

EDITORIAL

Recently, the Toronto Star ran a story on a woman who completed her graduate studies in English at Concordia University last May. Despite meeting her course requirements, Carolyn Gammon has refused to accept her master of arts degree, saying the designation "master" is sexist.

While she is still without her degree, she has requested that the word "master" be replaced by mistress.

In response, Concordia has set up a special committee to study her request and the whole issue of degree nomenclature.

Gammon appears to have taken the sexist label out of context.

The basis of her argument is that if you trace the origin of the word master, it strictly refers to males.

While this is true, today's use of the word is quite different.

Over a period of years, words often take on different meanings. The word gay is a prime example. Originally, the word was used to describe some one who was happy. Today, the word is used to refer to some one who is homosexual.

With this in mind, we cannot look merely at the origin of a word for its meaning. Words and meanings do change. Therefore, we must examine the word as it is used in today's context. Master, used in the context of a masters degree is not gender specific.

There are many meanings to the word master. The Webster dictionary defines master, the noun, as a male teacher, as well as one who is highly skilled, or someone having authority or control. As a verb, to master means to become skilled or proficient in. It is this last definition in which a master's degree is termed.

Gammon says that she chose the term mistress because it is the equitable term to the "male" term master. But is it?

Webster defines mistress as a women who has power, authority, or ownership (of the house), or a woman with whom a man cohabits without the benefit of marriage.

While Gammon objected to the term master, mistress is no better. It is still gender specific, which was her objection with the word master. And the word mistress carries with it a definite negative connotation.

There are enough blatantly sexist terms and gender discriminatory practices at university on which to focus our attention without getting caught up on niggling semantics.

OUR World...

By: F. W. Cameron.



LETTERS

Excalibur welcomes letters to the editor on all topics. We will publish, space permitting, letters up to 500 words in length. They must be typed, double spaced, and accompanied by the writer's name, signature, and telephone number. The opinions expressed belong to the writers and do not necessarily reflect those of Excalibur staff or directors. However, we will refuse letters that are libellous or attempt to incite hatred toward individuals or an identifiable group. All material is subject to editing. All submissions must be addressed to the Editor-in-chief, Room 111, Central Square.

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Excalibur is an autonomous corporation with a mandate to inform, educate and provoke thought among York University's diverse population.

The distinct opinions and articles appearing in Excalibur constitute our collective voice. However, they belong first and foremost to the individual writers and are not necessarily shared by any other Excalibur staff or board member.

Final editorial responsibility is retained by the Editor-in-chief.

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Correction:

In the Oct. 24 issue of Excalibur, the article "Clubs not happy with the space in Student Centre," stated that the CSA, JSF and YCC had leased 28,000 square feet at a collective cost of \$164,333. The amount of space leased was 2,800 square feet at a total cost of \$493,000.

Erroneous Criticism

To the editor,

Re: Oct. 24 opinion entitled "US, UN, and Israel: double standards."

The writer arrived at many conclusions by ignoring important facts.

1. The writer states that the United Nations "watered down statements against Israel" in regards to the killing of 21 people on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. The truth is that the U.N. as well as the United States condemned Israel's actions outright. Along with this, the U.N. Security Council voted to have a U.N. commission investigate the occurrence. (The United States agreed once again.)

2. The writer makes reference to the Arab League and how it can deal with the problems of the Arab Nations. This has proved untrue in many instances in the past. For example, what did the Arab League do when thousands of people were massacred in Syria, or when tens of thousands of Kurds were gassed in Iraq, or when 80 Lebanese Christians were slaughtered by the Syrians in Lebanon. Did the Arab League do so much as make a comment, or send a force in to investigate? Does this mean that it is okay for Arabs to die as long as it is done by the hand of their brothers? Where are the double standards now?

3. The writer talks about Israel's "illegal occupation of Palestine." (I suspect referring to the West Bank.) Britain created the State of Jordan in 1922. The portion left was divided between

the Arabs and Jews in 1947, but it was the Arabs who rejected the division and attacked Israel. The Arabs had the West Bank from 1947 to 1967 but this was not good enough as their aim was still the elimination of Israel. Jordan incited the war against Israel in 1967 and, subsequently, lost this territory as well as the Old City of Jerusalem. Therefore, is it not possible that if Jordan had never attacked Israel, they would still have the West Bank?

4. The writer contends that it "was not Saddam's intention" to go into Saudi Arabia, and that if it was, "the Arab and Muslim states would not have allowed" him. It is obvious that the first part of this statement is false since Saddam Hussein had amassed troops on the Saudi borders at the same time he invaded Kuwait. (A week before he invaded Kuwait, Hussein stated in an interview that he would never invade it, referring to Kuwait.)

In regards to the second part of the statement, how would the Arab and Muslim world plan to stop Hussein's one million strong army, not to mention his planes, tanks and missiles? All of the other Arab and Muslim armies together are no match for Hussein--knowing this they have welcomed the multi-national force and contributed by sending units to oppose Iraq.

It appears that the ultimate problem is the inability of the Arab states to recognize Israel and cease the state of war thus allowing the Israelis and Arabs to begin peace discussions.

Confidence and trust cannot be achieved that easily after being in a state of war for the past 40 years.

A clarifying letter for the YES side

to the members of the YES-Coalition

In the interest of fairness, I feel compelled to write in defense of one of my colleagues.

At last Friday's press conference, one of your members accused a member of the campus press of unfairly directing all questions to Jean Ghomeshi, and of incorrectly assuming Ghomeshi's role as spokesperson for your group.

For the record, I was told by several people that "Jean Ghomeshi would be holding a press conference." And before speaking to the press, Ghomeshi invited the rest of the group to "stick around if they wanted," implying that their presence was not essential. In addition, it was Ghomeshi who delivered the victory speech.

If any person assumed Ghomeshi's role as official spokesperson, it was because he was clearly acting in this capacity. If the coalition had not designated Mr. Ghomeshi spokesperson, then, as a member of the press, I wish more had been done to accurately reflect this.

It is not my intention to strike any animosity. I only wish to elucidate what is an obvious misunderstanding on both our parts.

Thank you for taking the time to read this, and I congratulate you on your victory.

Sincerely,
Jeannine Amber

On behalf of no publication

Clive Cohen