

# In the name of the Father

Religion, organised religion, is a double-edged sword — a sword that can both preserve life and dispense death and destruction. Institutionalized religion is considered by many to be the foundation of western society, a foundation that has created

great leaders and given life to many, but on further examination we must ask if that foundation is not built upon the bodies of the dead. The "church," as organised religion is often called, has lifted many up and at the same time, by the same hand, has

trampled many under.

Religions have been the keepers of knowledge. Monastics are famed for the preservation of knowledge through the ages. Our modern education system was created by the schools of religious

groups: Christian schools, Islamic schools, Jewish schools. The barriers are fading yet at one time, not so long ago, people of one faith could not go to the school of another. This was even carried to the extremes of divisions of a religion; e.g., Catholics and Protestants.

Faith, as mentioned above, has caused as many problems in the world as it has done good. While faith gives some direction and aid in their times of need, it gives others fuel and reason for anger and hatred. How many have supported prejudice and racism by claiming it is part of their religious faith? Many religious groups and institutions promote xenophobia by claiming all others are outsiders who are not part of their faith.

Christians don't like Jews, Jews don't like Muslims, Muslims don't like Christians, Christians don't like Muslims, etc.... All of these statements have been professed and believed by religious groups, either openly or silently, at one time or another.

What of the other groups who may be part of a faith yet it does not accept

them? Homosexuals, for example: None of the above, mentioned religions accept homosexuality. I wonder how it feels to be oppressed by the thing that is supposed to support you.

Jihad, Holy war, religious prejudice at its most extreme: Killing others for their beliefs. As a child I was always told that religion saved lives and gave people meaning in their lives. How could I accept that when, as an adult, I realized that people killed others in the name of God. Whether it was the God I was told to believe in or another, they are still killing in some God's name. What kind of meaning is that supposed to give my life? It is not right to have to seek solace in the fact that religions also save lives, help the poor, educate and "do good things."

Religion is a tool: something to lift one up, a crutch to lean upon, a step, a club, a fence of protection, a cage of imprisonment. Religion is a tool that has the power to both give and take life and it is the adherents of a faith that decide how to wield it.

Kirk MacLeod

## BLACKS ON BLACK

### Halifax through "coloured" eyes

Last summer I was involved in a market research project which examined reasons why people chose to come to Dalhousie to get their Master of Business Administration (MBA). I couldn't fill out a questionnaire myself, but it's probably just as well as I would have skewed the data. Unlike other respondents, an important reason for me to come here was to see and meet Nova Scotia's Black community. Of course, I also shared the conventional reasons too: school reputation, program quality, etc. But I basically chose to decline acceptance at a good Toronto university so that I could see first-hand what African-Canadian life is like. Seeing Halifax through "coloured" eyes, as it were.

And my impressions of Halifax and its Black community? Well, firstly I have to state that being a student makes me somewhat removed from the real world; most of my observations are based on campus activities. Nevertheless, what struck me initially was the warmth that I have received from other Blacks. Wherever I walk, I am greeted by a smile or an acknowledging nod—something that I rarely recall receiving in Toronto.

Something else that struck me is the socializing of Black students. Again, I don't recall ever seeing Blacks of diverse cultures partying it up together. Here, I see African and Caribbean student intermingling with the Nova Scotian crowd. And yes, there are differences, but somehow they don't seem so acute here. In fact, I was surprised to meet a number of people, both my age or a generation older, that have one parent from Africa or the Caribbean.

I especially love the people I have met who have shared something of their history with me. At my friend's house I am still awed by the old black and white photos of the family relatives. It is a physical reminder of the enduring Black presence in Nova Scotia, the province with the largest indigenous Black population in Canada. Given the fact that I am only second generation Canadian from my father's side (he's one those "island people") the Black historical roots have taken on a personal meaning, too.

There are also "first" for me here. For instance, I had never seen such unusual clientele at a bar until I went to JJ Rossy's. Preppies, freaks, university students and funky-looking Blacks all under one roof. Definitely an eye opener! Another first is my watching a basketball game. With fervour that I have not seen in Toronto, basketball seems to have been embraced as the national sport of this province! So there I was at St. Pat's, watching the teenage girl that I tutor and the rest of her team weaving up and down the court. We won, by the way.

However, I would also be a hypocrite if I didn't mention the things that sadden and at times anger me about Halifax. Many people (read: White) have been great, but others should seriously work on improving their attitude. Unfortunately, this fact is by no means unique to Halifax. Yet I still fear working here—I sense that the glass ceiling is a couple of floors lower than in Toronto, for example, and I don't really want to martyr myself to get a job where I must work twice as hard to get half as far. Having talked to some educated Black people that have gone before me, I realize that this is still a reality.

I am tremendously impressed by their determination, but also angered by the unfairness of it all. However, I still have it relatively easy: too many Black men I talk to face ignorance on a frequent basis. Funny how dark skin can set a White person off in a tizzy...

I am especially annoyed by the fact that although Blacks have been here for a long time, so many opportunities have been denied to them. You can change the law overnight, but you can't change people's mind set—Black or White. The few programs that do exist for Blacks are either very young (the Black Business Centre has been in operation for less than a year) or they are continuously threatened with closure, such as the Indigenous Black and Mi'maq Programme at the Law School. However, I am also saddened because some Blacks don't seem to fully appreciate the programs that do exist, such as Transition Year Programme. Yet, it also makes me wonder why the business school doesn't actively encourage more visible minorities to enter the program. It is business that gives us economic freedom and allows us to do the hiring instead of relying on someone else to be hired.

That's why when the Dal Alumni association comes looking for my donation, I will have to decline. I have already decided that when I get a job, I am going to set up a scholarship fund for a Black student to study business. There are already too few of us there as it is. And this, in my own small way, is how I can give back to a community that has been very good to me.

Sheri Allain

## Dalhousie Women's Centre



6143 South St.

(between Seymour & Le Marchant)

Halifax, NS B3H 1T4

(902) 494-2432

## International Women's Day Variety Show

Wednesday, March 8

Tickets are available at the S.U.B. Enquiry Desk.

\$4 /waged

\$2 /unwaged (i.e. students)

Doors open at 7:30 pm

Show starts at 8:00 pm

Dal Women's Centre

## Volunteer Meeting

Thursday, March 2, 5:30 pm at the Centre

Just a little note...

Saturday, March 4

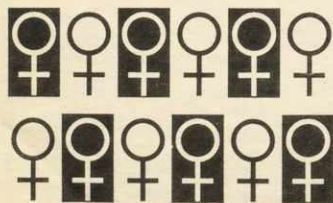
WOMEN'S DANCE

8 pm at "The Church"

\$5 /waged

\$3 /unwaged (students)

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