that many in Ukraine want greater integration with the West is an understatement.<sup>24</sup> On the 16<sup>th</sup> of September, the Ukrainian president, on behalf of the Parliament, signed an Association Agreement with the European Union formalizing Ukraine's initial step towards Member State status.<sup>25</sup> Even more recently, on November 21<sup>st</sup>, the newly formed coalition government stated its intention to cancel its non-aligned status with NATO and resume full integration and eventual membership with NATO.<sup>26</sup> While many arguments exist which forward the idea that the

“real fight” going on in Ukraine is between the United States and Russia, and that this is simply a proxy battle,<sup>27</sup> it would be a disservice to the ongoing battle for Ukrainian sovereignty and true independence to accept them and ignore the context discussed above. As Russia has continually promised to be the “Fatherland” for ethnic Russians in eastern Ukraine, it should be noted what kind of new reality the Ukrainian Tatars and business people are now facing after Crimea's annexation; forced evictions/expulsions<sup>28</sup> and nationalization of businesses “unfriendly” to the newly appointed Russian control mechanism in Crimea<sup>29</sup>.

Thousands of people have died on both sides over the past twelve months. The issues at hand are complex and convoluted. As John Baird recently wrote about this issue, “[i]f history has taught us anything, it is that Russia's greatness derives from the people—from their culture, from their creativity in so many spheres, from their industriousness, from their bravery and indeed, from the resilience of the “Russian soul.”<sup>30</sup> The Ukrainian people have shown that, through their resilience against a much better financed, equipped and prepared enemy, they are willing to lay down their lives for the right to self-determination.

Putin and the oligarchs controlling Russia have put themselves in a situation where Russia is nearing the edge of a precipice; the ruble has dropped by over 30%

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<sup>24</sup> <http://globalnews.ca/news/1636085/ukraine-votes-to-usher-in-western-leaning-parliament-open-new-chapter/>

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/ukraine/11100419/Ukraine-approves-historic-EU-deal-breaking-ties-with-Moscow.html>

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.kyivpost.com/content/politics/ukrainian-coalition-plans-to-cancel-non-aligned-status-seek-nato-membership-agreement-372707.html>

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.latimes.com/opinion/editorials/la-ed-ukraine-20140725-story.html>

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/11/17/crimea-human-rights-decline>

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.businessweek.com/articles/2014-11-18/crimea-gets-renationalized>

<sup>30</sup> <http://news.gc.ca/web/article-en.do?nid=905759>



from November 2013, inflation is projected to be over 9%<sup>31</sup> in 2015, thousands of dead Russian soldiers are showing up all over Russia without obituary details, the Ukrainian Crimean citizens who had relied on state assistance from Ukraine are all expecting government support and the increasing and persistent sanctions imposed by the EU and the US has begun to cripple its financial markets and economy. The question of Russia's resolve will now be tested. How much pain will Putin and his cronies be able to apply to their own country before it crumbles around them? When will the Russian people say enough is enough, this nightmare is over, Ukraine's future is its own and this failed revanchist agenda is ceased? When will the bear awaken from its nightmare?

Until then, we must be thankful that we live in a democratic and free nation, where we can choose our government, criticize it as we feel, and embrace the values our forefathers fought for in both World Wars, as enshrined in our Constitution. But we must support Ukraine, in spirit and in aid, as it may be the thread that holds together or unravels the stability and peace European nations have enjoyed over the last 60 years.

(\* The author acknowledges his Ukrainian roots and the persecution his family suffered at the hands of the USSR. This article was written to provide needed context on some of the issues surrounding the current conflict and was not meant to be exhaustive.)

