

# black perspectives

A weekly column by students of Afrikan descent, sponsored by a joint committee of the African Students' Association, Black Canadian Students' Association, and the Black United Students.

The opinion expressed below does not necessarily reflect the views of the aforementioned societies.

## The making of a Tom, part 2

Continued from last week

White patriarchal hegemony has allowed for the 'sacrifice' of a certain amount of its prized white females as an acceptable loss to further entrench their stranglehold upon power within this racist, sexist society. Black men, also the beneficiaries of a sexist society, see themselves as winning in this equation. They are allowed to express their 'right' to male power and privilege (whose expression has been denied through all other avenues, except sports and music) by sexually exploiting the female. Black self-hatred, whose seeds have been sown in the minds of black men at a very early age, guarantees that they will pursue these 'sacrificial lambs.' The white woman has been painted as the paradigm of beauty, whereas the black woman has been painted as the antithesis (by virtue of her accursed blackness) of all that is beautiful. As a result, the black man, effectively shackled by this racist, sexist mindset, throws all caution to the wind and pursues the white female with wild abandon, leaving the sisters wondering why their men cannot see the black beauty they possess.

Throughout history, this 'divide and conquer' tactic has been used, in its various forms, to negate the possibility of a unified resistance to white supremacy. Do you remember the hostility between the house slaves and the field slaves, which often resulted in the betrayal of many slave revolts? More

recently, do you remember the hostility between the Hutu and the Tutsi, which spawned the bloodbath in Rwanda? Both of these examples of infighting were incited by whites, who benefitted immensely from black divisiveness.

If we are ever to see the final death of white supremacy, we must commit ourselves to the re-education of the youth. The school texts deny the existence of black people as meaningful contributors to this world — this we know to be true, because we all suffered the trauma of junior high and high school and experienced it first hand. Therefore, it falls to us to avert the 'mentacide' (defined as the systematic destruction of the creative genius of the black mind) of the black child. They must know where they came from and what their people did BEFORE the coming of the white man. They must know how we fought the white man tooth and nail and even chose suicide over slavery. They must know about Africville and how the racist provincial government bulldozed an independent black community and condemned many of its residents to welfare. They must know that our liberation from racism is dependant upon the irratification of capitalism, homophobia, ageism, and sexism, because all oppression is inter-linked. They must know the REAL truth, because white people will only tell them lies.

The conclusion will appear in the next Gazette.

C. BURCHALL

## letters

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socialist country; everybody knows that Stalin didn't have anyone killed in Russia. But perhaps you are espousing a different socialism, more like Cuba. Then ask yourselves this: why do thousands of Cubans risk their lives to escape their socialist masters, and flee to the capitalist United States?

The reason that communism collapsed in eastern Europe, and the reason that Cubans risk their lives, just as Berliners did when the Wall separated them from their capitalist brothers, is that our system is better. Plain and simple. Countries founded on socialism are bound to collapse because they are built on collectivist ideas that human nature will always rebel against. As a scientific device, socialism fails to understand basic human emotions, like the drive to better oneself, and the need for more than just the bare necessities of life. Yes, socialism has a place in society (Canada being a prime example of this). Here we have tempered the Darwinian Survival of the Fittest Capitalism with a social welfare consciousness. If your half-dozen or so members are so convinced of the greatness of socialism, then why don't you all go to Cuba or some other socialist country to live happily ever after?

As for challenging our will to fight, we have only this to say: why would we fight against a system we believe in? But if you somehow manage to mount a real challenge to this system, we, and other sane Canadians, will be more than willing to fight to defend the system that has made this the best nation on Earth to live in. While you gather together to plot your little revolution against the capitalist system, the majority of people in this country will sit back, laugh, enjoy our capitalist Coca-Cola in the comfort of our new Levi's jeans, and plan what to do with the well-earned raises we are so proud of.

Colin Mason and Stuart McMillan.

