

African identity, fact or fiction?

There are many people both black and white who believe that it is time for us to stop blaming colonialism, racism, and slavery for our problems. Blame does little to help our cause. It only makes us angrier while our people starve, receive substandard education and continue to fill up the jails.

EDITORIAL

It would seem that those who hold these views are right. The Jews suffered tremendously at the hands of the Germans and they have managed to prosper wherever they are. The Japanese are now a powerful economic empire. They have progressed and risen from the ashes of Nagasaki and Hiroshima. Why haven't black peoples moved on?

There is only one answer to this question. Black peoples lack unity! The reason we lack unity is because we have no identity. Before we can "move on" and go anywhere we must know first who we are.

We the people of the African Diaspora are a peculiar creation. The historical experiences of slavery, colonialism, and racism have served to dehumanize us to the point where we believe we have no history and no homeland.

One cannot expect a group of people who do not know about their past to be able to view the future with anything but fear. To move forward, one must know where one is.

This question of identity is serious. Before we even criticize the white community let us look at ourselves. The European slave trade could not have been half as successful as it was had it not been for African merchants and kings who helped to provide supplies of slaves. The Europeans used strategies of divide and rule. African kings were given firearms and other weapons so they could raid neighbouring areas. In return

for weapons these kings brought the captives from the battle and sold them for more weapons. This action helped them to extend their kingdoms, and provided the Europeans with slaves.

How could these African kings and merchants sell their own people for weapons and goods? The fact is that the Africans never

saw themselves as linked or connected. People from neighbouring groups were seen as outsiders.

If one looks at the Black community here at Dalhousie one can see clearly the divisions among the Africans, the Black Nova Scotians and those from the Caribbean.

There is no feeling of peoplehood, no sense of belonging. We don't see our struggles as linked.

There are those that see the identity crisis in the black community must be addressed and I am one of those persons. Before we can start talking about political, social and economic liberation we have to know who we are.

The first thing that has to go is the label "Black". It is a useless term and one that we never gave to ourselves. By continuing to use it we are saying that in relation to the white norm (which is the yardstick by which all other things are measured) we are a deviation.

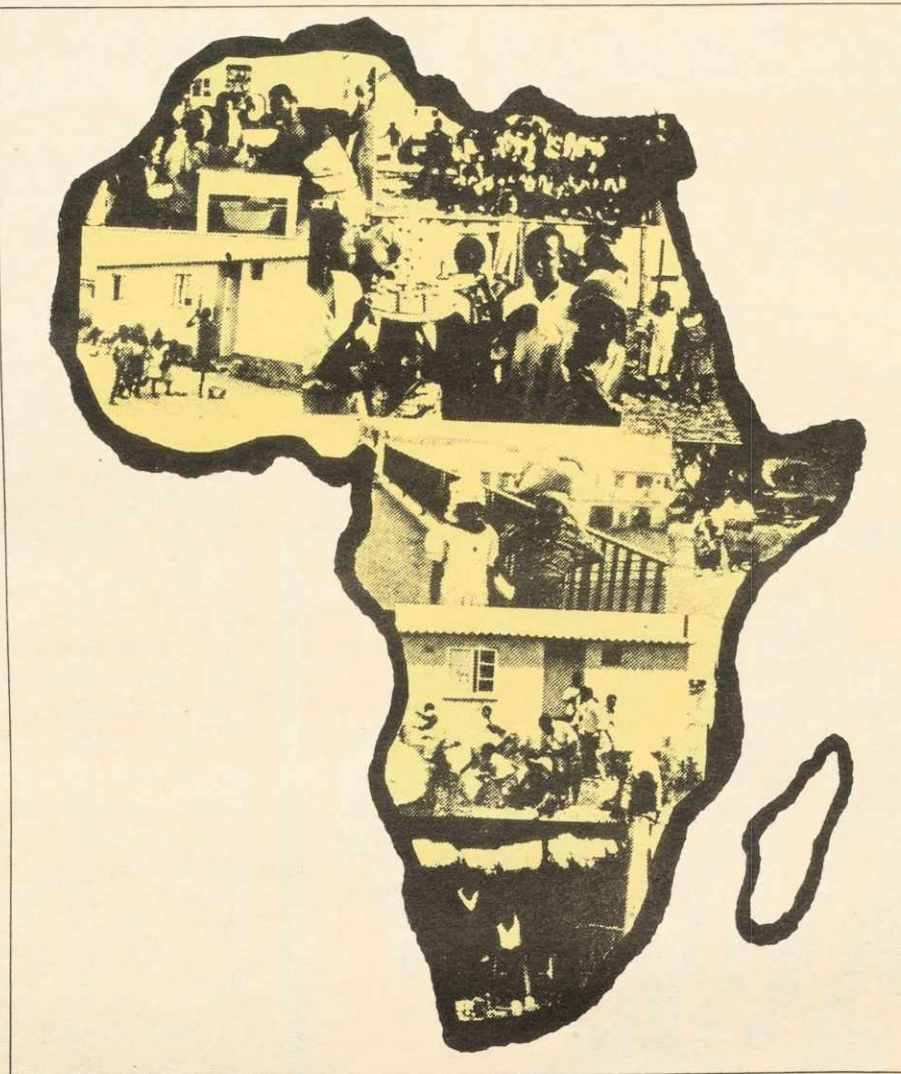
There is no land called "Blackland". The term does not locate us to a past and it is useless in charting our future. We are Africans in diaspora. We are the sons and daughters of Africa whether we live in North America, the Caribbean or Europe.

