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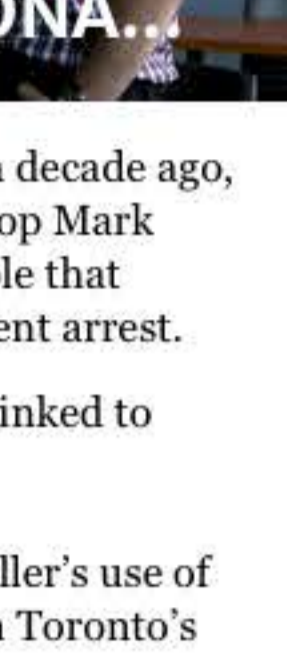
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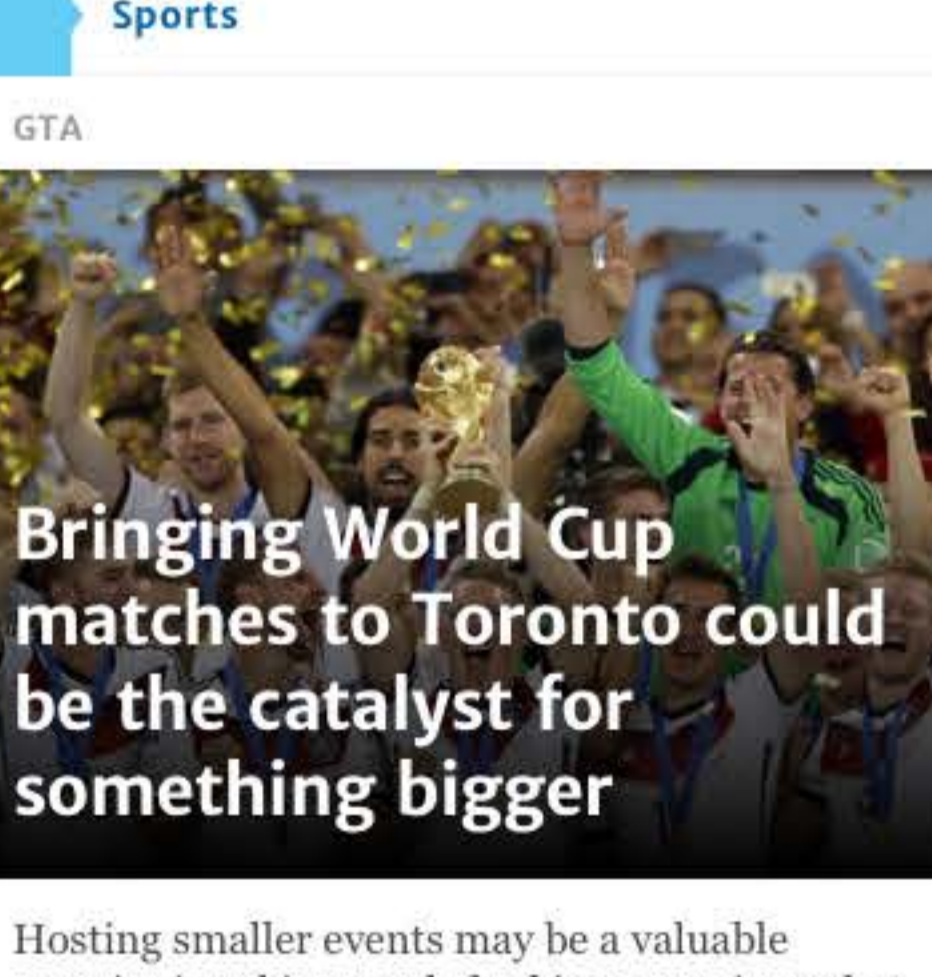