## Exodus

Dear Sir,

In response to Colwyn Burchall's article (March 14), my ancestry is Scottish, for over one hundred years (1740-1870's) the people of my lineage were forced from their homes and their land; persuaded by fire, bayonet and starvation onto ships

bound for uncertainty. Making room for sheep and profit was the impetus for the exodus. Sadly, the dispossessed were set adrift not by conquerors, but by their own people; their own kind. Today the Highlands are virtually empty.

Mr. Burchall has reason for angst concerning his name and the historical context surrounding its inception. Should he turn his eye further into

history's mist a parallel to Scottish woe would appear.

Sadly, it was the sons of Africa who turned on their own kind, and, for unholy profit, sent their brothers to traders then onto ships bound for uncertainty and slavery.

Greed does strange things to people, it often transcends rightness and fairness.

Michael MacDonald

## letters

### Analysis flawed

To the Editor:

In response to Colwyn Burchall: I have read your articles in the Gazette and feel compelled to respond. Don't worry, I am not going to spout the usual liberal platitudes of "we are all human and bleed the same colour" bullshit. This common, mainstream reaction to any kind of standpoint philosophy that is remotely strident in its opposition to white supremacy distorts and negates the very real and dehumanizing consequences of systematic and institutionalized racism. Nor am I going to debate the views on interracial relationships, black/white, or any other. We will never agree and that is not the point anyway.

Rather, I take issue with your analysis (which is spotty) and I am concerned that you are perpetuating the very myths and stereotypes that you claim to detest.

Whenever you use an example of a young black man, who in your opinion has 'strayed' from the path of strength of character and community, you present a caricature of this person. He is shortsighted, ignorant of the consequences of his actions, his behaviour predetermined by an all-encompassing society that leaves no room for personal autonomy or the influence of his family. When you talked about 'Tom' (Gazette, March 21, 1996), you presented a young black man who was aimlessly wandering a candy store of sexual gratification. He slept with numerous women in exchange for gifts; had little concern with regards to the consequences of his actions, towards himself, the white women he was involved with, the black women he would eventually settle down with, and the supposed subjugation of his race that this involvement with white women would cause. He is ignorant of his actions and blindly follows his sexual drive: "Tom begins to view himself as a sexual being, whose sole 'raison d'être' is to ejaculate inside a white woman" (Gazette, 21 March 1996). Whether or not you believe

that Tom's sexual ideology is constructed by the racist society in which he lives, to present a cardboard cut-out of a blind, sexually-driven black man to illustrate the grievance you hold with his behaviour is to use a destructive stereotype to prove your point. Your criticism of white society's historical objectification of black male sexuality involves pointing out the racist stereotypes of "a brute with an enormous penis" (Gazette, March 21, 1996), yet your example of a waylaid black man incorporates remnants of this hateful myth.

Also, your articles seem to insist that the numbers of black men sleeping with white women seems to be epidemic, or at least "occur [ing] with such disturbing regularity" (Gazette, March 21, 1996). This kind of language and tone reminds me of the misguiding and moralistic sensationalists of right-wing North American media-constructed hype who screech "epidemic!" of "black violence," "black teen pregnancy," "black dysfunctional family," etc. Please not another epidemic that young black men are involved in! A more realistic and humanistic approach is needed to peel back the infinite layers of social prejudice and injustice.

Finally, your presentation of relationships, interracial or otherwise, is fraught with sexist overtones. Mr. Burchall, let's get one thing straight. Women and their sexuality are not to be owned. We will not 'be gotten.' If you or 'Tom' or any other man on this planet wish to be with a woman, it will be because you were invited and not because you helped yourself.

I put much thought into this presentation. It is my contribution to an ongoing and very human debate. I have noticed in the past that your response to other's opinions has been sarcastic and hostile. I ask only for the respect that you wish your writing to be given.

Thank-you,

J.M. Riordan

**ERRATUM:** The author of last week's Blacks on Black column was mistakenly identified as a representative of the Black United Students when, in fact, he is not.

