

## ED/OP

## Overwhelmed by ignorance

I am a 3rd year history major and am presently participating on the Nova Scotia/New England Exchange Program. Since September 1991, I have been living in Boston and attending Northeastern University — what a scene!

The scenario below is NOT an exaggeration. I spoke to a 4th year history major at Northeastern after class one day and we had the following conversation:

"I hear you're at NU on an exchange program" he said.

"Yes," I replied, "from Dalhousie University". His face was blank but this was a reasonable response. "It's in Halifax," I continued. His face remained expressionless. I thought to myself he is probably a local with no sense of geography. "That's in Nova Scotia," I added. Still no reaction. I began to worry about this guy. Finally I said: "I'm from Canada."

He smiled immediately. "That's really cool."

We proceeded with small talk for a few minutes, then he commented on my accent. When he said I didn't have an accent I had a feeling he was referring to my non-Bostonian accent but I wanted him to clarify what he meant. "What do you mean I don't have an accent?"

"Well," he said, "I'd never know English wasn't your first language." (He wasn't joking.)

When Jen and I decided to come to Boston for the school year we knew it was going to be an interesting experience living in the United States and attending an inner city school like Northeastern but the level of ignorance among the students was and still is overwhelming.

A few weeks before the comment about my 'first language' an even more frightening encounter occurred in our residence. We have an anti-apartheid poster on the wall in our room. A 4th year student asked us what apartheid was. I looked at Jen and her mouth dropped. I walked into the hall and said "you deal with this one."

Being a Canadian student here has been both frustrating and fascinating. Although the examples above may appear extreme, I have observed that the students we have met are patriotic in an unhealthy sense. Nothing beyond the United States of America matters to them.

I am not trying to belittle Americans or claim that they are all ethnocentric, ignorant, blind patriots because we have also met some interesting people and our professors do not encourage such a narrow minded approach to education, I am inclined to believe that the students' education prior to university did not encourage them to think; much less think critically.

Now for the brighter side! Northeastern offers a wide range of courses which are not available at Dalhousie. The course content has been fascinating and the professors have been excellent. Boston is an incredible city where life as a student certainly extends beyond the campus. The Nova Scotia/New England Exchange Program has undoubtedly been an educational experience which stretches far beyond the classroom because in many ways this is a different culture and one can always benefit from such an experience.

Nicole Schmidt

another toad, and now Suzy Kovinsky, I'm coming for you! For years, the word "vengeance" has hung from my toad-lips, and at last it will be mine.

I have to admit, I was surprised to learn that you had gone all the way to Halifax to avoid suspicion, but distance means nothing to me. I'll just hop a freight or something. Believe me, Suzy Kovinsky, you will not escape the wrath I hold in my toad-heart. Philosophize this, Suzy Kovinsky: A toad never forgets; a toad never forgives.

Terry the Toad  
somewhere on the Trans-Canada

## Too much snow tarnishes winter wonderland

To the editors:

Snow removal, Not!

Well, our first major snowfall has hit and three days later it has become evident that the university's last budget only factored in a "partial removal" program. As a student here, it does not seem unreasonable to have the two main staircases of the A & A building cleared. There are three sets of doors going in and out of the building for a reason. As we travel out of the A & A towards the Killam the next set of stairs leading down to the ground level where the newly renovated science building sits, and only half of the half which has been cleared has actually been cleared. As for the Killam steps, well I'm sure you've seen it for yourselves. Perhaps the ten per cent tuition increase will be able to provide an introductory snow removal and salting course to the administration who do not notice the poor job being done, and must enter the building some other way.

Get with it man.

David Burns

arts supplement or for the anti-stereotype supplement! Editors, don't be afraid to take a look at your supplements before layout day. It might save you laying our letters like my own.

As for Ms. Langille. I'm sorry about the past experiences that you have had with men and I am aware of the problem with sexual assault. But lighten up and ditch your stereotypes.

Speaking for myself and for the men I know we don't breed to "shoot, main, poison, hate, enslave, assault," or anything else evil that your imagination can conjure up. We breed for mutual pleasure, mutual enjoyment, and sometimes to have a family. If you don't believe me, call me. By the way, I thought your other poems were appropriate and peaceful.

