

Giving back the night

On September 26, many women will flood downtown Halifax to participate in "Take Back The Night". This event is an attempt to raise political and social awareness of the fact that it is unsafe for a woman to walk alone after dark. It is also an event where, because of the power associated with a large group of people, women will not need male escorts to feel safe. There will be speeches and rallies kicking off the march.

The mood will be joyous, but will be undercut by tones of realism.

After all, on September 27 a woman will walk alone at night with the same fear, and the same hurried pace, that she had on September 25.

This reality does not take anything away from "Take Back The Night"; it takes away from society in general.

We often praise Canada for being a safe nation and for ranking high on the United Nations' various Standard of Living lists. Honestly, why glorify our country when half of our population feels uncomfortable when the sky turns black? There is obviously a serious flaw in our system if an event like "Take Back The Night" is even needed.

Some people may argue that in Canada women have the same "rights" as men. This may be so, but most people live their lives

according to rational thought, despite what their rights allow them to do. When one considers the fact that sexual assaults, beatings, and kidnappings occur regularly, and couples that with the fact that most women are naturally physically weaker than men, it is not hard to understand why women feel insecure when walking alone at night. In short, it is not a wise course of action to walk alone at night.

The prevailing issue is that many women do have to walk alone at night, and it is unrealistic to ask them to put their lives on hold because our society cannot ensure the collective security of all its citizens.

Something needs to be done. Band-aid solutions are not working. While groups like Tiger Patrol make it safer for women at night, and are greatly appreciated, they are not enough. The true problem — the terrorization of women — still persists.

Our various levels of government should pass laws which first, make it safer for women to walk at night (possibly by increasing police forces and street lighting), and second, impose harsher jail terms for even the "lightest" offenses. And I use "lightest" in the relative sense of the word. It is time to instill fear in

would-be criminals, not women.

Also, men should understand the discomfort they cause a woman every time they throw out a crude pick-up line. According to the Canadian Panel On Violence Against Women (1993), 98 percent of women said that they had experienced some form of sexual violation in their lifetime. If we accept the argument that women are already on guard when walking home at night, suggestive remarks or advances, when combined with a previous disturbing experience, would only serve to heighten anxiety. Together, as a society, we must help to diffuse this anxiety.

If "Take Back The Night" has the purpose of raising awareness of these and other related issues, then it has the potential to be a success.

It is the aim of organizers to encourage women to take a more pro-active approach to providing support for women in their community, but, ironically, it is up to those not involved in the march, especially men, to maximize the level of that success.

The rest of the community has to heed the call of females marching as part of "Take Back The Night," or else they may just march in vain. It is our responsibility to give women the other 364 days.

GREG MCFARLANE

The human face of AIDS

I'm sure that no one would contest the fact that we live in a world wherein often exist much pain and hardship. Many experience trials that perhaps seem too difficult to bear or even simply unjust. It is true our world is far from perfect. Some of these persons experiencing such trials are those afflicted with AIDS, and those affected by relations with AIDS victims. Aside from all facts, statistics, or scientific information regarding the "AIDS epidemic", there are thousands of real people, ones like you and me, who deal daily with the fact that they, or someone close to them, is HIV positive. Real. Not just statistics.

It is unfortunate that these real people are often overlooked under the pile of other issues related to AIDS — whether it's infected blood transfusions, sexual orientation and sexual activity, or even apparent government neglect of such a crucial health issue. These issues, while perhaps important (some more so than others), take away from the fact that many people are experiencing real pain and even alienation over such a disease.

Clearly then, attention needs to be given to those afflicted. This attention needs to be steered away from the issue of how one contracted AIDS, to the issue of

living, as a complete person, with AIDS. September 28 is the metro Halifax AIDS walk; a walk geared towards raising awareness of AIDS issues and showing solidarity among those who are and are not afflicted. As a campus society, Dal Christian Fellowship hopes to be present at this Sunday's walk — not to preach or condemn — but to show love and compassion. It is with regret that I can not personally be present, but as a society, we desire to be there to show love to those that hurt, to show that no person, no matter what their physical condition, can ever lose their personal value.

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Letters

The Letters/Opinions section of the Gazette is meant as a campus forum for all Dalhousie students. The opinions expressed within may not necessarily be those of the Gazette staff or editorial board.