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### **USC uOttawa Holodomor Movie Screening: Ottawa Mourning for Millions of Victims of Ukrainian Genocide, Holodomor 1932/33**

University of Ottawa Ukrainian Students' Club (USC uOttawa) organized a "Holodomor: Ukraine's Genocide" movie screening on November 20, 2014, at Desmarais building, University of Ottawa. "Holodomor: Ukraine's Genocide" is an Award winning Hollywood produced movie released in 2012. It is the newest movie on Soviet genocide committed in 1932/33 in Ukraine, which constitutes "extermination by famine" against millions of Ukrainians, pursuant to United Nations Convention on Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/11/17/us-russia-inflation-forecast-idUSKCN0J123G20141117>





USC uOttawa executive, Iuliia Zubrytska and Sofiya Kominko, event organizers, and Michael Burchill, president, greeted guests from all over including Edmonton, Montreal, Toronto, and Ukraine.

Keynote speaker and Ukrainian Canadian Congress National Board of Directors Member, Dr. Markian Shulakewych welcomed distinguished award winners Mr. James Bezan (Member of Parliament), and Professor Dr. Roman Serbyn to broader Ottawa community who made it a full house of over 130 people that came to solemnly commemorate the Holodomor victims.

Dr. Markian Shulakewych is a community leader, who has received a prestigious teaching award at the University of Ottawa for his work as a diagnostic radiologist. Dr. Shulakewych's extensive contributions over the years have helped build Ukraine's advanced medical infrastructure and education, and he introduced the first award recipient, Mr. James Bezan.

Mr. James Bezan was first elected in 2004 to the House of Commons in the 38th Parliament as a Conservative Member of Parliament to represent the riding of Selkirk-Interlake (Manitoba). In 2008, Mr. Bezan received one of Ukraine's highest awards for his private Member's Bill that recognized the Soviet-imposed Holodomor forced famine of 1932-1933 as an act of genocide against the Ukrainian people. Ukraine's highest civilian award, the "Order of Prince Yaroslav the Wise" was awarded to Mr. Bezan on the basis of a decree by the President of Ukraine as recognition for the people who have made a historic contribution on behalf of Ukraine. Mr. Bezan spoke about his intimate personal experiences in Canada and Ukraine devoted to Holodomor recognition, which the audience appreciated.

Professor Dr. Roman Serbyn is an historian, and a Professor emeritus of Russian and East European history at the University of Quebec at Montreal, and an expert on Ukraine. Dr. Serbyn is well known for his books and many articles about Ukrainian history, particularly the Holodomor. With a gripping content translated into 28 languages, Professor Serbyn's "Soviet Genocide in Ukraine" book and concise personal insights as a world renowned Holodomor expert drew close attention of the audience that attended the evening.

For the reasons mentioned above, as well as due to their unique traits of character and leadership, USC uOttawa proudly awarded Mr. Bezan and



Professor Serbyn with medals **"For outstanding contribution in recognizing Holodomor as Ukrainian genocide"**.

The talks and award ceremonies were followed by beautiful vocal performance of a tribute to the deceased Holodomor victims by unparalleled Ms. Olesya Shevchenko, soloist, together with melodious "Akord" choir of Ottawa. Her breathtaking singing of "Svichka" (Ukrainian for "candle"), as well as "Plyve kacha" were very moving and memorable for everyone present in the room.

Father Ihor Okhrymchouk from Ukrainian Orthodox church in Ottawa beautifully united the community in his lead of the joint singing of a song for deceased "Vichnaya pamyat" (Ukrainian for "eternal memory").

A constructive networking and a symbolic reception followed, during which many people of varying nationalities and ethnic backgrounds, such as South Korean, British, Jewish, and German attendees expressed their interest in the Holodomor, to give the event a truly unifying multicultural Canadian resonance.

Iuliia Zubrytska, an event organizer, remarked: "Genocide against Ukraine continues today as we speak. Tomorrow marks one year since former Ukrainian government started to kill its students (start of EuroMaidan). Many of you attending tonight may be personally experiencing emotions of brave family and friends risking their lives and getting killed defending Ukraine. What is my motivation for organizing this event? My grandmother's brother from Poltava is a Holodomor survivor. We are happy to have him alive."

