



# Inside men

OPINION

« A system that protects and covers up violations of our civil rights...»



Red Coalition’s Alain Babineau, Me.Ralph Mastro Monaco, Joel de Bellefeuille, PROF. COSIMO LA ROSA

The hardest thing about fighting systemic racism, is that there is a system. A system that protects and covers up violations of our civil rights. It is one thing for well-meaning and often effective citizens to come together in alliances to redress wrongs. But it is so much better when those rare occasions occur when inside men decide to permanently join those alliances and the buttons of the system begin to be pushed to help the victims and not the victimizers.

That is what happened late last week. The Red Coalition, which has been so effective in fighting systemic racism — particularly racial profiling and random police checks which violate our Sec. 7 Charter Rights — led by Joel de Bellefeuille and Alain Babineau, announced two of the best insiders will be joining them.



# Inside men... Continued

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The Coalition announced its Lawyers Against Racial Profiling (L.A.R.P) program. When someone is victimized, the hardest thing to find is a lawyer. And particularly a lawyer who knows the inside of the police. Lawyers who know which buttons to push. LARP will be the go-to resource to call.

What is exciting is that the Coalition has added two top legal talents that bring much needed punch to LARP. Noted criminal lawyer Ralph Mastromonaco and professor and court bailiff Cosimo La Rosa.

They will be joining the board of the anti-racism advocacy group and be available to those in trouble.

The Coalition has always been able to call on attorneys like Grey, Casgrain and activists like Fo Niemi of CRARR. But to have two advocates who know the system from the inside available constantly, is really kicking it up a notch. And on the two most critical challenges — profiling and random stops — the Police have taken notice. It's the kind of alliance between advocates and activists normally seen in the United States.

It is cause for cautious optimism, particularly with a new Police Chief in Fady Dagher who is already sensitive to these issues as he told The Suburban in an exclusive interview some months ago.

He said he wanted to change “police culture.” This will give him an added arrow in his quiver and added incentive.

In a justice system programmed to wear down victims, this new alliance can redress some of the imbalance significantly. It can lead to Montreal's police taking a pause if they have no cause and exercising responsible authority before making an intervention with someone merely because of the colour of their skin.

Officers will know that the next call they get may be from their commander because attorneys of conscience and character who know the system are on 24/7 call and they know who to call.

It is time that Montreal's security authorities stop assuming everyone is guilty of something, but they just haven't all been caught yet. Police may have a right to question.

But they have a duty not to pre-judge. And they must remember to intervene only with reasonable cause. Knowing the robust resources of LARP exist, will move them in that direction.

Policing in Montreal needs to be reinvented, Mastromonaco said.

We couldn't agree more.