David O'Connor

## Diversity exists, live with it

To the editors:

Ah! The wonderful refrain goes 'round and 'round. "I'm not homophobic, but..." When Darren Costain sees something in the *Gazette*, anything, that he doesn't agree with, his response is predictable "print what I want or close down the paper." What a bore. People like him only stay motivated long enough to dash off a heated letter to the editor. They seem unable or unwilling to grasp the simple fact that the paper is trying to reflect the diversity of the student body at Dalhousie and that you get out of your campus paper what you put into it. Perhaps I missed the part in your letter, Darren Costain, where you volunteered to proofread some copy, cover a news story, write an arts piece, or come to a lay out night?

No, people like Darren Costain prefer to work themselves into a tizzy whenever otherwise marginalized groups occasionally grab center stage or a column or two or, in this instance, a single two inch graphic on the last page. If you had asked, someone would have explained that that graphic was penned by cartoonist Alison Bechdel and was lifted from a well-known book by Cindy Patton, "Women in the Age of Aids." I'm sure it was intended to be a fun way to promote safer sex because after all, everyone includes women who love women. But I gotta tell ya, Darren, letters like yours do serve a purpose. You remind us that many close-minded individuals are still out there and that papers like the *Gazette* are important. I'm sure it will make your day to know that the *Gazette's* Lesbian and Gay supplement issue will soon be here. Happy reading!

Connie Clarke

## Graphic offends, but not for promoting" lesbianism

To the editors:

It was to my dismay to find Darren Costain's homophobic letter in the Jan. 30 *Gazette*. His views are a sad case in point that it's still okay to openly criticize and censor discussions or representations of gay or lesbian-related issues. The most unfortunate aspect of this letter is that Costain truly believes that he is not homophobic in expressing these views. As a gay Dal student, I am exasperated from hearing ad infinitum that whenever articles, ads, or letters of a gay or lesbian nature are published, gay and lesbian people are "flaunting" their sexuality and the publishers that print such pieces are "promoting" the same. Yet each day of my life, I live with heterosexist advertis-

ing, wedding announcements in newspapers, men and women walking hand-in-hand on campus, etc.

Had the cartoon in question been between a man and a woman, would Costain have complained? I think not. I would hope the cartoon was trying to send a message (however poorly) that ALL people, lesbian women included, need to take precautions against AIDS. The cartoon is not embarrassing, but offensive. It's the same old stuff: defining gay and lesbian people as sex-starved creatures, instead of human beings. Seeing that the cartoon occupied approximately 1/32 of a page (or 0.1 per cent of total *Gazette* space), I'd hardly view this as a campaign to "support and advertise homosexuality."

Yes, Mr. Costain, the *Gazette* does belong to the students of Dal and some of them happen to be gay or lesbian, perhaps 10 per cent. If the *Gazette* is to be a "paper for everyone", it must include ALL people, not just the "Majority: Heterosexual."

Bill Coles

## You're so hard done by

To the editors:

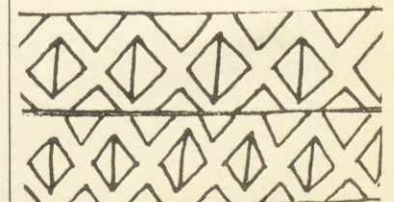
Polls have shown that one in four people are homosexual. Campuses across North America have Gay Societies that are among the largest organizations on campus. An example is the Entrepreneurs Club at the University of Western Ontario, one of the largest campus organizations in Canada, is dwarfed by the membership of Gays and Lesbians of Western. Homosexuality is a part of life. Unless you go to Dal.

The most often heard phrase seems to be, "I'm not homophobic, but..." The *Gazette* is regularly filled with letters from some homophobic male complaining on behalf of all heterosexuals on how homosexuals are wasting the majority's money on their "pathetic bathroom stall jokes." The usual response comes from the gay community and we then enter the redefined "battle of the sexes."

What's different this time? I'm a young male from a middle class background who is quite HETEROSEXUAL and I'm sick and tired of having homophobic rednecks speaking on my behalf. Mr. Costain's observation that the illustration in the Jan. 23 *Gazette* "must even be embarrassing to homosexuals, much less heterosexuals" is quite enlightening, — I personally wasn't aware of the connection between sexual orientation and a person's decency and integrity. I'm also quite interested by the lack of complaints from women even though they seem to be the 'target' of this promotion of a different sexual orientation; luckily Mr. Costain is looking out for everybody's interests.