USC uOttawa is convinced that Mr. James Bezan's and Professor Dr. Roman Serbyn's leadership on Ukraine are outstanding and deserve recognition, especially at this time when fear for the future in Ukraine keeps growing. This way USC uOttawa is dissolving Soviet propaganda and aims at largely mitigating current Ukrainian crisis.

Voluntary donation proceeds raised over \$2100 and go directly to humanitarian fund # 68139 "Friends of Ukraine Defence Forces Fund" administered by Buduchnist Credit Union.

Buduchnist Credit Union and Dr. Markian Shulakewych are the generous platinum financial sponsors of this movie screening evening.



Official co-sponsors include Ukrainian Canadian Congress National, Ukrainian Canadian Students' Union (SUSK), League of Ukrainian Canadians, UNF Ottawa-Gatineau and UCPBA Ottawa.

**Ukraine remembers- the world acknowledges!**

*Iuliia Zubrytska  
Graduate & Alumni Rep, USC uOttawa*





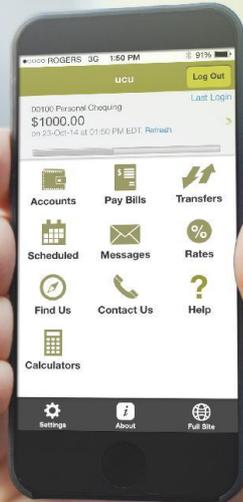
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## Rediscovering the True Meaning of Christmas: Through the Ukrainian-Canadian Christmas Eve and Holy Supper Tradition

As humanity continues to gain “knowledge,” and technological advancements continues to become more and more impressive, many previously unimaginable changes have happened on this earth. During this holiday season, we can all be thankful for how some of these changes have positively affected our lives. However, not all of these changes have been for the complete betterment of humanity. These advancements are also partially responsible for how we have allowed ourselves to become distracted. This distraction gives people the idea that Christmas is a burden, rather than a time of celebration. With the commercialization of the holiday, as well as all the busyness and preparation that comes with it - it has become easy for us to lose the “true meaning of Christmas.”

Although we have been able to make great strides in many fields, we have allowed ourselves to become distracted from what is really important. If this was not the case, why do we allow social injustices to endure? Many of these issues are consistent with issues of the past. Whether it be; oppression due to skin color or oppression due to economic class. Examples range from Russia or the USSR trying to exploit Ukraine, all the way to the War against ISIS or Al-Qaeda. The names and people change, but the issue stays the same. Why do we continue to choose not to learn from our past, and allow it to repeat itself in our present? Why do we continue to abuse, oppress, rape, murder, and make war with each other? Why do we hurt our “brothers and sisters?” To live this way is to take nothing out of the teachings of Christmas.

This Christmas how many of us, fortunate enough to enjoy family and a Christmas dinner, will discuss solving these real issues? How many of us will spend this holiday trying to do something productive to change things? I do not only mean “flinging a coin at a beggar,” because this is not all that it takes for true compassion.<sup>32</sup> Change can only come through altering the way that we think. Poverty, and other social injustices, can only change if we change the way we think about them. Something as simple as addressing some of these issues, during this time of year, is a good place to start. Most of us would rather not focus on these grim realities of life. Some would argue that a disheartening discussion has no place during a time of festive celebration. Although it can also be argued that true happiness cannot exist without the knowledge of the fact that people are suffering.

If it is not directly affecting us, we typically feel sad about these kind of things. We usually go about our own business anyways. Most would rather pretend

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<sup>32</sup> Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. *Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence Speech*, 1967. Discussion on poverty, and how to end it.



these issues do not exist, instead of looking to how we can help bring about change. Instead of changing our minds, it seems to be more popular to uphold the “status-quo.” This encourages us to not pay any real mind, or concern, towards “others.” Most of us would rather not discuss these issues with family and friends during a time of celebration. No one ever wants to be the one that ruins the party! Is this because when we think about the plight of some of our “brothers and sisters” we already have the preconceived disposition that we are powerless to change things? Are we too arrogant to care? Or, do we like living in an alternate reality where the truth cannot be discussed because it is far too real? This life of hopelessness cannot be why people began to celebrate Christmas in the first place.

