

Problems and profits of oppression

I loved the content of the November 17 feature for the "Week of Reflection". However, and unfortunately, I also recognized some problems with turning the Montreal massacre into a symbol for the movement to base itself on.

This particular event is no doubt a product of our oppressive and unjust society. However it tends to distort the issue and its underlying causes when applied to mainstream media. The reason I say this is that the event tends to come across as the result of a crazed sicko acting alone. (Yes, it sounds like the Lee Harvey Oswald theory but it may be no coincidence.) This image prevents men from seeing

ing their complicity in the matter. If there is no connection to the event then one can dismiss its importance. It is no wonder that people start calling "men bashing" when the symbol is used to attack the inequality in society. Men interpret their actions according to the scale that the movement has set. They think that because they haven't killed anyone, they are not perpetrators of the problem.

Some of the responses in last week's "Streeters" column are evidence that this is the case. These people see the incident as something separate from themselves. Four of the six people responded with sug-

gestions that the Montreal shooting was the result of some "weird ass" or "savage monster." They are clearly not aware of the power that is vested in their language and their actions.

Michel Foucault, a post-modern political philosopher, would tell us that the way power is exerted changes over time, and that people manipulate the system and tools of rational to exert power. I think Foucault would agree with me while I suggest that men may be resorting to more politically correct means of oppression. I don't believe it is some plot that is purposely formulated. That is the genius of it. Power can become hidden in a context in which we may not suspect it to be vested.

At one time it may have been in the tools of science, where doctors were able to determine what was "rational." Power was exerted when science told us that women were not totally rational and merely misbegotten males. By limiting women from our definition of rational, males were able to withhold political power. Whether it be within the home, politics or any work environment.

Now, however, I believe the power of oppression exists in the very institutions that are created to prevent it. Take for example, the act of telling a woman not to walk alone at night. Now I'm sure that people

such as Graeme MacDonald (who suggested such in the Nov. 17 issue) have good intentions in suggesting this. That is, of course, what is recognized in society as being good. However, we can't assume that what is accepted as being correct. Hysteria used to be accepted by society. It was a disease which supposedly afflicted women who became discontent with housework. This was able to justify the clitorrectomy to be used as a cure. People generally accept walk-home services, but doesn't it seem that men are still exerting power? It is merely occurring in a different way.

Inequality is still being promoted by walk-home programs. Clitorrectomies are no longer being performed in Canada however, men can now walk around and openly see what appears to be fear instilled into those women who feel it necessary to take such a service. Heck, even if they don't feel it necessary they have some guy imposing his solution on them.

Now, I wonder, how the problem is going to disappear when there is a progressing institution developed on the basis of it still existing. By this I mean that Tiger patrol, and I'm sure any walk-home services, evaluate their success upon how many people use the service. The following years' budget is also determined upon that

form of evaluation. Wouldn't it make more sense if in this case success was determined by the diminishing number of users? I gather there is someone who studied and wrote of the economic value of abuse against women. What she was telling us is that if it goes away now then many people will even be out of work. It seems as long as people still benefit from inequality it will remain present. What I believe we should be doing in the "Week of Reflection" is trying to understand the tacit assumptions beneath our words and how they relate to the oppression of others.

What I think is missing in the "Week of Reflection" movement is that people don't make the connection between the psycho-killer and everyday life. What people don't understand is that the values which Marc Lepine represents are not counter-cultural. It is the same base of values which caused him to act that once made western medicine capable of performing such things as clitorrectomies (and only to cure women who wanted a man's job). If the source of Marc Lepine's violence continually appears to be something disassociated from all men, not just the sickos, I fear that a more subtle, harder to isolate form of oppression will be taking hold.

Toby Moorsom

BLACKS ON BLACK

There is no Blacks on Black column this week.

For your information, the Black History Month Supplement will appear in the Gazette on Thursday, February 2, 1994. Submission deadline for stories, articles, photographs, artwork, poetry, etc. is Monday, January 23, 1994. If you would like to help out or find out more information, please call 494-2507.

Ask Joe & Jo

Hello again! We are sad to say that the second part of our look at security will have to be postponed until next issue as we are still awaiting answers to some important questions.

Since the weather is so blech, exams are almost here, and papers are in mountainous waves, we thought we'd do our review of some of the ugliest buildings on campus. Should the architects be reading... stay away from our houses!

1) The Dalhousie Arts Centre: Thankfully, the beautiful sights and sounds that come from inside the Arts Centre have no connection with the exterior of the artsy part o' campus. Concrete melding into concrete, slabs of rock from every direction... It could be said that the stone carving in front of the Arts Centre of an eskimo carrying ice (yeah, whatever) gives it that "je ne sais pas" — but WE certainly didn't think so. The only nice thing that Jo & Joe could think to say about the Arts Centre was that it's wheelchair accessible.

2) The Kilam Library: Anybody ever notice that the middle of our library is gone? As someone noted to one of us, we've got the doughnut library, and some other little university (St. Mary's?) must have the library-bit. We can't speak for everyone, but the idea of a building with windows only facing the other side of the library is very scary. With your body pressed up to the second floor windows, begging for air and light, all you can see is some dumb schmuck on the other side doing the same.

3) Now the winner — the ugliest building of the Dalhousie campus in the eyes of Jo & Joe... the Life Sciences Centre. As students here, we can proudly show it off to any out-of-town guests as "our unfinished basement," our "concrete prison," or our favourite, "the bowels of Dalhousie."

