

Both sides of the looking glass

letters

Odd that I volunteered to write this week's editorial without being completely sure of my stand on the Week of Reflection. After some soul-searching and research though, I am now sure of my position. Which brings to light my point: what is the issue behind Week of Reflection?

I battled first with what I thought about one man brutally killing 14 women with his brand new semiautomatic weapon, because he felt women were the reason for his troubles. Then I contemplated what I am expected to think. As a woman, I should hate this man who encapsulates all that is violence against women and join the ranks with my sisters in remembering him and the 14 victims.

Though I don't see things quite this way.

Yes, I think that December 6, 1989 is a dark day in Canadian history. Marc Lepine was a horrible man who doesn't deserve the attention he gets. I feel for the 14 women whose lives were snatched away from them and for those they left behind.

But only remembering the Montreal Massacre during this week minimizes a problem that is frighteningly larger, one that exists as a different reality for most women. As publicized and well known as this crime is, it is not one that occurs frequently. More commonly, women endure violence as part of their everyday lives. They are not being made to suffer at the whim of an unknown gunman, but at the hands of their husbands, boy-friends, brothers. This is the harsh reality that scares me. I could become a victim of this violence at any time, walking

on campus this evening or when I'm out on a date this weekend.

Using Marc Lepine as the representative of violence against women gives a lot of men the opportunity to excuse their behaviour. They aren't opening fire of a group of innocent women, so why should they think they have a problem? They only slap their girlfriend around every once in a while. Nothing newsworthy.

Women are suffering behind the scenes. Behind the news reports, and T.V. exposés, the protests and marches, and behind the Week of Reflection. We don't know of them because we can't hear their screams and we can't see their tears.

It is these women who need to be recognized during this week. To accomplish anything, we must remember the horror of the Montreal Massacre, but realize that the massacre continues.

KAVERI GUPTA

I have a friend back home in Vancouver who likes to think he is the TV stereotype of the "Heterosexual Male". He talks about "chicks" and "getting laid" and all the other things attributed to beer-drinking boys. So why am I friends with this guy, the politically correct among you might ask? Well, I know him well enough to see this persona as a facade. He is a shy, generous and very loving person when

around females. He is a hopeless romantic and a very loyal boyfriend.

This bravado-soaked image of men is just as fake as that of the "dumb blonde". It is sometimes superimposed on the type of person who would beat their wife or girlfriend. (When you think of a wife beater do you picture a scrawny man, or a muscle-bound one?)

We are in the middle of the Week of Reflection. Every year, we dutifully remember the tragedy that happened at the École Polytechnique. Rightly so, as it is important not to forget. But is it just me that finds it a little weird that our society talks about things and doesn't act upon them? It took the death of 14 women to create the Week of Reflection. Why does it take tragedy to spark a little activism? A whole lot of us (myself included) sit around and complain and come up with incredible ideas to save the world, but it is all rhetoric. It seems most people agree on social issues, but the leap from "idea" to "action" seems to take a catalyst like murder.

What does the Week of Reflection mean to males? I can only speak for myself, but I think some guys might agree with me. Sometimes I feel that guys are automatically guilty of being rapists, and must always prove otherwise. Take for example, my route home.

Quite often I walk

home after sunset and find myself behind a girl. I'll slow down so that she doesn't think I'm following her, and I'll switch sides of the street. I do everything in my power to make it known that I am a law-abiding citizen. I have even thought about shouting out "I am not going to hurt you, I just happen to live in the same direction."

But that is the problem. I should not have to shout out the aforementioned phrase every time I fork down the street. I am sick of always having to qualify myself and try to prove my innocence. Marc Lepine and people like him are mentally disturbed; somewhere in their collective minds is a chemical imbalance. Should I be heaped on the pile and labelled an "insensitive male" just because of the actions of a very small minority?

I think holding a week of reflection in memory of a crazed man (quick, name one of the 14 women) villainizes males. People fail to realize that Mr. Lepine and men like him are not your average guys, but psychos.

There's nothing wrong with the week of reflection — it's a good thing — but no one's made an effort to clarify one small, yet vital point. Men commit violence against women, but all males are not violent. I'd like to think that violent males are greatly outnumbered by men who respect women and treat them as equal human beings.

