

We haven't come that far, baby

Six years ago, the *Gazette* ran an article entitled "The Gay man's guide to erotic safer sex". The item, which appeared in our 1991 Pink Triangle supplement, was a reprint of one that had run earlier in *The Muse*, the student newspaper of Memorial University of Newfoundland. The article contained information on safe sex, interspersed with explicit descriptions of gay male sex. The piece ran with a photo of two men having oral sex.

The resulting furore in both Newfoundland and Nova Scotia was incredible. The media denounced the article as pornography, the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary launched an investigation, the *Globe and Mail* reported on the issue, and the *Gazette* was swamped with letters to the editor for the next month. The debate was so heated that one of the editors of the *Gazette* resigned.

Putting together this year's Pink Triangle supplement, it is hard to imagine such a heated controversy arising like that again.

While the article in question did use graphic language, it was not, in fact, much worse than what appears in Dan Savage's *Savage Love* column every two weeks in *Coast*.

In comparison, last year we received just one letter complaining about the Pink Triangle supplement.

Have we become more tolerant of gay issues?

It would seem that we have. This week the Neptune Theatre is performing *Angels in America*, a play that has raised a storm of controversy in both the United States and Canada. The play deals with gay relationships in the era of AIDS. The reaction in Halifax? Nothing. In fact, there has been an awful lot of self-congratulatory editorializing in the local papers (and on national radio) about what a major step this is for Halifax, and how open-minded we are.

No mention is made of the fact that at least 30 Neptune subscribers asked for refunds for this particular show. No mention is made of the fact that the Neptune man-

agement took it upon themselves to send out a special advisory to its season ticket holders to give them the option to ask for a refund for this particular show. Why would this play warrant a parental advisory for the culture-class, and not *Great Balls of Fire* which dealt with religion and incest? This is hardly indicative of a truly open-minded locale.

People also seem to forget that, just last year a Nova Scotia court judge required a convicted pedophile to have a heterosexual male escort whenever in the vicinity of children, thus implying homosexuals are inherently child

Have we become more tolerant of gay issues?

molesters.

And what of the Gay community at Dalhousie? Is there one?

The Nova Scotia Public Interest Research Group has helped create Humans Against Homophobia, an action group on Gay issues. As commendable as this group is, there still isn't a group on campus that is specifically for the gay community. Why?

There are two possibilities. The first is that the gay community has won. Dalhousie is a gay positive campus, gays are not discriminated against at Dalhousie, and there are no issues or obstacles that gays face that are different from the straight community.

This, of course, is patently untrue. Just this year an employee of the Physical Plant here at Dal alleged homophobia and discrimination on the part of his employer. At the University of Ottawa, a new program was launched called Queer studies. Why don't we have that here? As the premiere university in the Atlantic provinces, we should be the groundbreakers. Why aren't students lobbying for greater academic coverage of gay issues?

The second possibility to explain the lack of a viable gay group on campus is that Dalhousie is a patently gay *un*-friendly campus.

The Dalhousie Student Union (DSU) has allowed the B-GLAD (Bisexuals Gays and Lesbians at Dalhousie) seat on council to remain vacant for nearly a year. Have they even tried to advertise that the seat exists? Or are they comfortable in letting a designated space remain empty? Would they do the same if the law representative resigned? They would inform the community of law students that the position existed, and ask people to apply. Why aren't the DSU publicizing the fact that the B-GLAD position exists, and trying to proactively involve the gay community in campus politics?

The DSU and Dalhousie's administration aren't the only ones to blame here. Where are those in the gay community that really should be out there, raising awareness and working towards greater understanding?

Many will say that there is nothing to fight for, that the major victories have been won. Not so. Now that homophobia is recognized as unacceptable, that gay issues are mainstream issues, *now* is the time for the gay community to keep the issues alive.

Every year someone criticizes the *Gazette* for running the Pink Triangle supplement, on the grounds that "they" shouldn't be "stealing" a previously straight holiday.

People still forget that as recently as last year, Members of Parliament were still talking about the "gay agenda" to destroy "family values" and bring our whole society crashing down around our ears.

