

EDITORIAL

Week of rejection?

That's what one letter to the *Gazette* asked this week. A number of men on campus seemed to think that last week was all about blame, and making them feel bad. I can't speak for everyone involved, but those I have talked to assured me it was about awareness.

Painting "rape zone" on a sidewalk is not a new idea, just new to Dal, and contrary to popular belief it doesn't mean that someone has been raped there, or that someone will be raped there. It just means that someone could be raped there, because it is a poorly-lit, somewhat secluded area. And the message is aimed at men and women both.

For women the benefits of such a message are obvious: if you stay away from that type of place late at night, you're a little less likely to get raped. For men the message seems to be a little harder to grasp.

To me, looking at the words rape zone is like a blast of reality. Yes it's true that not all men are rapists, but I think I can say with a certain amount of confidence that most rapists are men.

This doesn't mean that I should feel guilty, or that men in general should feel guilty. I would hope though that most of us feel sorry. Just because you have never raped anyone doesn't mean you're completely separated from the crime.

Rape is a recurrent problem in our society. Society is the collective term for all of our actions and attitudes. If the problem is going to change it is we, the members of society that are going to have to change it.

When a judge can say something like "Rules are like women — they're made to be violated" and still keep his job, there is something wrong with our justice system. Everyone knows that a rape victim goes on trial as much as the accused, but it still hasn't changed.

So when I walked around campus last week and saw "rape zone" written on the ground, I stopped each time to look around, to see if I agreed that it was a likely place for a rape. Each time I did that I realised that, if I were a woman, I wouldn't want to be there alone at night. Each time, rape was more than just a word.

So, if you haven't done anything, nobody is trying to blame you. If you continue to do nothing, now that you are more aware of the problem, that's a guilt that you'll have to live with. Last week was not about blame, it was about pointing out a colossal problem, and asking for help in solving it. Anyone can help.

Jerry West

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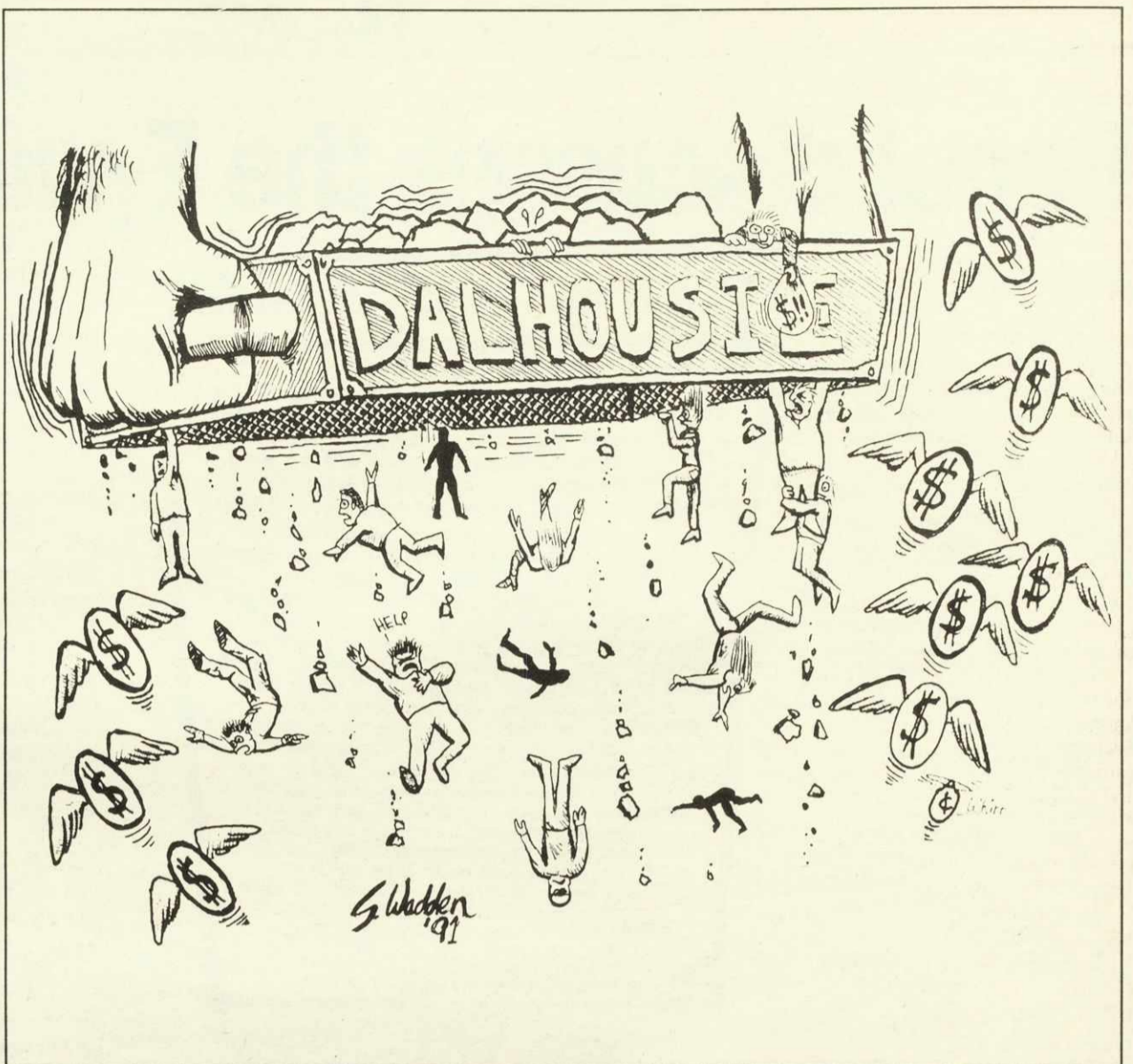
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LETTERS