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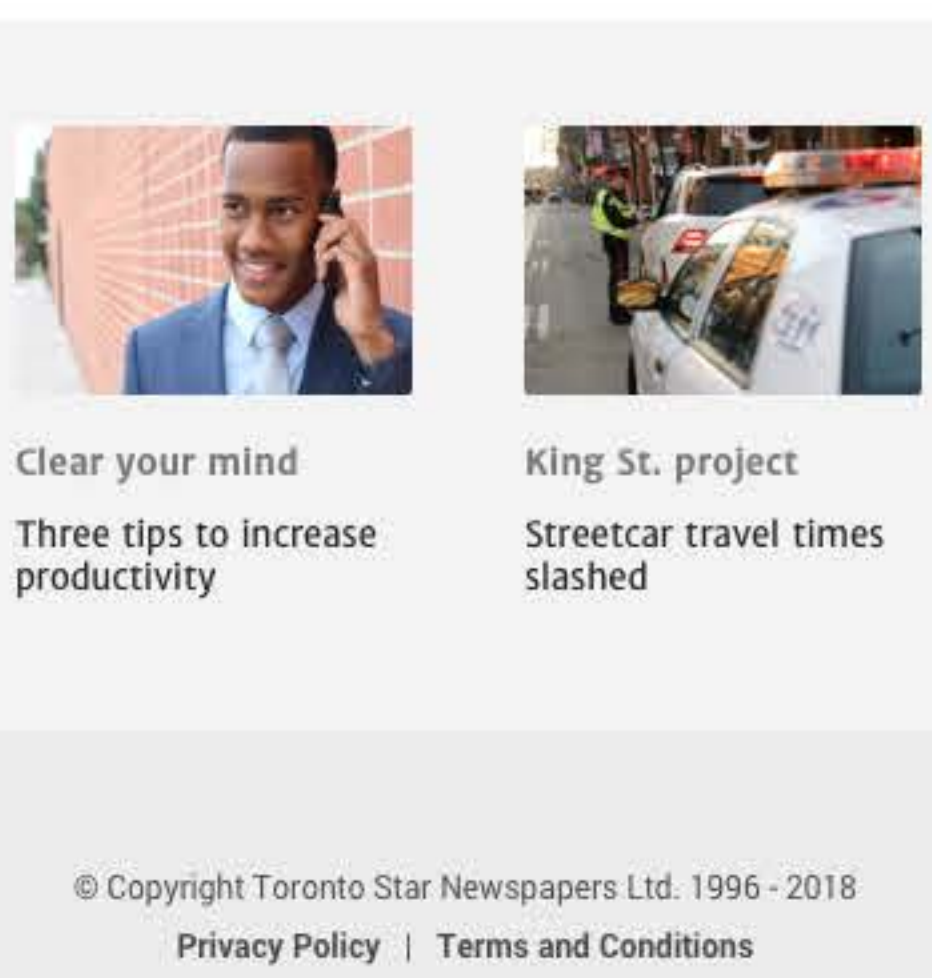
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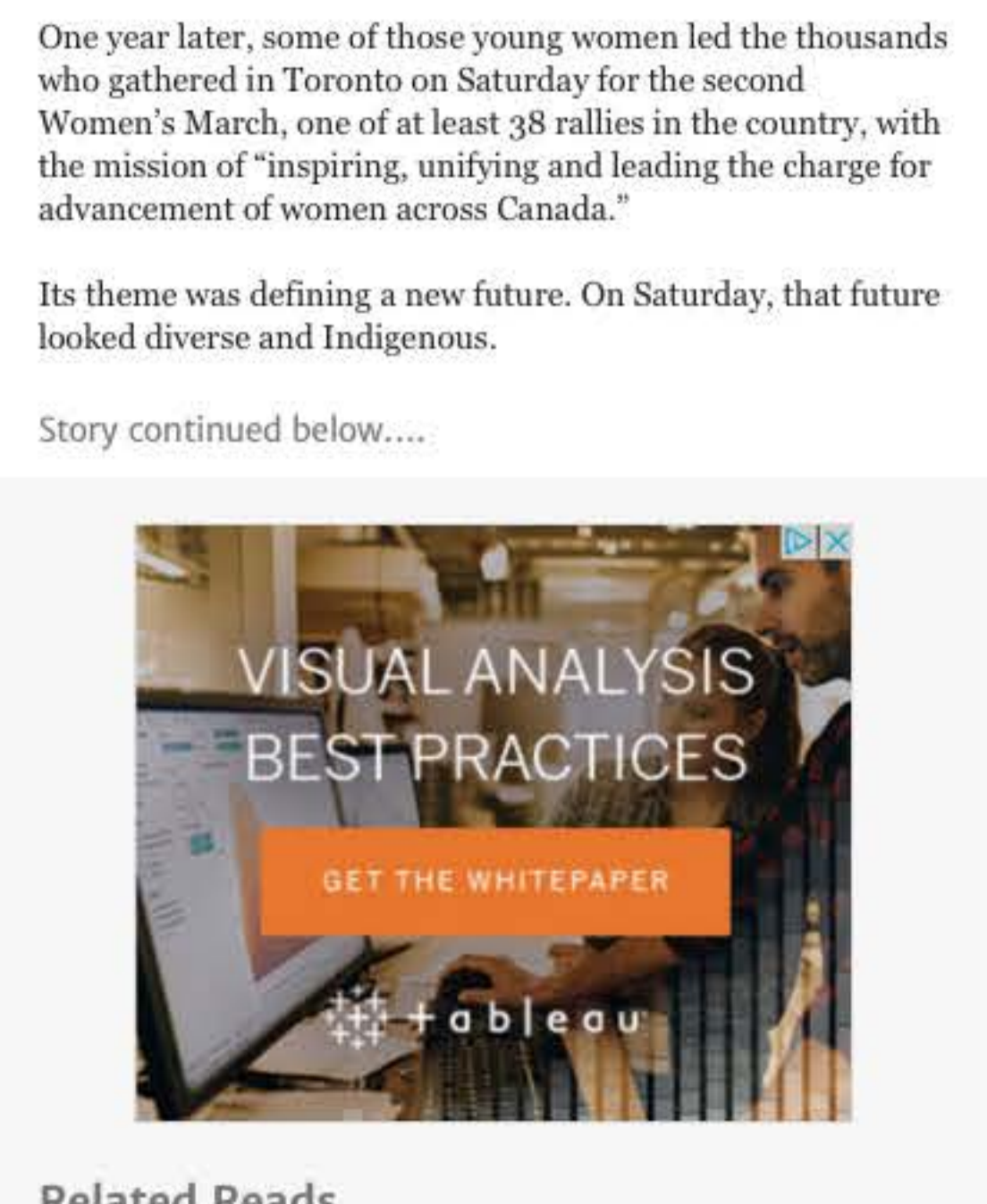