The greatest gift we could ask for is rediscovering the true meaning of Christmas.

As a fourth-generation Ukrainian-Canadian, sometimes there is fear that my family's traditional way of life is beginning to end with me. Although many Ukrainian-Canadians are proud of who we are. It can become more and more difficult to remember the Ukrainian part of our identity. We have heavily felt the assimilation policies (as many other minority groups) in our past. However we can still celebrate feast days and celebrations like the Nativity in the traditional way. Traditions play a key role in upholding our morality. We should fear losing the lessons behind these traditions. Without the lessons our Christmas traditions can teach us, we can begin to lose a sense of our morality.

Without understanding the traditional practices, and the reasons behind them, it would be difficult for present day Ukrainian-Canadians to get anything out of their meaning. In our tradition, Christmas is not about Santa and presents. Christmas is about the birth of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. There is a lot of symbolism behind the way we celebrate this joyous time of year. The understanding of this symbolism provides us with a teaching on how we are to live our lives. Many Ukrainian-Canadians continue to practice Christmas Eve the same way as their families did in the “Old Country.” As we gather together for the “Holy Supper,” we are reminded of how we are to share our lives with each other. We serve the twelve Lenten dishes which are symbolic of the twelve Apostles, who gathered for the Last Supper. This reminds us of our duty to serve the Lord, in whatever way, wherever we can. We leave two seats at our table open. One, for our loved ones who “lie asleep in the Lord,” but whose spirit is with us that night. We leave a candle burning in the window, and another seat open for any passers-by that need rest. We hope we can help provide for those who need it. It is our custom to not refuse anyone a meal during this celebration. No one should be alone, or hungry, on this night. We work together and share of ourselves to accomplish this goal. Christmas is a time of giving. Giving of ourselves to others as God gave his only Son to us.



We do not begin the feast, until our youngest family member sees the first star in the eastern sky. In doing so, we remember how there is hope for our future. The first dish we eat is “kutia.” A spoonful of the cooked wheat dressed with honey, ground poppy seed, and sometimes chopped nuts.<sup>33</sup> After the prayers, the kutia is thrown to the ceiling before the feast begins. We pray and thank the Lord for all we have been blessed with. We pray not only for ourselves, but for those who we cannot reach and who need it most. We hope that the kutia sticks to the ceiling, meaning that it will be a successful year. Let us not forget our future when we throw the kutia to the ceiling this year. Let us measure the success of our “harvest,” by judging how we can change things to better our future. Let us hope and pray that the kutia sticks to the ceiling in all of our homes this year. Not only for us, but also for our children who are our future.

It is through this gift of Christmas tradition, that we are able to find the “true meaning of Christmas.” Finding this meaning, we are able to make changes for the better.

As Ukrainian-Canadians we are losing a way of life, and what being a Ukrainian-Canadian means. To be a Ukrainian-Canadian is not just your “heritage,” it is who you are. You would never tell an African-American that it is only their “heritage” to live as who they are. It is more likely someone would tell this to a Ukrainian-Canadian, and some of us even tell it to each other! Loss of traditions, means losing the teachings behind them, and in another sense who you are. Traditions like Christmas Eve, are put in place for a reason. This is to help a person better understand themselves, and help provide us with lessons on morality. It almost seems that it is more acceptable in society to devalue your culture, and in doing so who you are. It almost seems as though we are more concerned about trying to “fit in,” instead of being who we are (and accepting “others” for who they are). This disregard for traditions may be the reason why humanity seems to be suffering so much in terms of our morality; more so now, than ever.

It is too bad that too often; instead of associating knowledge with morality we would rather link knowledge with power.<sup>34</sup> This sort of thinking enables the unjust structures within our contemporary North American society. If we were to change this way of thinking and associate knowledge with morality, a true revolution of values<sup>35</sup> would occur. This is why we need our Christmas traditions. If we learn from these teachings, our sense of morality would prevent us from looking at injustices that continue to create hardships and suffering for people on this earth, and do nothing

<sup>33</sup> Christmas - Ukrainian Style. Journal Article. No author, no date.