This provides us with the a sense of identification, belonging and connectedness. An injustice to a person of African descent anywhere in the world is our injustice. We cannot deal with the white community until we start respecting and acknowledging our own.

We cannot even think about linking hands and forming coalitions with other oppressed peoples until we can look at our own brothers and sisters within our own African extended family. When we learn how to relate to each other, we can then extend ourselves and see the similarities inherent in the experiences of others.

At this time we are too disunited amongst ourselves. Until we can reach out to each other as AFRICANS we will spend our days pursuing a fleeting dream. The slavery we are involved in at this time is not physical; it is MENTAL.

John Burchall



Sexism increasing

by D. Power

A recent incident in one of my Sociology classes brought to my attention a disturbing fact: many people believe that we live in a perfectly egalitarian society. The incident was the in-class viewing of the film about sexism in advertising, *Still Killing Us Softly*, or rather the feelings it brought out in the ensuing discussion. Three women approximately in their twenties expressed their feelings that although violence and sexism in advertising was not a good thing, it did not represent a real problem concerning gender relations, and was not that detrimental.

I must admit that until this point I had never considered myself "one of them women's libbers", and generally I am not an activist-type. However, although not wanting to come across as a self-righteous, self-proclaimed crusader for women's rights, I must state that this attitude both incensed and disheartened me.

It is my belief that this reaction represents the general attitude of

my generation (those in their twenties), which is that the struggle for the freedom of women is over, and we are just mopping up the remains of sexism that may be still present in traditional institutions and bureaucracy. "The problem is just a few old cronies who, if given some time, will realize the error of their ways."

Whether I am a revolutionary-to-be (step aside Che Guevara), or just a student on a moral-binge, I see the young generation of which I am part, as being frustratingly apathetic and morally lazy. Whether we believe our slug-like characteristics are to be blamed on our upbringing or our society, it all comes back to our own initiative. Those of the young generation, my generation, are supposed to be movers and shakers, the ones who want to change the system. Sadly it appears that we are not.

We, as a society, believe that we have achieved equality, proclaimed in the cigarette ad, "you've come a long way baby". If there is any more blatant bullshit that has been propagated by the govern-

ment, institutions, and media of North America, I have yet to find it.

The band-aid solutions to the huge wound of sexism are not working. Affirmative Action and other such tokenistic initiatives, supposedly designed to equalize the sexes and the races, is both ineffective and harmful, serving only to cloud the issue. The general public is led to believe that just because X per cent of the people hired by the government are women, that there is equality. True equality does not come from a quota.

Although I may have transcended societal criticism, entering the realm of pulpit-pounding rhetoric, I truly feel that sexism has now become even more dangerous than it was in its previous incarnations. It has changed from being a painfully obvious yet easily identifiable sentiment, into an insidious lethal force moving quietly through our society. The greatest danger that we as a society face is that we might not notice this monster at all.

