

COLUMN

The dissent of (wo)man

by Sue Pennypacker

York University has a nationwide reputation for innovative and progressive programs for the advancement of minorities. In spite of these programs, there seems to be a strong backlash against students and faculty members who attempt to stand up for their rights.

Most of us have been through classes which examine societal problems such as racism, ageism, classism, sexism and discrimination against religion or culture. Why is it that these "isms" are not being eradicated within the York community?

It is strange that a community which sees itself as liberal and without prejudice commits subtle crimes against minorities.

One of the most pervasive forms of discrimination is sexism or gender discrimination. Stop any York student and ask her/him if she/he feels that women are

inferior to men. My bet is that any student will say that women and men are inherently equal. Still, many people are completely unaware of the various forms of discrimination that are faced by women. They seem to believe that simply stating that women and men are equal (equivalent) means that there is no problem.

We all forget that sexism and sexist attitudes are much more complex than the relatively simple idea of equality. In order to alleviate sexism, the traditional gender roles of both women and men must be changed.

Ask yourself a few simple questions. Is it OK for a woman to work while her husband stays home to take care of the child(-ren)? Is it OK for a man to cry? What about a woman? Why are certain occupations traditionally male while others are traditionally female? Is this simply convention or the way things should be?

We all have to learn that the roles assigned to men and women are arbitrary. We are all human and we share the same emotions and capabilities.

Evidently, this attitude is not shared by everyone in the York community.

The Sexual Harassment Education and Complaint Centre (S.H.E.A.C.C.) reports that women who express feminist views are often harassed. A case in point is the harassment which Carolyn Amendola faced when she complained about the sexist nature of the mock trials held at Osgoode.

Whether or not these views were justified is immaterial. Every student or faculty member at any educational institution must be able to present her/his ideas without worrying about harassment. Disagreement is welcome, as it is part of the learning experience, but harassment is another matter.

This is a concrete indication that women are not accorded the dignity and respect which are prerequisites of equality or equivalency.

Although many people say that they consider women to be inherently equal to men, it is clear, by the actions that this is not the case. Unfortunately, women are often treated like lesser beings.

Discrimination against women is subtle and sophisticated, disguised to look like help; but it does exist. There is still a lot of work to be done.

Question Engine

Q: What do you feel about the building of commercial offices on university property?

by A. Clive Cohen

Michele Lejosius
English
A: I think it's a good idea because it will be beneficial to the university and students.

Lisa Fleming
History
A: As long as it is generating revenue and it doesn't take away from the university's independence I feel it is positive.

Hilit Gozlan
Psychology
A: Preposterous, the more we make it like a mall or market place, the more it will come down to that level.



QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"We're looking for young people to go to war"

Major Serge Quenneville

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