

# LETTERS

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## Women-only best choice

Dear editor,

I would like to respond to the Oct. 25 letter by Mr. Bruce Gilchrist, who criticized the Take Back the Night March for being sex discriminatory in its exclusion of men from the march. I disagree very much with the perspective that he has taken on this issue.

The purpose of the Take Back the Night March is quite clear to see; it is an opportunity for women to unite and find courage together, in places where they commonly cannot go alone at night because of the sickening threat of sexual assault.

It is true that Mr. Gilchrist and other men were, as he says, "never asked to join" the march. In fact, posters and pamphlets very intentionally invited only women and children. However, I would caution Mr. Gilchrist's use of words when he claims that he was not allowed "free choice" in making the decision of whether or not to join the march.

The words "free choice" here indicate that ideally, a person

would have many equally valid options to select from, and that s/he would be able to freely decide among these options without outside coercion. This does not happen with violence against women. For women there is no "free choice" afforded on the issue of sexual assault and rape. A woman cannot freely choose to live safely and without threat in this city or anywhere else. That is precisely why the Take Back the Night March is a women's march. It is a women's issue. It is women's fear that is being released.

Fortunately for Mr. Gilchrist (and yet very sadly for 51 percent of the world's population), the issue of violence against women does not directly affect him. His friend, Ms. Beckwith's quote ("Get real! Since when did we ever have the night anyway?") exposes a sad irony that women indeed have never had the night, and many continue to fear for their own safety.

I find another section of Mr. Gilchrist's letter very frustrating to read. When he refers to Dal staff member Mr. Joe Morrison being asked to leave the women's only event in the Green Room, he writes, "Sounds like a bit of sex discrimination to me, eh fellow men?" This attempt to draw solidarity from "fellow" men is very

inappropriate, especially in light of the issue at stake. I am bothered that he uses this issue as a forum in which to create a battle between men and women.

Mr. Gilchrist obviously is enough in tune with the issue to know that very serious injury, both mental and physical, is done to women at the hands of men every day. I think that Mr. Gilchrist's only "choice" in this matter is to support women in their decision to march freely together. Without men.

Ian Digby

## Infanticide?

Dear editor,

The deaths at the Temple Mount gave Paul Webster (Gazette, Nov. 1) an opportunity to equalize Iraq and Israel ("the very same crime") and, more subtly, Iraq and the United States (the invasion of Kuwait was a "murderous display of violence not seen... since the U.S. invasion of Panama").

I do not intend to dispute the "widely-known" facts proving the comparisons nor comparisons themselves. I understand that one child wounded in front of a T.V.-camera in Jerusalem or in Panama is worth more than a thousand of poisoned Kurds or scores of killed Kuwaitis, in places where journalists do not dare to go.

All I resent is only the play on my emotions by picturing the Palestinian intifada as the brutal soldiers versus the innocent children.

If safety was the most important issue for the Palestinian children, they should stay at home. If they did not stay, I may find two explanations only.

The first one is that they make a conscious decision to go and fight for their beliefs. We should respect their mature choice and should refer to them not as children, but as freedom fighters or warriors. But if you are a warrior, shouldn't you accept the possibility of being hurt?

The second explanation is that the Palestinian children are actually too young to make a mature decision. I would imply that the people who exercise an ascendancy over the children, manipulate them, and, by sending them on the streets, deliberately risk their life and health to achieve their political goals. And I do not think the Israeli politicians or soldiers have that kind of ascendancy over the Palestinian children...

If this explanation were correct I would pity the children, but my moral repulsion not necessarily would be directed toward the Israeli soldiers...

Therefore, dear Paul, do not expect me to pity the children and to support the Palestinian cause at the same time. One or the other - you cannot have both.

P. Trela

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