## Science meeting blowup

### Disgusted

To the Editor:

I was disgusted with the proceedings of the Dalhousie Science Society Annual General Meeting and the Elections on Monday, March 25. In the elections, I saw a group of fresh, energetic faces try to get involved, only to be pushed away by a combination of old-guard thinking, petty politics, and personal attacks.

The DSS of that meeting was not the DSS I have served on for the last two years. In the last few months, DSS meetings have degenerated from productive, enjoyable gatherings into nightmares of procedural point and counterpoint. It is precisely this kind of nit-picking that alienates many students from the Student Union and student groups in general, and prevents anything worthwhile from happening.

A caution to those who voted and those who were elected: the DSS is about bringing science students together so everyone can benefit, so everyone can be involved. It is not about power. If our elections cease to be opportunities for new ideas to be presented, and turn into dirty political races where we tally the number of hours each candidate spends in meetings, then we have lost the spirit of the society, and missed the point.

At our elections I was shocked to see veteran councillors ask loaded questions, try to trick can-

### Leadership, direction questioned

didates, and resort to other questionable campaign tactics. These comments and questions may have damaged the candidates, but they damaged the DSS as a whole far more. In any executive or any council, experience is important. However, without fresh energy, new ideas, and new approaches, our group will degenerate and become stale. In the past, the DSS has always been receptive to new people who wanted to be involved. At that meeting, we showed those kinds of people — the kind of people we need most — that we did not want them.

At that meeting, the DSS ceased to be a student group, and became a political group. We may have our constitution, be we have lost our spirit.

James Worrall  
DSS Chairperson-Elect

### Frustrated

To the Editor:

It is one o'clock Monday night, and I have just returned from one of the longest, most tiring Dalhousie Science Society meetings to date. However, my weariness is only partially due to the meeting. I guess my tired state mostly comes from being in the SUB too long, and the fact that I finally understand, after talking with a couple of good friends, where student apathy comes from.

Tonight's DSS meeting was an AGM, where we elected our new society executive. Two outstanding peo-

ple new to the society were there to run for positions. They both would have been just what the DSS needed — new blood with new ideas. However, one was insulted with inflammatory questions by an executive member with an apparently personal gripe, and the other declined a nomination after this incident. Both left the meeting, and regrettably the DSS, with an undeniable bitterness.

Student apathy is a product of stuff like what happened Monday night, and what happens in general with a new person who wants to get involved with an established organization. The new person is shut out, their positive energy ignored in favour of somebody already established in the organization. Eventually the new person stops trying to fit in the organization, and we lose a potentially valuable asset. Student apathy isn't about the students, it's about the organization which changes slowly, usually feeding on itself to sustain itself. Students can't get involved because the organization favours itself rather than new students.

Nobody won Monday night. Not the people wanting to get involved, not the Science Society.

Tim McCabe  
DSU Representative  
Dalhousie Science Society

### Sorry

To the Editor:

My name is Steve Parsons and I

have been recently elected to the position of President of the Dalhousie Science Society. I am writing in regard to the AGM that we held on Monday, March 25 and in anticipation to other letters concerning the events that transpired. Initially, I was very happy to see the excellent turnout; however, the evening very quickly turned sour.

It was brought to my attention that during the discussion period, when council talked about the presidential candidates, a science student in attendance verbally assaulted a person that spoke on my behalf. My problem is in that this 'attack' was allowed to continue throughout the evening. Whenever my friend tried to voice an opinion, she was reprimanded by certain members of the executive. Meanwhile, the attacker was allowed to continue unchecked. Furthermore, council proceeded to support the "attacker," claiming that he and his supporters would offer a "fresh perspective" to DSS and should therefore "be given a chance."

As a member of both the present and past executive, I would like to apologize to the person who spoke on my behalf. She was denied her right as a science student to question a candidate, firstly. Secondly, she was let down by her council and friends as the "attacker" was hailed as the victim. In short, on behalf of everyone, I am sorry that the evening turned out the way it did.

Steve Parsons  
President, DSS