

Grumblings from beyond the gap

Walking home from the movies the other night with a bunch of students, feeling slightly stranded since Dracula had been sold out, someone came up with the idea of listing the cultural mandate of our generation. Generation X.

What generation is this? It's hard to figure out. It's an age when coke is it, when it's just fantastic, when it's just so easy, when goodyear takes you home. Chanel, Rolex, Gap, Kleenex, Band-Aids. New York, Paris, Toronto, Montreal.

Twentysomethings share an impossible group awareness of pop culture. Entire episodes of Fantasy Island, M*A*S*H*, and G-Force are part of our cultural database, catalogued beside Popomatic Trouble, Operation, and Sorry! We can't list the last ten Prime Ministers in any order, but we can list every actor who ever played James Bond.

Television is the primary media link that drew us all together, uniting the individual huts in our global village. Twentysomethings from Toronto can "Do you remember Vision On?" with Halifax natives, Vancouverites can discuss Definition with Montrealers. Douglas Coupland wrote two books about us, about our hip disillusionment, our status as world-weary misfits in limbo and our critically terminal urban maturity. A sense of individuality and belonging is hard to come by in a mall full of chain stores.

So we walk the razor's edge between our double lives, taking buses and reading good books and growing more and more sophisticated until buses feel shameful and books are avoided because they show things as they should be.

A painful urbanity of smokeless coffee houses and overblown record collections develops. A few favourite things are used until they lose their magic. Everything is disposable; it's cheaper, easier and more casual to buy a new one than it is to fix the old one.

Universities become barometers of coolness. The aura is crucial (in MacLean's recent "Measure of Excellence" survey, the category of Reputation was actually given substantial weight). Time is used as a bargaining chip, bartered for experience. Four years are donated in exchange for memories, then you have to go out and start making your own. Presumably valid prospective memories can be found in Nepal or Guatemala, or planting trees.

Then it's back to school or starting the climb up the job ladder, constantly in a holding pattern over real life.

...Whew!

I went to Whitehorse (no, not Yellowknife) this summer and got a job, a place to live. Made a few contacts. I could go back there this summer. Have my job back. Save some money. I went white-water rafting for my birthday in Whitehorse. Pretty tame, really: lots of guides, lots of pre-paid thrills. Kind of cheesy, groups of bank tellers and bus drivers going for a shot of week-end wildness.

I absolutely loved it.

I guess I'll go to Mexico this summer.

Jennifer Beck

Erratum:

Last week's cover photo was taken by Angel Figueroa

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CONTRIBUTORS

ANGEL FIGUEROA
IAN DIGBY
RYAN STANLEY
ADAM NEWMAN
MIKE GUSHUE
GLEN THE PIZZA GUY
MICHAEL GRAHAM

WOMEN'S LIASONS

JUDY REID
MARY JANE HAMILTON

PHOTO LIASON

BRIAN BUCHANAN

TECHNICAL ADVISOR

SHANNON MACAULAY

DISTRIBUTION MANAGER

LESLIE FURLONG

PRODUCTION MANAGER

MIKE ZELLE

EDITORS

JENNIFER BECK
MIRIAM KORN

NEWS EDITORS

CHANTAL SAXE
MARIE MACPHERSON

ARTS EDITORS

GEOFF INESON
BRUCE GILCHRIST

CUP EDITORS

PETER ANGIONE
LESLIE POIRIER

CALENDAR EDITOR

STEVE MILLS

TYPESSETTER

TAMMY ROGERS

AD/BUSINESS MANAGER

CONNIE CLARKE
494-6532 PHONE
494-1280 FAX

STUDENT UNION BUILDING, DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY
6136 UNIVERSITY AVE., HALIFAX, N.S., B3H 4J2

editorial

Regaining ourselves

Homophobia. We have all heard the word and tacitly understand its definition. But are we really aware of the role and impact it has on our lives? It permeates every part of our being and pervades every aspect of our lives. It has become ever-present on campus with remarks made by Reuben Cohen and Howard Clark. It has become even more apparent with the lack of action taken against Cohen and Clark. It is evident in the lack of power and self-esteem that many queer people have.