If Mr. Costain really feels that we straight males are in danger of being repressed by this evil scourge of homosexual propaganda that assaults him every time he picks up a copy of *The Gazette* why doesn't he try writing a regular feature for *The Gazette*? Something like *How Hard it is to be a Misunderstood Heterosexual Male in Today's Society...* after all *The Gazette* can always use some humour.

Mike Zelle



## Recognizing Israel's right to exist

To the editors:

Could this be Arab propaganda I hear once again in the article "Shamir and his SS Army?" (*Gazette*, Jan. 30). This well-rehearsed speech is one we've all heard many times before, yet the real facts will always set the story straight. Firstly, who is the real transgressor of U.N. resolutions? All Arab countries with the exception of Egypt have yet to abide by the U.N. resolutions calling for the recognition of the State of Israel. How can Israel talk peace with countries who won't even recognize its right to exist?! And what does "Israeli expansionism policy" mean? Is this supposed to be in reference to Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza? In 1967, there was the Six-Day War. Israel was attacked by Arab armies, and consequently took the West Bank, Gaza, and the Golan Heights. This was not by choice, however. Israel was attacked, it was not the aggressor. The occupation of these territories occurred through an act of self-defence. It is true that Israel's borders have changed in the past, however, this was not an expansion of Israel, by rather an expansion of Egypt, when Israel returned three quarters of its land (the Sinai desert) to Egypt in return for peace. Does this sound like a country who is not "apt to achieve peace?" As for "Human Rights", Israel has far from oppressed the Arabs living in these territories, before the Intifada. Israel built roads, hospitals, universities, and much more. What

Israel has done for the Palestinians is by far more than what their Arab brothers have done for them (which is next to nothing).

Palestinians have feelings, do they? Well, so do Israelis, and when they have 21 enemy Arab countries breathing down their necks all around them, they have to fight to survive. "Death to the Jews!" was heard during Arab riots in Jerusalem (Oct. 8, 1990). The fact is, the real issue isn't the West bank, or the Palestinian-Arabs or even the Intifada. The real issue is: The Arab world's refusal to recognize and live in peace with Israel.

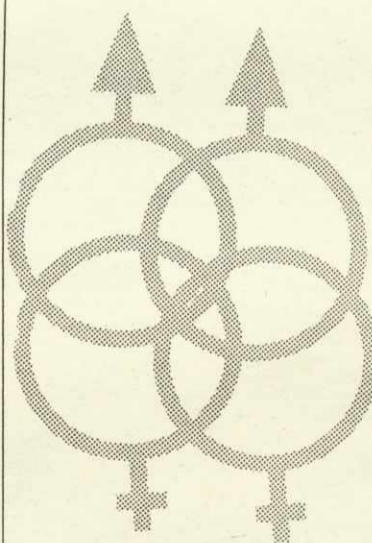
Amir Nevo

## Too much free time

To the editors:

I couldn't believe my luck last week when I picked up a copy of the *Gazette* (Jan. 30) and turned to the peace supplement. There, in an article entitled "Achieving personal peace," Suzy Kovinsky admitted to brutally crushing a helpless little green toad in Southern Ontario in the mid-seventies. I have been searching for that little girl for 14 years, so to read that article was an unbelievably moving experience.

You see, I am that little green toad Suzy Kovinsky so viciously attacked with her bike that summer day on the tree-lined path. Yes, Suzy Kovinsky, I'm alive! You didn't get me after all. While you were curled up in a ball by the side of the road, I dragged my mutilated body into the ditch and lay in a drainage pipe for 17 months recuperating. I managed to nurse myself back to health, along with the help of



## The peace our children dream about

To the editors:

Your last edition of the *Gazette* was about Peace, right? Isn't Peace about dropping barriers, ending 'isms', maiming stereotypes and generally caring about things. Then why would you print Jane Langille's poem Our Macro Incubator? As a peace poem, this poem offends because it is not about peace it is about hate. To me this is far from the peace that our children dream about. I understand that it is a poem and not an article and I believe in the freedom of expression especially in poetry. But why print it in a Peace supplement? Why didn't you save it for the male-