The *Dalhousie Gazette* welcomes letters to the editor. Letters should not exceed 300 words in length and should be typed and double-spaced. The deadline for letters is Friday noon before publication. Letters may be submitted on Mac or IBM-compatible 3.5" disk.

On tampons and condoms

To the editor:

I feel I speak for myself and most women, when I express my disgust about the lack of feminine hygiene products available in the women's washrooms on campus. The options available for female students to obtain these products is very limited. The Tiger Trap, which sells their tampons and pads at a phenomenal price, is the only place on campus for females to go. Capitol, O'Brians, and Shoppers Drug Mart also sell these products, but with a very high mark-up. Besides, these are not good options when you need only ONE tampon. Moreover, I was absolutely infuriated to see a functional condom machine in the Women's washroom at the SUB. How useful are these machines to we women, when more women on campus menstruate than have sex. This condom machine in OUR washroom furthers the myth that birth control should be the responsibility of women, (Surprise! Women don't wear condoms, but we do wear tampons). Come on Dalhousie get your

act together! Every woman at the University should be able to obtain feminine hygiene products on the campus, and not have to hike around Halifax!

Hermie Abraham

To all the feminists I have met

To the editor:

I am writing this letter in apology. "But you shouldn't have to apologize," I think to myself, "You're a woman. You do too much of that already." But I am writing to other women so maybe this time my apology won't fall on deaf ears.

I am sorry that until recently, I didn't know about or understand or believe in the injustices associated with being a woman. I'm sorry that until now I made no connection between: the uninvited comments I receive from strangers about my body; laughing at sexist jokes; my extreme politeness; and prefacing my ideas with "This might sound stupid, but..." or "I'm not sure, but..." or "It's only my opinion, but..." On second thought, this letter

isn't really an apology but a defense.

Have patience with me, women who I admire and respect. Enlightenment has caused you pain as you live your life all too aware of woman's role in society. I also recognize your frustration with other women; every day you are fighting for us, whether it be by not tolerating sexism in your daily lives or by actively rebelling against a system that is structured to keep us subordinate to man. But have patience with me.

I am just beginning to understand and share your pain, frustration and anger. Don't be angry with me for having lived thus far, oblivious to a reality which is obvious to you. It wasn't a conscious decision, I don't think.

It takes time to unlearn my woman's talk and my woman's ways, and it isn't easy to unlearn something that is a part of my personality. It is unsettling to catch myself saying or doing things which, for philosophical reasons, I stand against.

I respect and support you but I am not ready to jump with both feet into our revolution; not yet. I will do eve-

rything that I can to help but I need time to explore my new beliefs towards being a woman. I am not willing to be a leader until I am confident that I can also be a role model. Don't be frustrated or disheartened by my views. Just recognize that at this point in my life, we see things differently and give me time and space to grow.

We can still hold hands and work towards the ideals that we both believe in.

Joanne Fry

The reflections are not over

To the editor:

On behalf of the Dalhousie Women's Group, I would like to thank all those persons who participated in the second annual Week of Reflection. Not only did you come and listen but you shared yourselves, giving us and others the opportunity to learn from your own experiences.

The Week was intended to raise awareness about violence against women, but also the awareness that women, as we are, are beautiful people. We

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The *Dalhousie Gazette* is Canada's oldest college newspaper. Published weekly through the Dalhousie Student Union, which also comprises its membership, *The Gazette* has a circulation of 10,000. As a founding member of Canadian University Press, *The Gazette* adheres to the CUP Statement of Principles and reserves the right to refuse any material submitted of a racist, sexist, homophobic or libelous nature. Deadline for commentary, letters to the editor, and

announcements is noon on Friday before publication (Thursday of each week). Submissions may be left at the SUB Enquiry Desk c/o *The Gazette*. • Commentaries should not exceed 500 words. Letters should not exceed 300 words. No unsigned material will be accepted, but anonymity may be granted upon request. • Advertising copy deadline is noon Monday

before publication. • *The Gazette* offices are located on the third floor of the SUB. Come up and have a coffee and tell us what's going on. • The views expressed in *The Gazette* are not necessarily those of the Students' Union, the editors or the collective staff. •