

EDITORIAL

14 women, 2 years later

Natalie Croteau. I remember your name because two years ago I read it out at a memorial service. I don't remember the names of any of the other women who died. I don't recognize any faces of the fourteen women who died. The only name most people remember is the murderer's. We know his name but the women — they exist only as a

But what has changed since the massacre?

nameless faceless collective, the Montreal Massacre.

Why did you die? You died because you were women, and because a man hated women. There was national outrage at your deaths. Where has that outrage gone?

This is a week of reflection, commemorating the violent brutal deaths of fourteen women. It is a time to think about what happened on December 6, 1989. It is a time to think about violence against women. But what has changed since the massacre?

Last week women on a women's newspaper in Halifax received death threats for being women. The only difference between this and the Montreal massacre is that action has not been taken, yet. But the hatred is still the same.

Is linking the Pandora threats to the Montreal massacre going too far? Maybe, but this violence is real. Women face violence, or the fear of violence everyday. Ever see a woman walking alone at night tense up when she hears your footsteps? Ever see a woman cringe when she is whistled at on the street. Ever see a woman back away from a man when he is trying to pick her up?

Incidents of violence against women will recur. They may not be as obvious, or as newsworthy as killing fourteen women, or death threats to a women's collective, but they will happen until society changes to perceive all violence against women as abhorrent.

Fourteen nameless women died in the Montreal massacre. Did they die in vain? Has anything changed?

I know their deaths changed me, the way I look at the world, the way I perceive violence. This week reflect: did their killings change you?

Natalie Croteau I remember you. I remember the way you died. And I will not let you have died in vain.

Shannon Gowans



LETTERS

The Dalhousie Gazette welcomes letters to the editor. Letters should not exceed 300 words in length and should be typed and double-spaced. The deadline for letters is Friday noon before publication. Letters may be submitted on Mac or IBM-compatible 3.5" disk.

Not a luxury

To the editor:

I was interested to read Robin Ingle's recent letter to the editor. In that letter, which referred to Dal's Health and Accident Insurance Plan, the author contended that "oral contraceptives are a costly luxury, used by a small portion of the student population." The comment was made in the context of a defence of the recently increased cost of the plan, and a justification for the exclusion from coverage of oral contraceptives. I have no quarrel with the author's view that inclusion would add to the cost of the plan — this is self-evident — but I do believe that the author's characterization of oral contraceptives as a "costly luxury" is misguided.

The implication is that these drugs add to the pleasure, comfort or convenience of the user, but are unnecessary, and are readily substituted with other means of birth control. No doubt there are substitutes, but I suspect that the insurance plan also excludes condoms, diaphragms, etc. The issue therefore is clearly whether

contraception generally is a "costly luxury."

What a novel concept. If women are to participate equally in society, surely they must have an equal opportunity to both experience their sexuality and parenthood at their discretion. Yet because it is only women who experience pregnancy, treatment of contraception as a "luxury" exposes only women to either the significant cost of contraception (it is a responsibility that is overwhelmingly borne by women) or the suppression of sexuality, unwanted pregnancy etc.

Clearly, therefore, contraception is not a "luxury" to society-at-large. Equally clearly, it is society-at-large that benefits from having women participate as equal partners. The only conclusion that can be drawn is that society-at-large should bear the cost of contraception — all that remains is to determine at what price, and whether the appropriate vehicle is Health and Accident Insurance plans.

Rob Hyndman

More facts

To the editor:

This is regarding Aaron Peter's column in the November 7th issue of the Gazette. The subject matter was quite interesting. I was eager to hear the problems of our Constitution. It is important to note that charters may sound good, but are often ineffective in that their principles are not carried out in society.

The problem I had with the commentary is that it criticises without backing up even one comment. I learned nothing from the column and thus my opinion could not be swayed in any way. There were some good points, but they were completely unsubstantiated, making them sound like ravings rather than legitimate commentary. It is easy to just keep saying something bad over and over again.

I won't bother to send any topic ideas, at least not until Mr. Peters shows that he would do them justice and proves that he deserves to have this column each week.

Anonymous

Ribbon Snaked

To the editor:

As I read the sports section of last week's Gazette, it occurred to me to wonder why it is that all Dalhousie sports teams are called the Tigers. I suppose this is because the university colours are black and yellow, and a tiger's coat is (more or less) black and yellow, but beyond this, the tiger really has no special significance for Dalhousie. As a possible alternative to the tiger as Dalhousie mascot, I propose the northern Ribbon snake. Not only is the Ribbon snake black and yellow, it is also native to Nova Scotia, and rather special since it doesn't live in any other maritime province.

The University of California, whose teams used to be called the Sealions, now call themselves the Banana slugs. The Banana slugs looks just like the slugs we are used to seeing under stones except that it is the size of a banana, and the students changed the name of the teams on the grounds that the Banana slugs were more common than the Sealions on their campus. So it can be done. Go Ribbon Snakes.

Kate Jackson

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