JOHN CULLEN

No Lawsuit Pending

Further to your lead article, "Physical Plant Accused of Homophobia" (Gazette November 28, 1996), I would like, in the interest of accuracy, to provide clarification to two potentially misleading statements.

1. In the opening sentence, it is claimed that "a lawsuit is pending against Dalhousie University regarding incidents of discrimination against a homosexual employee of Physical Plant and Planning." Dalhousie's legal counsel is unaware of any such lawsuit being initiated. If the Gazette has information to this affect, we would appreciate hearing about it.

2. Contrary to the impression left by the article, Physical Plant and Planning *did* respond to the Human Rights Commission. In a letter dated December 6, 1995, the Department provided the Commission with assurances it was seeking. To date, we have received no further correspondence from the commission on the matter. Sincerely,

**Bill Lord, P. Eng.
Director, Physical Plant and Planning**

A bitter boy learns to smile

In your November 21 edition of the Gazette, I was appalled at the state of the opinions/editorial section. Almost every article seemed to have a problem. Shall I expand?

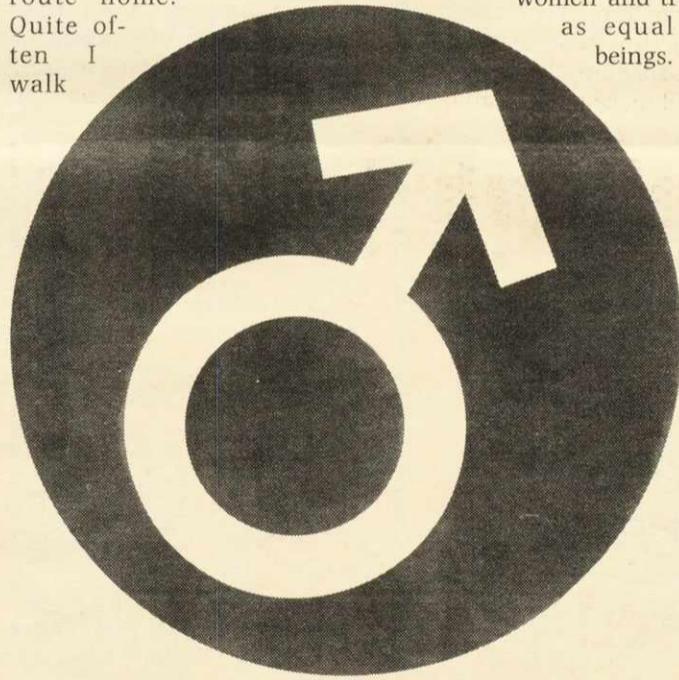
It appears that the Gazette must think that all Dalhousie students have jumped on the highly over-rated information highway. Of the seven articles published in the section, three of them had something to do with the internet (two written by the same person). Don't get me wrong, I have nothing against the internet. But isn't there anything else worth writing about? I thought the student press was supposed to paddle upstream, but the Gazette seems happy to buy into the vast sea of pabulum the mainstream media sells us.

An article I found particularly was the one titled "Dal-Lousy...". After reading it, I got the distinct feeling that the author was not attempting to stick up for Dalhousie's reputation. If anything, the article seemed to be a tool to express a personal grudge against Mr. Duffy. Is this behaviour acceptable from a Senator? I always thought they were supposed to be impartial. But DSU politics has never been serious anyway.

Next on my hit list is the article on the coffee house scene. This seemed to be a paid advertisement by the local coffee shops around campus. As the article described the drab atmosphere of coffee houses, I suddenly felt the need to get a cup of coffee so I would not fall asleep. In my opinion, coffee shops are a den for social morons to congregate and pretend they have a life outside of internet chat lines.

Finally, the piece entitled "You better believe" seemed very uninspiring. I have to admit that I did not get past the first paragraph. With an opening sentence like, "A few weeks ago, my friend, my friend, who is wonderful, helped to organize a monthly activity called city prayer," could you blame me? Who cares about your friend. ALL FRIENDS ARE WONDERFUL YOU SAP!

Thank you for letting me express my opinion. I have regained that happy feeling I had before I picked up your shoddy, sleazy and cheap excuse for a paper. However, I don't expect much from narrow-minded nerds who spend their free time posing as "journalists" — I suspect they just can't get dates.



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