# Women's March: A year later, women are reshaping the future

By **Shree Paradkar** Columnist  
Sat., Jan. 20, 2018

The second Women's March in Toronto was one of at least 38 rallies across the country and hundreds around the globe. The theme of Toronto's march was defining a new future. On Saturday, that future looked diverse and Indigenous, writes Shree Paradkar.

Was it only two years ago that we read headlines such as "Feminism is over, the battle is won. Time to move on?"



The Toronto Women's March represented a striking change in the fundamental make up of Canadian feminism. It's a change that came about when the long-standing leadership of intersectional feminists — women of varied backgrounds, races, ethnicities, sexualities, abilities, trans women, immigrant women and other marginalized women — gained visibility and prominence. (Shree Paradkar, Toronto Star)

Last year, rising fundamentalism around the world with Donald Trump's election as U.S. president at its pinnacle exposed the vulnerability of hard-fought women's rights that were considered done and dusted. The threat galvanized millions of people to take to the streets across the globe, smashing bystanderism and launching a pipeline of young leaders.

One year later, some of those young women led the thousands who gathered in Toronto on Saturday for the second Women's March, one of at least 38 rallies in the country, with the mission of "inspiring, unifying and leading the charge for advancement of women across Canada."

Its theme was defining a new future. On Saturday, that future looked diverse and Indigenous.