Queers have unfortunately become just as homophobic as any other group. We are not free of its hold. Most gay men, from what I observe, are extremely homophobic. They are afraid of the implications of coming out of the closet. They are afraid of the implications of going from an invisible minority to a strong fighting force. They have in fact become part of the ever-growing problem. We have become part of our own oppression. We have been made to believe that we are only significant if we conform to certain norms. It is not that we are necessarily responsible but that we are subject to the same social pressures as the rest of society. We are affected by our surroundings, environment and social setting. We cannot deny the effect that this has on our personhood.

This has affected me in very unusual ways. I hated men, all men, until very recently. I could not see any redeeming characteristics in men, regardless of sexual orientation. I had in fact become absolutely homophobic. Men represented all the evil I was fighting against. I did not even realize the basis for this hatred.

Many people who make homophobic remarks do so as they are not secure in their own sexuality. I think that it is fair to assume that they have

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probably had thoughts of having a same-sex partner. This presents them with a difficult situation. They have had thoughts which are contrary to the way in which they are expected to conduct themselves. As a result, they try to assert their membership in the category of heterosexual by verbally degrading and vilifying queers. They think that if they do so others will see them as part of this mythical norm. This white, thin, male, heterosexual, christian, economically

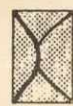
stable norm. This norm is the biggest fallacy which exists in our society. How many people actually fit into this norm? How many people actually want to fit into these categories? How and why does this norm perpetuate itself? How can we overcome it?

Very few people actually fit this norm. That is the nature of this oppressive force. To keep people striving to achieve this unnatural norm but always keeping it beyond reach. Those who are in power and meet the criteria to gain membership into these categories are those who define it, and therefore define it to their own advantage: to perpetuate and maintain their own power and to keep all others in an inferior position.

We must take an active, aggressive role if we are to overcome this problem and destroy the hatred and oppression which accompany it. It is important to know that we can in fact be as much a part of the problem as any other group. We are not immune to this phenomenon. Upon this realization we can reflect on our role in our own oppression and work within ourselves to surmount our own fear, insecurity and self-hatred.

Anthony Roberts

BGLAD!



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 Monday noon before publication. Letters may be submitted on Mac or IBM-compatible 3.5" disk.

Funding bridge is falling down

To the editors:

In her editorial of November 5, 1992, "Student protest: the sound of silence", Jennifer Beck does a disservice to your readers through selective and partial treatment of several issues. Let me explore university funding as a case in point.

Characterization of the economic circumstances of students and of universities as stringent is entirely valid. But to impute this to a lack of concern on the part of stakeholders - e.g., government or university administrators - is incorrect and ignores the larger picture. While provincial funding of Nova Scotia universities is indeed the lowest per student of all provinces in Canada, it is the second highest in provincial contributions per \$1000 of provincial personal income.

These facts are quite simple. Nova Scotia has a very high university enrolment, but the province's capacity to fund post-secondary education is severely limited by the functioning of its economy. Until we improve our capacity to generate wealth, we can have little prospect of greater investment of public funds in our universities, even recognizing the vital role they play in a knowledge-intensive era.

The health of our economy, our society and our university system are intimately interlinked. Without a vigorous university system, our prospects of future well-being are slim. However, the public recognition and support that are so necessary for continued public investment are not engendered by confrontational rhetoric based on selective and partial commentary.

Let's build bridges, not walls.

Janet E. Halliwell

Chair

Nova Scotia Council on Higher Education

Halifax, Nova Scotia

Have you checked the children?

To the editor:

In the latest edition of the Gazette, I was very interested to see that members of my fraternity had defaced public property (the public wading pool at Flynn park). Firstly, the defacing of public property by Phi Kaps has not occurred in my memory since becoming a member in 1986. The use of graffiti is limited to pranks between the fraternities. Phi Kappa Pi, Canada's only national fraternity, would not do such a childish thing to public Canadian property. Secondly, if another fraternity on campus carried out such an action to make Phi Kappa Pi look bad, then we know the intelligence of the members involved who commit-

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