While there are still people who can still effectively advocate this kind of ghetto-ization, then there is still a need for the Pink Triangle supplement. The gay community and society at large has come a long way, but there is still far too much room to improve for us to sit back now.

MARK REYNOLDS

letters

Racial rebuttal

In the February 6 edition of the *Gazette*, on pages four and five, the *Gazette* printed an article entitled "Everyone's a racist", written by Tim Covert, as well as an article entitled "Dialogue, Language and Race: The Intellectualization of Race", by Adwoa Buahene. I must object to several points brought up in these articles.

Let us begin with "Everyone's a racist". Mr. Covert begins his article by throwing a blanket statement on all readers: Wrong. You are a racist he writes.

It seems naive to use "Websters" as an accurate source for defining racism, as you would not use Websters to define Dadaism, or nihilism, yet he continues, in the spirit of Lionel Hutz (defense attorney).

Racism: 1) a belief that race is the primary determinant of human traits and capacities that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race.

And this is what we are accused of. Let us take "we" to mean "Canadians." These labels of racist and prejudiced have been applied to us on the grounds that we make judgements of people without adequate grounds. Guilty as charged. People constantly make judgements. However, this seems to be a human trait, and not necessarily the trait of a racist. These judgements we pass are not necessarily racial judgements as Tim has suggested.

Racism, in terms of what most of us would not like to be associated with, would imply that the judgements we make are based on race. When I encounter someone, (when anybody encounters someone), there are immediately judgements passed. Is this person attractive, my, this person is smoking — whatever. These are judgements. According to Mr. Covert, this makes me a racist. This is an alarmist view of racism. It is not racist because these judgements are not based on race.

True, many prejudices are passed by generation, from one's parents or one's experiences. But these are not the only influences on our lives. Given adequate reason or initiative, we are free to leave these predispositions.

In this respect, many people would be understandably upset at being called racist. For example, I was once a member of a theatre group called Insight, which dealt with racism. I voluntarily put my non-paid time into scenes which would be seen by the impressionable minds of thousands of high school students. I believed in what I was preaching. If as a result of this, I am still a racist, and hence a sexist and homophobe as well as a member of the multitude of other discriminating groups, then my time has been in vain. As far as Covert is concerned, I may as well have not participated at all.

Covert suggests racism requires us to be conscious of its existence 24 hours on end. This seems to be heading in the same direction politically correctness once went. To think that everyone will accept "anti-racist" as their master status, hence watching their every step to avoid falling into the pits of isms is unrealistic, and does not even represent the ideal.

Buahene criticises "intellectuals" for allegedly denying the existence of racism based on one's random sample experience. To even suggest that Canada is a racially sound place to live might toss me into the ranks of the holocaust deniers.

I do not deny the existence of racism in Canada. I am subject to such value judgements every time I sign my name. But let's look at Canada from a worldly perspective. We do not have tanks positioned alongside Catholic parades to prevent Protestant/Catholic riots on the streets of Dublin. We do not have stories deal-

ing with the slaughter of 1200 unarmed Muslims, like in Bosnia. Instead of fighting land disputes with guns, we handle these matters politically by addressing such issues as Native self-government. We have safeguards like employment equity and affirmative action. In brief, Canada is doing very well in worldly terms.

This does not make Canada perfect. We still have a long way to go towards equality. It seems these articles were written to convince the reader that inaction concerning racism might cause the collapse of Canada. Racism is not Canada's major problem, and when a cohort suggests "we move on" from the topic of racism, it is perhaps a suggestion that we concern ourselves with larger problems. It is not a denial of any imbalance.

This is African Heritage Month. It is a month to reflect and display the best accomplishments of African Canadians. It is not a license to infer the label of apathetic on those who do not feel racism is the guiding force in their lives, to label the general public as racists. In discarding Covert and Buahene's myopic view of Canadians, many of us move away from the label of racist. I continue to slate myself alongside non-racists, simply because race is not a criterion on my list of value judgements. Yes. Racism is a problem. But it is not THE problem.