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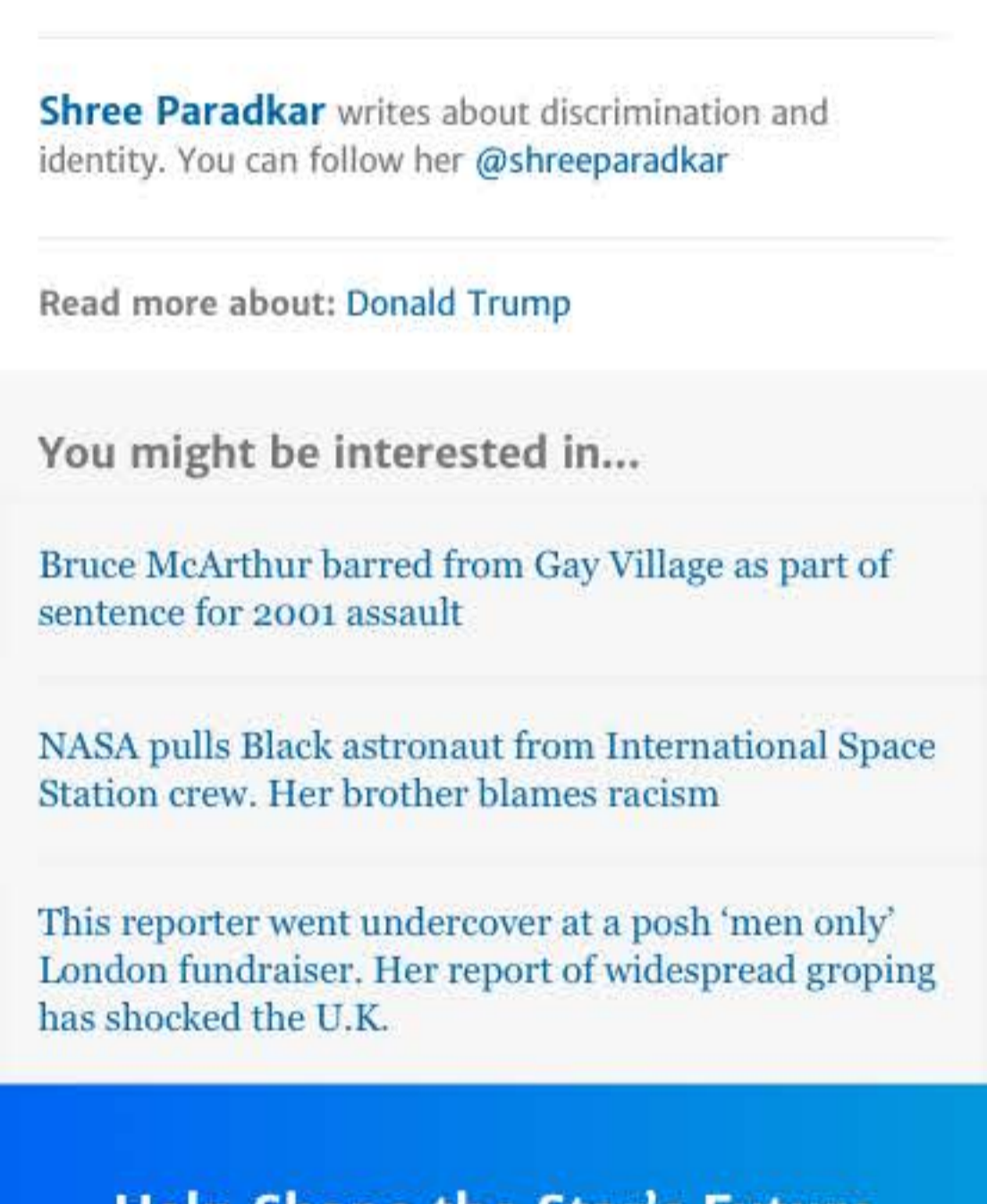
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When Rana Nasrazadani spoke of systemic barriers to ableism, thanking her supporters as well as those who tried to hold her back, and Zainab Arkani brought people to tears with stories of atrocities against her fellow Rohingyas, and Kassandra Neranjan hailed the power of unacknowledged, impoverished female heroes of colour, and Janelle Hinds talked about the importance of hope for young Black girls, they expanded the scope of feminist focus to include white supremacy, immigration and refugee rights.