If you can think of an uglier building (send photo!) or have any questions, remember: nothing is too rude, crude or stupid. Just ask Jo & Joe.

The root of violence

How is that three to eight years of education end in violence? The belief that sexual inequality is biologically determined is held by many potential graduates, graduates and post-graduates, and is one root source of the harm inflicted upon women each minute of the day across the world.

How can this belief be considered violent you ask? Reducing women to their sexual and reproductive functions makes them inferior. Their status, order and space in society are reduced because they are isolated from other areas of human activity. Furthermore, myths and stereotypes promote this form of discrimination. This produces negative behaviours. Maybe not yours and mine, but some-

body's.

When women are believed to be inferior (and not equal), they are considered less important, less intelligent, less able. This is translated into subordinate status which includes among others, poverty, lower pay and violence. You may not believe that what you think, what you say, has a direct bearing upon the status of women as a whole, but it does. Beliefs and attitudes are the most common way to perpetuate and promote certain behaviours over others. The idea that women are 'better nurturers' or have less aptitude at mathematics are two common values that have disturbing consequences.

While research is privately con-

ducted in biology, ecology and psychology to forward claims to the contrary, one universal message is clear: biology may lead to predisposition, but not predestination. Whatever we find unique to one species, one sex, will not ultimately determine order, position, status and value. We define value, and if we don't watch ourselves we are prone to hurt those that we care for the most.

The process of this conditioning can, however, be subverted and deconstructed. A brave new approach is necessary. And if you are not helping to solve the problem, you are part of the problem. Please stop the violence.

Marc Cassivi

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this is that select males, or groups thereof, are desperate to hold on to the present power structure and fear that they will be forced to share it with equally qualified women and minorities. People such as Warren Farrell seek to undermine legitimate concerns of women and men by manipulating numbers to fit their agenda.

Men, with the exception of those who perpetrate violence and oppression, are not personally responsible for the oppression of women and minorities. However, since men are in the group which holds power, they do share the responsibility for eliminating violence and oppression. Similarly, as a white woman, I must assume some responsibility for eliminating racism.

Wylie wonders why women are "unfairly" singled out as victims of violence; perhaps women and men are not equal after all. In terms of physical strength, women are not equal to men and violence is used by men to demonstrate this fact. Violence is about power. Statistics Canada reports that women with more education, thus not fitting

traditional roles, are more like to be victims of violence than women with less education, while the reverse is true for men. I agree that violence against everyone must be stopped but one cannot ignore the fact that violence is largely perpetrated by men — on other men and on women.

I would like to conclude by asking what "scare-tactics" are being used to further women's "situations"? Perhaps he believes that legal sanctions against rape is a scare tactic or a woman leaving an abusive partner is a scare tactic or...

Diane Gillies

Tigers bite back

To the editor,

In response to the article concerning the Tiger Patrol van, it was unfortunate that you may have experienced any inconveniences during the first few days of operation. We would like to say that it is just the beginning of a new service, and flaws are inevitable.

We would also like to assure you that the bus has always been on schedule.

Although we do appreciate feedback, like anyone providing a service would, we feel that a great deal of our recognition on campus has been negative. We fully agree with complaints being voiced; however, we feel a more thorough examination of our services should be conducted before such complaints are made. Honest mistakes happen, and a properly researched article may have uncovered that these incidents described were just that. The problem was not with the van, but with a misinterpretation of the schedule that could happen to anyone.

You also expressed concern about the use of the van. We would like to say that the van is off to a great start, with the number of passengers per night sometimes being in the forties. We were very fortunate to have received the sponsorship that we did for the van. Since it wasn't certain what the response would be like, we are glad that the ridership is so high. As for boosting security on campus, new student guards have been placed in most building on campus and we have a new van in addition to Tiger Patrol foot patrol, in the span of one year. Last

year, additional Tiger Patrol was hired for escorts to Fenwick Place. In only four years of operation, student security has grown from a small volunteer operation through Shirreff Hall to what it is today.

Colleen Blake
Ben Waymark
(Tiger Patrol Members)

Knee-jerk reactions

To the editor,

So I am continually impressed by the emotional, knee-jerk narrow-mindedness so prevalent on this campus. Both Jodi Gallagher and Eugenia Bayada decided to put their p.c. blinders on and read into my letter criticizing the use of a U.S. soldier's gravestone for the Remembrance Day cover. Both accuse me of saying something that I not only did not say but, as well, attack me on grounds that only further my point on how we might be disregarding the importance of Remembrance Day.

My point was not, as both writers carelessly say, to remember only Cana-

dians on Nov. 11. (To do so would indeed be "ridiculous" and "patriotic drivel" verging on fascism.) Rather my point was this (and read carefully now):

By recognizing how close to home the costs of war have claimed Canadians, and how we, as their fortunate beneficiaries, can live in this country free from the ravages of war (unlike a good percentage of other places on this planet) then we, as ordinary citizens, of all persuasions, may more poignantly "remember... the ultimate price of war, for all nations, for all people." And yes, this means remembering, in turn, all victims of all wars, both past and present, and both soldiers and non-combatants, from Germans to Americans, to Japanese to Maltese, etc. (Attacking this as contradictory misses the point entirely.) Ultimately, our empathy might allow us to make a difference in the future.

While one obviously need not have to reflect first on Canadians on Nov. 11, this is Canada, and for a newspaper to use a U.S. soldier's gravestone shows journalistic sloppiness because Remembrance Day is not [the US] Memorial day and "Let us Forget" really should mean something.

Angel Figueroa