

Theology prof speaks on

## Black churches and equal rights

by Heather Hueston

Peter Paris has come a long way since leaving his native New Glasgow in 1958. The Princeton Theology Seminary professor, now a naturalized American citizen, was at the grassroots of both the African independence movement and the American civil rights movement.

In town to address the fifth anniversary of the Black Cultural Centre last weekend, Dr. Paris also spoke Friday at the North Branch Library on **The Black Experience in Nova Scotia, Africa and the United States**. Paris, the author of **Social Teachings of Black Churches**, and a professor of Christian Social Theory, emphasized the role of the churches in the struggle for black consciousness and equal rights.

The church was important for Paris, who left New Glasgow after graduating from Acadia to work for the Student Christian Movement, a university-based ecumenical organization. Of the

few blacks in Nova Scotia who went on to college in those days, said Paris, the vast majority were training for the ministry. His work in the SCM and a brief student exchange trip to Nigeria resulted in his being invited back to Nigeria to head their Student Christian Movement.

He arrived during the "ferment" of the early 60's when African countries emerged from decades of colonial white rule to become sovereign nations, an event which electrified blacks around the world. Paris related how one Nigerian minister's accepted notion of British supremacy in all things was shattered when he heard God speak with an American accent in the movie **The Ten Commandments**.

Paris returned home in 1965 and enrolled in the University of Chicago's graduate school to learn more about the political, moral and ethical questions he'd grappled with during his time in Nigeria. It was here that he met fellow seminary student Jesse

Jackson and became part of the student network supporting Martin Luther King's civil rights campaign. Detailing the boycotts of companies which supplied, yet refused to hire any of the city's one million segregated blacks, Paris said King's program laid the foundation for the black consciousness movement and its theological wing, liberation theology. These concepts upset both blacks and whites, but it was the white press that most bitterly

attacked the frightening idea of Black Power.

Paris said it was necessary to prove that power is power and black power is simply power for blacks. "Without that, blacks are powerless ... and if you allow someone else to define you, that sows seeds of inferiority."

Paris said liberation theology, rooted in the different ideas of God held by a slave and a slaveholder, had resulted in "a great plurality" of theories still struggling with the dominant theology of white males.

Paris has recently returned from Africa, where he visited the relocation camps of South Africa. Although Paris said he prefers non-violence over violence, "humans don't change without some violent interlude. A revolu-

tion is what's needed. Since a revolution is a constitutional change, the question is whether it will be peaceful or violent."

Paris, who has returned often to Nova Scotia, had kept in touch with the Black United Front's progress here. Paris was hired to report on the first five years of BUF in 1973, and was even offered the job of executive director but decided not to give up his tenured position at Princeton. When asked why he didn't stay in Canada, Paris said after he got his PhD, none of the Canadian universities offered him a job. He said he's pleased to see the rise in black graduates from local high schools and universities, but added that now racism is harder to fight because it is subtler.

## Gays and lesbians involved at Dalhousie

by Edward Fobes

Last Thursday, in room 314 of the Student Union Building, Gays and Lesbians at Dalhousie held their first biweekly meeting of the year. This, their first get-together, drew 14 people. Because the group is the only one of its

kind in the Halifax area, outsiders, as well as Dal students, faculty, and other employees are welcome.

GLAD came into existence about two years ago after a nine year hiatus.

One of GLAD's main services is "The Word Is Out", a weekly radio program on CKDU concentrating on gay and lesbian news. They also provide a yearly gay and lesbian supplement to the Dalhousie Gazette. For the first time, these and other operations will be run from GLAD's own office. People who are seeking additional information on gay and lesbian events can call the office's number, which will become available in the near future.

Last year, GLAD received \$259 from Dalhousie University. To supplement this relatively small funding, they hosted a coffee house and ran the weekly concession stand for Monday night movies at the SUB. Part of the money generated by these ventures was donated to Gay Pride Day and the Simon Nkodi fund.

(Nkodi is a gay South African poet who is being persecuted for his sexual preference.)

Members of GLAD can look forward to special speakers at meetings, access to gay literature, and gay-positive movies every three weeks, as well as picnics, safe-sex parties, and even afternoons at the bowling lanes. There are also the responsibilities of helping out at the office, preparing the radio show, and participating in fundraising ventures.

These services and activities help increase the general public's awareness of the gay community. Even more importantly, they provide the chance for gays and lesbians to have fun together in a non-threatening environment.

Gays and lesbians belonging to this group enjoy a forum in which they can be themselves without any fear of rebuke. In society at large, this is not always the case. According to the group's acting president, 90 per cent of people are not gay and they dominate society. The remaining ten per cent need a place, too.

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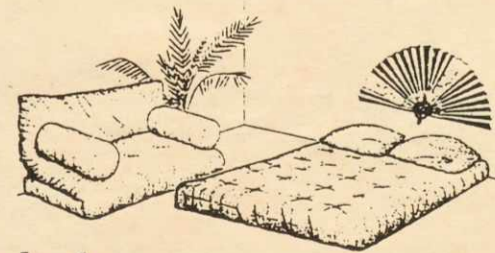
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