When Jessica Bolduc talked of walking for the future that is lost and the future that wants to emerge, she folded into feminist resistance the tragedies of murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls.



The impact of the Women's March movement on Canada and the world has been called "incalculable" and "incandescent" by leaders in the feminist movement. (Andrew Francis Wallace, Toronto Star)

Together, the dozen women on stage represented a striking change in the fundamental makeup of Canadian feminism. It's a change that came about when the long-standing leadership of intersectional feminists — women of varied backgrounds, races, ethnicities, sexualities, abilities, trans women, immigrant women and other marginalized women — gained visibility and prominence.

"They (white feminists) were really hearing for the first time," says acclaimed Canadian women's rights activist, journalist and author, Michele Landsberg, of recent changes. "Not saying we will include you, but quite the reverse, saying I want to be part of your movement and I want to be an ally and how can I support this."

"That's been a struggle always in the movement. Because white women are sort of the way men are in the patriarchy. That's our world. We don't question our privilege as white people. It's invisible to us as the air we breathe. That's something we've all had to struggle with. It's a painful, inner, solitary struggle that every woman has to undertake. And not everyone is willing to do it."

When it comes to resistance, a march has the power to mobilize the huddled masses, to energize the populace, and to foster solidarity of purpose even among those with divergent views.

When it comes to a march of resistance that is global in scope and is billed as the largest single day protest, the impact is magnified and manifold.

Last year's march was a moment born out of fear and shock and rage and outrage following Trump's election and in awareness that U.S. leadership influenced global policies.

Two days later, Trump reinstated the "Global Gag Rule" — a policy that banned international agencies that have anything to do with abortion from receiving U.S. aid. This had a damaging impact, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, not just on access to safe abortions and legal advice related to it, but also to sex education, birth control and HIV testing.

Trump's actions, his rhetoric as well as rising intolerance around the world spurred women to wrest that moment, that day of Jan. 21, 2017, and unleash a movement.

Since then, the world has witnessed the passage of landmark legal judgments. Saudi Arabia lifted the ban on women driving (next on the agenda: end male guardianship). India ruled that sex with a child bride constitutes rape (next on the agenda: criminalize marital rape).



Thousands gathered in Toronto on Saturday for the second Women's March. (Andrew Francis Wallace, Toronto Star)

The U.S. saw direct and tangible outcomes from the march. The #MeToo movement resonated worldwide and led to the creation of the Times Up Legal Defence Fund. No longer content with marching and exhorting elected officials to change, American women registered interest in running for office in record-breaking numbers.

Latin America saw women pushing back against Christian and evangelical fundamentalists, according to the Global Fund for Women. It reports works of solidarity across the Middle East and Africa as well.

Canada announced the creation of its Feminist International Assistance Policy, which signalled a game-changing shift in how aid is allocated by reframing women receiving aid not as beneficiaries but as partners. This helps grassroots organizations bring change within their communities rather than implementing an outsider, imperialistic agenda.

"The only word that came up constantly in my mind is incalculable," says Landsberg of the impact of the Women's March.

"It was incandescent — the impact that this was the largest march in history, and it was around the world, and women organized and did it. It was so deeply thrilling that I think it gave courage and power to thousands and thousands of women."

**Shree Paradkar** writes about discrimination and identity. You can follow her @shreeparadkar

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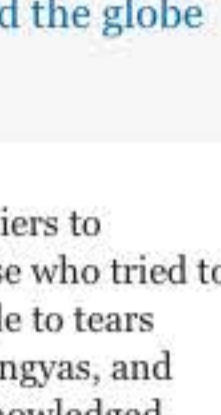


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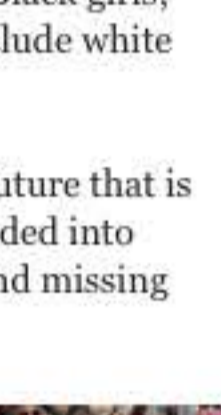


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