

A life ruined by homophobia

Dear Editor,

To: The Students of Desmond Ellis' Sociology of Crime and Delinquency Class — 3810.06A:

On Mon. Feb. 3, Professor Ellis showed the film - "Before Stonewall"; a piece depicting the great lengths that homosexuals had to go to in order to hide their sexuality, or defend it, before they found solace and support in the Gay Pride Movement. During clips where guys were kissing or cross-dressing, many of you gasped, groaned, and left the room. Forty minutes into the film, two-thirds of the class had departed. You all missed a very important segment in the film, where homosexuals sadly admitted that they got



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Letters

married in heterosexual relationships, only in order to fulfil the role expected of them by society.

Recently, my father told me that he is gay. He is now dying of AIDS, and is entangled in a terrible marriage with my mother. He cannot communicate with his children, because he has never been comfortable with himself. He has internalized homophobic social attitudes and his denial of his own sexuality has destroyed his life and the lives of those who love him. I was shocked to learn that my father, a gay man, in the 1950's would feel enough social pressure to go against every fibre of his being and marry a woman. But after seeing our class' reaction to this film, I have learned that the social pressure placed on homosexuals has not changed at all since the 1950's. Jerks like you are still expressing attitudes that make guys like my dad feel forced to be married, unless they are lucky enough to find social support from friends or gay activist groups. Just think about the many lives you are destroying.

Sincerely,
Name withheld by request

Using sexism as a shield

Dear Editor,

I am disgusted at the allegations made by Kalli Paakspuu in the Jan. 22 edition of the *Excalibur*. When I arrived at our midterm examination it was painfully obvious that professor Paakspuu had not prepared us. As a result, students chose to express our concern by communally writing letters to Jim Fisher, Chairman of the Department of Film and Video.

Our reaction was unpremeditated and not executed as an act of malice. Our complaint was levelled professionally, not personally. It is for this reason that I am outraged by her attacks on her students. Paakspuu has the audacity to state that this so-called boycott "happened on Dec. 6, which was memorial day for the Montreal Massacre. This has symbolic relevance to that day and the boycott." That's a convenient and particularly antagonistic excuse for her to dismiss our actions, and one without validity. I don't know of any student population that is empowered to choose the date for its examination. Paakspuu chose this date herself, and I now question if there wasn't some greater motive at work in her choice.

Paakspuu is simply deflecting criticism. I am affronted by her repugnant use of the banner of "sexism" with which she chose to shield herself. Rather than accepting the fact that as an individual, she was singled out for her incompetence, she chose this measure. It is politically astute and insulting. By doing this, she has easily grabbed the

attention of others and helped to divide the opinions of those unfamiliar with the surrounding events. She aligns others with her, gaining sympathetic ears by protesting a serious and delicate issue that cannot be treated so intentionally disrespectfully.

Kalli Paakspuu has discredited herself, the Film and Video Department, its students and faculty, and has insulted the families of the victims of the Montreal Massacre. She has proven herself unworthy of the privilege of educating.

Yours truly,
Simon Lacey

Big Brother wasn't tenured

Dear Editor,

Re: "Eliminate tenured profs" (*Excalibur*, Feb. 12/92)

Heaven Help the Creative Arts! Christopher Waghorn, identifying himself as the President of the Creative Arts Students' Association, and by this designation, presumably speaking as representative of the association, has proposed that professional tenure should be managed on the basis of reviews for political correctness (non-racist, non-sexist, non-homophobic) and sale ability — unspecified "assessments", and approvals by members of a further unspecified "review board". The assumption is that this will save money by eliminating undesirable faculty and their ridiculously high salaries.

Set aside the fact that this perspective reveals an abysmal ignorance of the history, principles, and functions of academic tenure, and worry only about what this means for the Creative Arts: The only art worth supporting is that which is politically correct, disturbs nobody, and can be sold profitably. And, of course, it should not be overpriced. Heaven Help the Creative Arts if the future is in the hands of a functionary such as this one. Creative Arts students, watch out, your leader may be Big Brother!

Malcolm R. Westcott
Professor of Psychology

Education over free speech

Dear Editor,

After listening to the debate on the issue of "political correctness" between Judy Rebick and Alan Borovoy on Wednesday night, I came away with the feeling that both of the ideals espoused by the

two sides of the debate (those of equality and free speech) were incontrovertibly important to a free, democratic society. Nevertheless, as both also admitted, no right is absolute, and certain restrictions (both legal and customary) are permitted in order to preserve equally important social values, like tolerance and respect between peoples, for example. The issue is not so much which right is supreme and basic, but what are the legitimate criteria for restricting them. In other words, how do we decide, as a society, which contexts are appropriately defensible arenas for voicing opinions, and which are not? As an educator, I feel that promoting respect for free speech is central to the purpose of the university, but even more central is education. Clearly, when the classroom is poisoned by an atmosphere which prevents students from learning, then the central goal of education is not being achieved. Educators have an unusual and exceptional role to play in society, bestowed upon them by the power structure of the university and the society (sometimes deservedly, sometimes not). As a consequence, the responsibility of educators to educate outweighs the wider right of free speech, since educators have a responsibility not only to the wider society, but to their students. The responsibility includes providing a supportive environment in which students may express themselves freely, and develop themselves to their fullest potential. A blind defence of free speech which does not recognize this inherent responsibility results only in an erosion of the university's ability to perform its central function, that of education.

Rosalind Irwin,
Teaching Assistant,
Political Science Department.

