

NEWS

Black women's history

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Bernard is concerned there is a perception the black women's community is not active. She attributes this to the lack of black representation in high-profile women's struggles such as the Take Back the Night March, International Women's Day and activities around the Morgentaler abortion clinic. "People can't conclude that

black women aren't deeply concerned about these issues," Bernard said.

Bernard said work done on black women's issues is overshadowed by anti-racism work. "This takes away from black women's efforts. They don't get to work on the issues of concern to them," said Bernard. She sees work on race issues as

very important, but points out that women working within the black community find their concerns pushed down on the agenda.

The historical significance of racism has contributed to the physical isolation of black people, and the isolation of black women from other women.

Race is also a factor in the 'women's movement'. One woman in the audience pointed out the white women's movement is too presumptuous and needs to learn more about its own racism. "We need trust to gain the ability to work together," she said.

Bernard agrees, but points out black women don't always want what white women want. "You have to look at what black women want. We don't necessarily want to become part of a white feminist group. We do want to work in our own community."

Bernard recognizes a duality of oppression and works to end sexism and racism within our society. "You can't separate the black and the woman...the liberation struggle means both. We can't wait for one or the other."

Discriminates

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Members of the audience expressed concern this type of thinking is perpetuating a 'superwoman' myth. Women are

expected to step into a male oriented work structure, without abandoning their duties as mothers and supporters in the home. Soemhow the structure also has to change.

Francis said Dalhousie's hiring and promotion policies are improving, but asks why. "Is Dalhousie changing because of external forces such as employment equity, pay equity and the Federal Contractors Program? What if there were no external forces?" asked Francis.

Chris Bellon, facilitator of the seminar, sees no progress without external pressures to eliminate discrimination. "I think the points Francis raised are important questions to ask. It's interesting that only two members of the political science faculty were present at the seminar."

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