



editorial

Intolerance intolerable

Has the level of intolerance in the world hit you lately?

I was watching CNN Prime News last evening and I was bombarded with images of people battling over the same issues that seem to be permanently clogging our society.

Take the situation in the Middle East. During the past eight days, the fragile peace has been disrupted by four suicide bombings. The Palestinian terrorist group, Hamas, has taken responsibility for the bombings in which 57 people have been killed and over 200 injured. Israel is in a state of turmoil as the country grieves over the loss of their loved ones and lives in fear at the possibility of further bombing.

Or what about the recent regulations instituted in New Hampshire banning the discussion of homosexuality and homosexual clubs in their schools? Some government and school officials feel that it is inappropriate to promote such "activity" in schools. And an even bigger shock was that there were several children quoted who supported the new rules. Officials are now seeking legislation that will give them the right to decide which clubs are allowed in schools and which ones aren't.

Or, what about the 1996 Republican Presidential Campaign? Every time I watch some of the campaign coverage, I am shocked

to hear the things that come out of Pat Buchanan's mouth. He targets blacks and wants to limit immigration into the States. He feels that homosexuals should be "contained" and that women can't handle the work place.

Notice a pattern here?

All these recent events involve hate. One group of people hating another group of people. One group trying to stamp out another group. One group not willing to open their minds and reach out to another. The seemingly everlasting hairball blocking the pipes of progress.

It is so frustrating that our society as a whole hasn't evolved to the point where all individuals realize the benefit and necessity of accepting the differences in the people around them. When are we going to realize that this world is brimming with people of different backgrounds, experiences, skin colour, ideas, and dreams? And that embracing people for their diversity opens doors, and sheds light on things you never thought about. The amount of similarity between people underneath their superficial differences is striking, and the differences are what make a person interesting.

I watch the racial conflict going on around me with a combination of disgust and fear. Disgust because it's hateful and pointless, and fear because I have a defen-

sive position when it comes to racial attack. It sometimes shocks me to realize that I am considered different because I am a visual minority. It shocks me to realize that I'm being immediately categorized into a little box by the colour of my skin. It angers me that I may not receive the same opportunities as someone else even though I may work just as hard or may be just as qualified. These situations don't exercise the positive aspects of differences.

But getting frustrated about all of this is like beating your head against a brick wall — you won't get anywhere, but you will get a headache. I was just feeling pessimistic because in an hour-long news program, less than 10 minutes was about an issue not involving intolerance.

I know that there are people out there who are making a difference, who are making slow progress in changing ignorant attitudes to open and educated ones. Because face it. The world doesn't end at a school's boundaries, or a city's limits, or a nation's borders. There is an entire world out there full of such diversity and if you aren't willing to embrace it, you aren't going to be left with much.

Learn to tolerate differences, learn about these differences, and don't forget to make a difference.

KAVERI GUPTA

letters

Question innocent

To the Editor:

This letter is to clarify an incident and issue which occurred at the DSU candidates' forum on Monday, March 4. After the President/Vice President Executive teams presented their ideas to those in attendance, the floor was opened for questions, most of which were directed to each of the teams seeking election. One of the exceptions was the question that I posed to Presidential candidate John Killam. Unfortunately, the question and its intent were misconstrued not only by those in attendance, but also by those conducting the forum (CRO & DRO). Numerous people in the crowd began shouting to answer and defend John, and I was not permitted to restate and clarify my question. Consequently, many people felt that allegations had been made which called into question John's honesty while others felt that I was slandering him. I first met John in the summer of 1993 when I was his summer orientation leader and I have come to know him well since. The result of my query was certainly not my intent. I had hoped, by way of example, to have John respond to the issues of responsibility and accountability — issues which I felt were important for a person running for any elected position. Instead, due to a lack of understanding by those present and to a lack of control by those running the forum, it appeared that I was attacking and questioning his character. The impact that this would have on a candidate is obvious. Therefore, I want to state for the record that upon conclusion of the forum, when an opportunity for rational discourse with John presented itself, he answered the real question to my satisfaction. Finally, while responsibility and accountability were called into question (and answered), honesty was never an issue.

Bob Pritchett

nation that was being observed. Eastwood felt instead that proportional time should have been given to talk about all things hetero. As if we don't get enough heterosexual affirmations every day of our lives. I believe the Gazette "ignored the heterosexual community" to make a point that Valentine's Day is not just for straights. This point seems to have eluded Eastwood. I thank the Gazette for publishing the list on ways to combat homophobia. Let's hope some people used it, or at least read it more carefully than Eastwood did. Eastwood speaks only for him/herself. He/she does not speak for all heterosexuals, and certainly not for me.

