

Reader criticizes *Excal* for being "black-centric"

Dear Editor,

I read every issue of *Excalibur* because I'm interested in what is going on in the lives and minds of my fellow students at York University. On most counts, you do a good job of this with interesting dynamic articles which encourage reflection, but there is one trend which I noticed which makes me feel very uncomfortable.

This trend is the concentration and importance given to the concerns and complaints of York's black community. Perhaps I am missing something, but it seems to me that your last three issues have been black centric, almost to the point where they could be construed as arrogant towards the rest of the York community.

It seems to me that you paper wishes to portray the black community as a band of glorious crusaders fighting for their social advancement and acceptance. This in itself is noble, but article denouncing the administration and community as being racist, are quickly causing you to lose your credibility in my eyes.

You should not isolate the black community from the rest of the University. This only causes bad feelings and raises even greater obstacles in the path toward interracial cooperation. Some examples of this "spot-light journal-

ism" are your "Forty acres and a mule aren't enough Jack" article and your total indictment of Christopher Columbus. Like it or not, the subjects of these articles are parts of our history and cannot be forgotten. Nor can the black community expect the "White" community to feel remorse for things that their ancestors did long ago.

Your report on the treatment of two black women received in Montreal because on and incident on a bus also indicates the African slant which your paper has fostered. That incident was one example of a type of thing that goes on all the time, why give it such coverage? To pit the York black community and even the York community in general against francophone Quebecers? I found that article irresponsible.

Your paper is interesting, usually insightful, and forward thinking. Do not let yourselves fall into the pit of boosterism, because that is not your place. Your place is to report on the thoughts, feelings, complaints and concerns of the York university community in general. Not to encourage racial conflict, arrogance and guilt and not to give undue attention to one facet of the beautiful Kaleidoscope which is our community.

Alexandre Sévigny

Excal responds:

The above letter was one of two received by *Excalibur* complaining that there is too much focus on Black issues in the newspaper. In the first of an occasional series addressing issues raised in our letters section, the Black Writers caucus responds.

Those of you who have followed *Excalibur* over the years will have noticed significant changes in the paper this year. More articles addressing issues of concern to the Black community and reflecting a Black perspective have appeared. In addition, "minority" issues in general are receiving better coverage. These changes reflect the beginning of efforts to make the paper more representative of the diversity of York's Student Community.

The Black community at York is probably the largest Black academic community in Canada. Our fees (like everyone else's) support the *Excalibur* and yet we have never really been represented in the paper. This situation of benign neglect worsened last year when racially offensive articles appeared in the *Excalibur*. The situation was so serious that students mobilized to have the editor dismissed and were eventually successful. The students demanded that steps be taken to prevent that type of situation from recurring. Because the Black Community had been the victims of the initial problem, it was felt that the *Excalibur* had a particular mandate to reconcile itself to the Black Community. As a result the Black Caucus was created to bring together Black Writers to ensure that a Black perspective is represented in the *Excalibur*.

Apart from the articles which deal explicitly with "Black issues" we feel that the question of perspective is an important one. Naturally authors write from their own position in the socio-economic hierarchy. In most print media, articles tend to reflect the perspective of White, middle-class males. Not only does this shape their point of view on a particular issue but it also determines what issues get any coverage at all. We

Post Script

feel very strongly about our responsibility to provide a different perspective. As evidenced by the current debate, the people to whom Christopher Columbus brought wealth think of him in very different terms from those he stole it from. Expect to see stories from us that you won't find in mainstream press and expect a new approach on the same old issues.

In addition to the Black Caucus there is a Women's Caucus. It was never intended that these be the only caucuses but the process of giving the *Excalibur* back to the students is still in its infancy. There is nothing to prevent any group which feels it is not being represented from setting up a Caucus.

Those who find that the status quo works just fine for them will be uncomfortable with what we do. That is to be expected. Rather than criticising our efforts we suggest that these people start trying to make a contribution because this is their paper too.

Writer takes issue with editors

Dear Editor,

I wrote an article simply to reach more York students who may be interested in the Reading Series. Now, I may have made some journalistic faux pas, and I admit, some parts of it were somewhat unnecessary and unconventional, and I realize you must edit to a certain extent in terms of space and syntax: but Editor, you re-wrote my article. You changed key words, re-worked entire passages, omitting the best and most important ones altogether.

I never said I was writing my own "epic". How arrogant. Sir Gowain And the Green Knight would have to wait because I was working on my own poetry. In fact, the irony of it all is so self-evident that your substitution of "epic" for "poems" is sadly ironic.

I realize that I should thank you for publishing my article, considering my last-minute submission, but I think you should read a little more carefully before you take to a pen yourself. You civilized my style, but I sort of accepted that: as a newspaper your main goal is to simply communicate information. However, Ed, you left out the most relevant and informative passages.

The purpose of Creative Writing workshops is to work-shop your work. That means generating constructive feedback from your classmates, and reciprocating with honest critiques. It's a collective process, young writers teaching and learning from each other. That's how workshops make us better writers! Not just reading and listening to each other!

You also omitted the one passage that dealt directly with the Reading Series. Why it exists in the first place: to give student writers a place to showcase their work to an audience, which helps them develop their per-

formance skills and confidence; to reach more people both in and outside the Creative Writing Dept.; to support and promote and celebrate our serious creative artists. That's what made me decide to run this gig. Not because "I enjoyed my Writers Read experience so much..." That was very unprofessional. You make me sound like a dipstick promoting some dumb product. If this is about power you lose., How credible is a newspaper that belittles its contributor's integrity?

I wanted to generate interest in a social activity which involves a tremendous amount of courage on the writer's part, considering most of us break open wounds in front of an audience. And the tremendous amount of respect and attention these audiences have given us this year.

I think I have a very ancient conception of the power and purpose of

poetry and public readings, but what's wrong with that? There has been an excess of apathy both in and outside the Creative Writing Dept., but then that only reflects what goes inside the larger social spheres of big impersonal business with their administrative agendas and their demigod duties. One of which is to desensitize us to the person, poetic voices. After all, they don't make anyone much money, nor are they newsworthy.

I'm overreacting, so what? Keep on rocking, *Excalibur*.

P.S. I wrote my name on the submission so I'm sorta responsible for this but, um, how could you misspell my last name with a Q, when it's followed by an "o"? Wake up.

P.P.S Do not edit this.

Zaffi Gousopoulos.

To whom it may concern:

After reading your horrendous account of the dyslexic lumberjacks in Canada's Yukon Territory, it behooves me to voice my disgust of the absolute crap your dog-eared editors allow into-called "newspaper."

Is it not enough I should have a such hope a bleed (though truly, on can expected amidst the overcrowded administrative staff, and crappy transit service (not only do they want me to pay two goddamn dollars for a ride on their 1962 red and rust coloured sloths, but they

expect me to wait 40 minutes for each bus which, by the way never goes right into the York campus, but rather leaves you stranded on the edge of civ-

king of the university, ed editors allow into-called "newspaper." I'm up this holding a sword personally in the hall of higher cause there is no to turn to whom I can freely.

If I had a subscription to your waste of paper, I'd cancel it.

Up yours,

Louis Cypher
Louis Cypher

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