Paul Lewandowski

Desperately seeking love

I am in search of a girl who goes to Dalhousie University. I met her over Christmas Break, and due to my own stupidity, I didn't get her last name or her address or phone number. But, this is what I do know about her.

Her name is Christine, or maybe Kristine. She is about 5 feet, 4-6 inches tall. She has curly blond hair that goes about a third of the way down her back. She is thin and judging by the way she danced, I would say that she is in excellent shape!!!

She is from the Grand Falls area. I think she said that she lived about 10 miles from there. She has a sister Nina who is a teacher.

I'm not sure if you're interested or not, but let me tell you how we met...

I am from Bridgewater, Maine, and my friends and I decided to go to Foxes (a bar in Grand Falls) for the evening on Saturday night, December 28. We got there early and there wasn't much going on, so after a while, we decided to go over and check out Broadway, another bar across the street. We walked in and looked around a little. My friends pointed out these two girls sitting down and told me to go talk to them. So, to add a little excitement to the evening, I did. One girl, Andrea, was talkative, and the other girl was quiet. After a little while Andrea got up and started dancing with someone, so being the nice guy that I am, I asked the quiet girl to dance. About a song later they left, so I looked around and started dancing with a group of three girls. I was just having a good time and then all of a sudden it felt like something struck me in the heart.

I looked across the dance floor and there she was. Dancing with two or three other girls was the most gorgeous girl I have ever seen. She looked so fine and pleasant that I don't think I stopped smiling from that point on.

We made eye contact while we both continued dancing with others, and then a song ended and every

Continued on page 5

the Dalhousie Gazette

editorial board

Managing Editor Shelley Robinson **Copy Editor** Tim Covert
News Gina Stack **Arts** Andrew Simpson & John Cullen
Sports Aaron Bleasdale **Opinions** Michael Alves
Focus on Dal Kaveri Gupta & Tamara Bond **Dalendar** Sophia Maxwell
CUP Editor Mark Reynolds **Photography** Danielle Boudreau
Science & Environment Adel Iskander & Anthony Skelton
Online Manager Daniel Clark **Office Manager** Natalie MacLellan
Art Director Peter Ross **Ad Manager** Amit Batra

contributors

Chris Benjamin, Eugenia Bayada, Jeremiah Hiery, Tracy Stewart, Karen Stille, Paul Lewandowski, Chad Bradbury, Ken Smith, Monica Gillis, Stephanie Pieri, Paul, Angela Failler, Robin Metcalfe, Tania Trepanier, Sunil Sarwal, Justin Jagosh, Kelley Lewis, Farhad Dastur, Andrew Cook, Amy Dunphy, Carmen Tam, Nik Madan

Founded in 1869 at Dalhousie College, the *Gazette* is Canada's oldest student newspaper. With a circulation of 10,000, the *Gazette* is published every Thursday by the Dalhousie Gazette Publishing Society, of which all students of Dalhousie University are members. The *Gazette* exercises full editorial autonomy and reserves the right to refuse or edit any material submitted.

All editorial decisions are made collectively by the staff. To become voting staff members, individuals must contribute to three issues. Views expressed in the *Gazette* are not necessarily those of the editors or the collective staff. Unless otherwise noted, all text © 1997 the

Dalhousie Gazette Publishing Society. ISSN 0011-5819

Vol. 129 / No. 18

Student Union Building, Dalhousie University, 6136 University Ave, rm 312, Halifax, NS, B3H 4J2
 editorial tel. 902 / 494-2507
 fax 902 / 494-1280
<http://is2.dal.ca/~gazette/home.html>
 e-mail GAZETTE@is2.dal.ca

For advertising information, call 494-6532 or visit our ad manager, 9am to 5pm daily.

The *Gazette* welcomes letters to the editor and commentary. All letters will be printed up to four per week. The printing of additional letters will be at the discretion of the Opinions Editor.

Letters may be edited for length above 300 words and we reserve the right to edit commentary.

All submissions must be typed double-spaced on paper, e-mailed, or on a Mac or IBM 3 1/2 inch disk, in a WP version not greater than Word 6.0 or equivalent. The deadline is Mondays at 4:30 p.m.

97