<sup>34</sup> Author, historian, theologian, and activist - Vine Deloria Jr. On the issues of how we think in “western society.”

<sup>35</sup> Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence Speech, 1967.





about it. Our morality would no longer allow us to continue practices of racism, economic exploitation, militarism (profiting off of war – off of killing)<sup>36</sup>; or at a more personal level not respecting “other” people, the environment, other creatures, and ourselves. At Christmas, almost unlike any other time we have an opportunity to learn about our morality. We can begin to work towards changing our values because of what we have learned. When a person realizes they should not be concerned about what they get, but are instead concerned with what they give of themselves; that is taking a step to change society for the better. Changing our values is exactly what we need to do to bring about real change. With this change we can move from a “thing” oriented society, to a person oriented society.<sup>37</sup> In this sort of world, “machines and computers, profit motives and property rights” will no longer be considered more important than people. Then the three interconnected triplets of racism, militarism, and economic exploitation,<sup>38</sup> would no longer affect us and cause hardships that they do for many. In a world where technology makes life easier, and valuing traditions helps aid in our morality; every day would feel like Christmas.

Without love for God, one-another, and ourselves, how could we ever truly be grateful for life? This is something that anyone who has heard the story, knows that Ebenezer Scrooge had to learn the hard way! We should not all want to have to learn the way he did! We should learn from the example of *A Christmas Carol*, and the teachings behind our Christmas Eve feast. With this love, life is the greatest gift of all. Love, allows you to put people before “things.” Living in this way what possessions you have are not as important as who you share them with. This is a Christmas where what you have “under the tree” is not all that important. In good times and bad, times of richness or poorness, love is the greatest Christmas gift anyone could ask for. We should stop devaluing Christmas by forgetting how love is the reason why we celebrate Christmas in the first place! Without this love that God provided us through the birth of our Saviour, no one would even be celebrating Christmas in the first place! It is about time that we stop allowing ourselves to be distracted by the contemporary commercial aspect of Christmas, and remember (or become educated) on love; the “true meaning of Christmas.” It is time for us to open up the Christmas presents we have been blessed with, and start living with this gift of love.

As a Ukrainian-Canadian, I am thankful to be celebrating this holiday season in the traditional ways of my family, and people. In a way that has been a blessing to

<sup>36</sup> Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence Speech, 1967.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., (1967)

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., (1967)



me, and which I believe has helped preserve the true meaning of Christmas. Khrystos Rodyvsia (Christ is Born)!

*John Kiesman*  
*University of Manitoba*

### The Report

On Thursday, December 18th, 2014, Stephen Colbert will host the final episode of the Emmy award winning show, *The Colbert Report*. Long time viewers of *The Report* will miss Stephen's antics, his wit, and incredibly quick answers to guests on his show. For nine incredible years the show has educated citizens of the The Colbert Nation about what is happening in the world around us.

Before starting *The Report*, Stephen was a correspondent on the long running *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*. You know there was incredible chemistry between Jon and Stephen when they couldn't keep it together during so many hilarious segments.

Stephen Colbert ran for The Presidency of The United States twice, showing strong numbers and was frequently in the top 4 in the polls. Although Stephen only ran in South Carolina, he still had his own *Colbert Super PAC: Making A Better Tomorrow, Tomorrow*. He raised over a million dollars for his Super PAC and was able to show the world how politics can be influenced by money without anyone knowing about it.

His segment *Cheating Death with Dr. Stephen T. Colbert, DEA* was always informative, despite the fact that Colbert only has a honorary doctorate of fine arts. His *Prescott Pharmaceuticals* always came with many side effects that gave audience members stomach pains from trying to suppress the laughter.

I visited the Colbert Report twice and had an opportunity to ask Stephen a few questions. Stephen was incredibly kind to his audience and had an incredible amount of energy for a 50 year old man. In between segments he would dance to indie song and fire his WristStrong bracelets into the crowd. He would make jokes on air that only the audience would understand, frequently pulling from the audience Q&A before the show.