Bill Koles

To the Editor:

I'm writing about the letter by one J. Eastwood in your Feb. 29 issue.

Eastwood seems pretty hung up on the mechanics of sex. So let's talk about sex. J.E. You find what homosexuals do to be disgusting and distasteful. I've got news for you, J.E. Homosexuals don't do anything differently sexually that heterosexuals haven't already done. Sure, some of the things homosexuals do might not appeal to a lot of heterosexuals. On the other hand, there's homosexual behaviour some homosexuals find "disgusting" and "distasteful." Likewise, there's heterosexual behaviour some heterosexuals find "disgusting" and "distasteful." My point is: if two (or more) adults are engaging in safe sexual behaviour that they mutually consent to and are having a good time doing, then what's the problem? Who cares whether they have opposing genitalia or not? If vibrators or bondage or oral sex or whipped cream or butt-fucking is not your sexual cup of tea, then chill out and stick to the missionary position, Eastwood! Please, leave the rest of us to enjoy whatever we like, and to do it with whomever we choose.

Matt Fernley

"Silent majority" talks

To the Editor:

In response to J. Eastwood's diatribe against the Gazette ("In defense of the silent majority" Feb 29), I take offense to this person appointing themselves to speak for the so-called "silent majority" (presumably all heterosexuals). I don't know whether J. Eastwood is male or female or transgendered, but his/her/their letter reveals a person who is possibly not uneducated, but just can't read. Had Eastwood read the article properly, the Gazette did not associate his aversion to homosexuality with "racism." Racism was used as an example of prejudice. Eastwood is indeed prejudiced and admits to it. I do agree with Eastwood that he/she does not fear homosexuals or homosexuality. However, if Eastwood would read Webster's dictionary, he/she would find the word "phobia" not only defined as "morbid, compulsive or persistent fear," but also "any strong aversion or dislike." The latter applies to Eastwood, and therefore "homophobic" is a perfectly acceptable adjective for him/her.

In my opinion, the Valentine's Day cover page was not to place homosexuality or gay and lesbian folks on a pedestal. Had Eastwood read the article carefully and slowly enough, this person may have realized that it was "Pink Triangle Day" (which just happens to be Feb. 14), its celebration of love, the remembering of homosexual victims of Nazi hate crimes, and the fight against prejudice and discrimi-

End racism

To the editor,

We would like to thank Mr. Colwyn Burchall for telling us what we were really thinking when we wrote our response to his racist article. Mr. Burchall, the sarcastic tone in your reply shows us that you would like to simply dismiss our position, however, the "truth" is not as apparent as you would like it to be. You are implying many things that we never wrote or even thought. Nowhere in our letters, or in the other letters, was racism denied. There were no suggestions of killing blacks for any reason whatsoever, or that Christianity compelled our letters, or for that matter, that we were even white.

Perhaps it is necessary to clarify our argument. We were suggesting that divisive and racist articles like, "Whites are liable" and "Jungle fever" have no place in any newspaper that is seriously interested in ending racism. We will not continue to engage in any discussion where people are judged by the colour of their skin, which you are clearly doing.

Mr. Burchall, hostility will get us nowhere. The enemy of all humanity is a relentless clinging to the past, and to ancient hatreds. Together we can end racism, we are all humans and should be judged by who we are, and not what we are, or for the actions of our ancestors.

Colin Mason, Grant Loveland, Stuart McMillan, Mike Jerrett, Mike Bigelow, Ryan Churchill

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The Gazette welcomes letters to the editor and commentary. Letters are limited to 300 and commentary to 800 words. All submissions must be typed double-spaced on paper, e-mailed, or on a Mac or IBM 3 1/2 inch disk. The deadline is Mondays at noon.

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GAZETTE ELECTIONS

Nominations for the positions of: Managing Editor of the Dalhousie Gazette and Copy Editor of the Dalhousie Gazette for the 1996-97 publishing year are now open. **If you are currently a Dalhousie student, then you are eligible to run for either of these positions.** If you are interested in running for either position, please submit a signed letter of intent to run to: Jen Horsey or Sam McCaig before March 15 at 5 p.m. **For more info, contact Jen Horsey at 494-2507, or at the Dalhousie Gazette, 3rd floor, rm. 312, SUB.**