A whiter shade of brain

To the editor,

I would like to agree with Milton Howe's opinion that governments should not impose helmet laws. However, I am still astonished that his article was allowed to go to print. I wonder is Milton Howe the love child of Rush Limbaugh and Ted Kazinsky? His article is more like a ranting than an opinion, and is certainly not a coherent, cogent, or even logical argument. To equate smoking by-laws, Bob Rae and helmet legislation all in one is a leap of reasoning that no one short of a believer could make.

First of all I would like to agree with Mr. Howe on helmet laws, I wholeheartedly endorse the choice not to wear one. Government plays too great a role in protecting those that should not be protected. I believe nature has a way of thinning it's ranks, culling out the ones not really fit to run with the rest of the herd. People who don't wear helmets are charter members of this group. I resent the spending of tax dollars on this sort of thing. I would also like to say that I am opposed to money being spent for signs on bridges that say "No Diving". These by-laws are designed to protect the really moronic from themselves. Do we as a society really want to do this; should we aid in passing on the genes of people who feel compelled to drive their cars on frozen lakes or dive off of railway tresses? And really, if you're thinking about climbing an electrical tower, is a "No Climbing" sign going to stop you?

I am also confused by Mr. Howe's comparison of cycling legislation to smoking by-laws. Although as stated earlier I believe in Mr. Howe's god given right to smear the sidewalk a paler shade of brain, I cannot feel the slightest bit

of sympathy for the poor people who have just lost their right to give other people cancer, or begin to understand the connection. Mr. Howe, please light up, drop dead, whatever, but my lungs are my lungs man, dig?

As for that fascist Mike Harris thing Milton, I think it was that cutting funding to single parents while spending \$40,000 on suits thing that got on peoples asses. Whatever.

Happy Cycling buddy.

BRIAN KELLOW

DSU handbook woes

To the Editor,

This year's free Dalhousie Agenda would be quite impressive if Canada was a nation comprised mainly of white, Anglo-Saxon men. As I flipped through the day timer, there were few inspirational quotes from ethnic minorities, and even less from women. Out of thirty three quotes, two were by women. Furthermore, the quote from Roseanne Barr-Arnold did little to promote women as it implied that all thin women have eating disorders.

Canada is a multi-diverse nation with many intelligent people that are not white males. The cultural plurality of Canada which makes this nation so rich and invaluable was over-looked in the Dal handbook, and in doing so, many Canadians were silenced.

While I am sure that this ignorance is not reflective of the attitudes of the overall student union; it portrays a poor message to the students...a message that ethnic minorities and women are not included in.

VANESSA ZACNY,
CATHERINE CRAIG
Co-Presidents, Dalhousie
Women's Studies Society

Opening doors

As a building guard at this fine institution, the student body has amused me with many acts of infantile behaviour and utmost belligerence. But sometimes it's the little things that people do that get to me. For example, how many times have you seen an able-bodied person push that little button on the side of all of our buildings' doors specifically reserved for the handicapped?

I don't mean simply pushed, either. I've seen these things punched, kicked, kneed, and for what? Is having that device there so irritating that it must be destroyed? Quick, burn out the motor before someone who actually needs it gets the chance to use it!

To drive the point home, let me tell you a story. As I was entering the Park Lane mall on Spring Garden, an elderly woman with one of those walkers on wheels was pushing the handicapped button to open the door. Guess what? It didn't work! Not only that, people were walking by without offering her the door. Before I could finally pay her the courtesy she deserved, the manager stepped out and opened

the door for her, explaining how the motor to the door was broken. Oh gee, wonder why.

While it may seem silly to castigate people for such small details, it bespeaks a higher disregard we have for the handicapped. According to Statistics Canada (all stats as of 1991), almost 1.8 million non-institutionalized people are categorized as having some sort of handicap, almost 12.7% of the total workforce. Over half of these constitute a minor disability (asthma, partial vision, etc.) while less than one sixth are in the severe category (paralysis, crippling disease, etc.). Of the severely disabled, 75% were not in the labour force at that time. It made me wonder who was enforcing these entrenched human rights laws.

We seem to be under the false pretence that the disabled don't want to work. Nobody wants to feel like a burden. Often, the reasons these people give for not being able to work, are that they can't get proper access to transportation, the

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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.

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