Grave situation under Paakspuu

Dear Editor,

Re: "Professor claims sexism as reason for student boycott of film exam" (*Excalibur*, Jan 22/92)

As a student in Kalli Paakspuu's class, I too was extremely frustrated at the lack of instruction encountered, at the disorganization of the course and at Kalli's inarticulateness as well as her refusal to listen to our concerns. She simply did not fulfill her duties as course director. Thankfully, the collective effort of many has prompted a change; and the improvement is so great that only now do we fully realize how grave the situation was under Kalli. In fact, we have learned more in one three-hour lab with our new instructors than was taught throughout the entire fall term.

However, I did not write to chronicle

Kalli's incompetence, but to express my anger at her response to her dismissal. She falsely attributes our actions to sexism. As a female student, I find this extremely offensive. She cannot deny that ninety-five percent of the material on the midterm exam was never discussed in class, and must realize that this was the situation that could not be tolerated, not the fact that she is a woman. I, frankly, was encouraged at the beginning of the term to see a female instructor, and hoped that she would have some insights about being a woman in a predominately male field. I was also interested in her creative ideas, as she called herself a feminist filmmaker.

I am then baffled at the lack of respect that she shows for all that feminism stands for through her allegation of sexism as the reason for her release. It discredits all legitimate sexism complaints when one uses such a serious accusation as a means of concealing the truth and of putting others on the defensive. She wrote that what happened to her was "indicative of the situation of women in the Film and Video Department." Not so. A similar incident occurred two years ago when a male professor in the department was replaced due to student complaint, and the male to female ratio in that class was higher than in our own. Particularly incensing, however, is her completely inappropriate attempt to somehow link the boycott to the Dec. 6 massacre in Montreal, simply because the two occurred on the same date (she neglected to mention that it was she who rescheduled the exam from Dec. 9 to the sixth). To even try to show some relation between her dismissal and such a brutal act of violence against women shows a complete lack of consideration for the victims and for the female struggle which they represent.

I am truly dismayed and embarrassed as a woman to see the selfish manner with which Kalli Paakspuu has used the issue of sexism, as it will no doubt be a reflection on all females when one of us cries discrimination on an egocentric whim.

Sonnet L'Abbe
First year film production student.

Palestinian state for peace

Dear Editor,

Re: "Arabs and Jews should talk" (*Excalibur*, Feb. 12/92)

Mr. Leizer and Mr. Shoore, members of the Progressive Zionist Caucus make the challenge to the Jewish and Arab populations at York to "rise above blaming and statistical warfare, and actually start discussing the topics surrounding future peace in the region." Furthermore they identify issues such as peaceful borders, mutual recognition of rights and shared economic ventures as topics that need to be discussed "in a time for seeking peace." Yet they neglect to acknowledge the necessity and right of the establishment of a Palestinian state. It is only after this that we can "stop acting like enemies and move towards acting as neighbours" as Mr. Leizer and Mr. Shoore point out.

Fatin Juma

Bouncer bullies students

Dear Editor,

This letter is aimed at one man in particular who calls himself a "bouncer" and attempts to act like a human being. This man's job is to check student's I.D. and control the lineups at the Underground Pub in the Student Centre.

Being an undergraduate student at York, I find Thursday evening an appropriate time to unwind, and I usually do so at the Underground. What annoys me to such an extreme is the way students are treated by the larger man who stands by the first entrance to the Underground.

This man in question has physically pushed me and several others for having one shoe being under half an inch over the tile behind which he expects the line to be. He has insulted a friend I was once with as well as myself, for insinuating that I couldn't meet a girl who was of the age of majority.

I find my arguments justly, for the others who control the exterior of the Underground are regularly very pleasant and well-mannered. I am unaware of the man's name about which I am speaking, however I am sure that those who attend the Underground on Thursday and occasional Friday evenings are fully aware of him and his inappropriate actions.

A bouncer's job should include prohibiting irresponsibility and disrespect. This bouncer feels that he should intimidate everyone to retain some unruly power which he has no right withholding. This man is not powerful; he is only a true ass-hole.

Jay Wargo.

Horscroft invaluable

Dear Editor,

I am writing this letter in response to comments about Elissa Horscroft in the *Excalibur* of Jan. 22. My comments concern the purported "report card" for Elissa. It is claimed that while "her work on anti-date rape campaigns and Women's safety was excellent," the Equality and Social Affairs Portfolio is much too broad and vaguely defined to be completely filled. In Oct. of last year, I was initiating a programme called "Teach AIDS," in which T.A.'s were to be encouraged to talk about AIDS related issues. Elissa's ideas and help were invaluable in formulating a programme. She was highly approachable and ready to meet at little or no notice. Elissa is highly intelligent, and her planning and motivation are indeed an asset to York students.

Glyn Hotz,
Co-Chair, Philosophy Graduate
Students' Association.

YFS doesn't serve students

Dear Editor,

My experiences with YFS over the past four years has led me to believe that it is not much more than a cash cow; a place for prospective NDP candidates to learn a craft. As Doug Saunders correctly pointed out the YFS in its current state is grossly inefficient. The current executives hands should shake when they pick up their pay cheques.

Now, with all this said, I have a few questions of my own:

1. Why didn't the YFS search for a new insurance company instead of being held hostage by Blue Cross?
2. Why does the YFS have such limited office hours?
3. Why doesn't the YFS open up the books to show all the the waste?
4. Why doesn't the YFS do something about student increases, instead of just flapping their gums?

The reason why they don't do any of these things is because they don't serve the common student! They serve themselves!

Rob Stubbings,
York University Liberal Association,
and Founders Resident