It's sad to see such an incredibly talented individual move on, he has taught me so much about the American way of life and how truly crazy our southern friends are (and how apologetic us Canadian's are, eh?). 2015 will have Stephen taking over



for David Letterman and will bring a new chapter to the life of Stephen Colbert (person, not character). So to you, Her Excellency The Rev. Sir Doctor Stephen Tyrone Mos Def Colbert, D.F.A., Heavyweight Champion of the World\*\* La Premiere Dame De France, the ladies and gentleman, Mr. and Mrs. America's, in here, out there, all around the world, and all the ships at sea, we will miss you. That's it for the Colbert Report everybody, goodnight.

*Cassian Soltykevych*  
*University of Alberta*

**"Back to my roots"**



Year: 2012

Medium: Acrylic on Paper

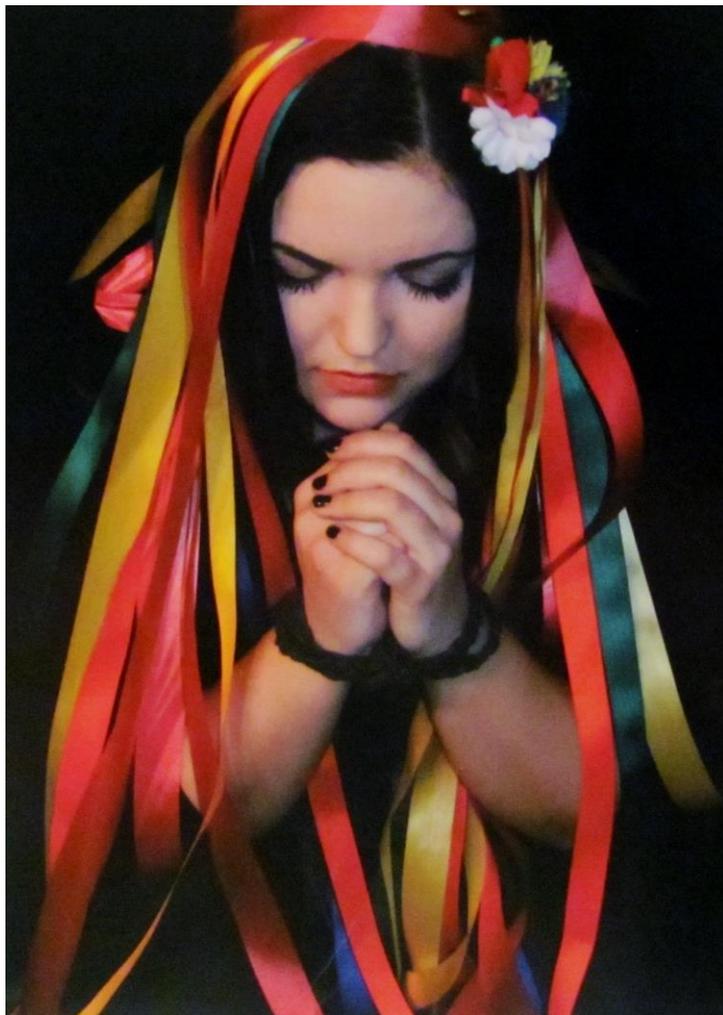
I grew up feeling very in touch with my Ukrainian Heritage but over the years I started to feel a distance from my culture. I felt this most when I abruptly quit



Ukrainian dancing. Dancing had always been a very important part of my life, something I did for 15 years in fact. Having to stop Ukrainian dance broke my heart. This painting is physical evidence of my first attempt in a few years to dance again. I put on my favourite polka song and with my feet dipped in paint began my re-connection with my Ukrainian Culture.

"Untitled"





Year: 2014

Medium: Digital Print

These photographs are evidence of an endurance performance art piece in which I knelt down and prayed for the people in Ukraine.

*Tatiana Phillips*  
*University of Manitoba*