

editorial

Your voice: use it or lose it

What we have here is a failure to communicate. Dalhousie University, and indeed any campus, is an insular community of variegated composition. The one thing that all 12,000 of us have in common is our presence. Of all the universities we could have chosen, we chose this one. By the grace of this decision, we are all intangibly and tenuously linked.

When something occurs on campus that affects a number of students, osmotically we are all affected. The dynamic that was Frosh Week is doubtless the event with the furthest-reaching implications to evolve at Dalhousie so far this year. Frosh Week directly affects 3,500 or so first-year students, and indirectly affects us all. With this idea in mind, *The Gazette* laid the burden of critiquing Frosh Week upon the shoulders of one brand-spanking new staff member, who was a Frosh himself.

He spoke to people campus-wide, gathering impressions. A day after his assignment, he investigated the details of the story which became our cover story on Frosh Week.

The first rumour I would like to dispel is this: "That *Gazette* article got our Frosh leaders fined and ruined our Frosh Week." False. The *Gazette* article was written on Monday, September 14. A quick date-check will show that the events related in the story all occurred before we printed anything. This issue is the first appearance of the article. Also, by reading the article, my opinion is that (a) your Frosh Week was ruined long before we came on the scene, and (b) whether our article would have affected in any way the outcome of the case, it would have been printed. Students have a right to know.

The misconception that the investigations of a *Gazette* staff member "cut short Frosh Week" at Henderson House has had an interesting repercussion. Apparently, Dennis MacNeil, Vice President of the Dalhousie Student's Union, has been exhorting the Residence Council of Henderson House to circulate an anti-*Gazette* petition. With 500 signatures, any Society's mandate can be changed: that is, a referendum could be held to cut or curtail its budget. MacNeil has been unavailable for comment, so he has neither confirmed nor denied this allegation.

My point is this: WE ARE YOUR NEWSPAPER. We are one of the few bodies on campus that are purely concerned with representing you, the student. No hidden mandate, no secret agenda, no profit even. If you have something to say to us, write it down and send it in. That way, your point reaches our entire readership (of 10,000) instead of being lost. Let us know what you want- because without us, no one will know.

Jenn Beck



Ignorance is not bliss

A contentious cutline under last week's *Gazette* front page photo showed how dangerous a lack of awareness can be. The phrase, "shiny, happy people being introduced to Dal", originally chosen with a cheery R.E.M. song in mind, described the smiling youth in the picture. Unfortunately, no one in our office spotted the implications of this statement when associated with Black people, for Black slaves were once referred to as "shiny" when the hot sun reflected off their dark skin during work. Any association with any form of "sunshine" has racist connotations.

In fact, contemporary language has many racist terms inherent within it. For example, the word "black" is consistently used in a negative manner. One should say "underground" instead of "black market", and refrain from using expressions like "The pot called the kettle black". In using the slogan, "Black is Beautiful", Seventies' Civil Rights movement, attempted to reclaim the term.

Some may say this is being too sensitive and complain of an overload of "politically correct" language, but these people miss the point of encouraging such language. Language shapes our perceptions of the world around us, and thus "correct language" is used in an effort to help eliminate labels and work towards making people feel included, and thus more comfortable, in our society.

It is crucial every member of the student population feels equally included in order to assure their freedom to fully participate in the campus community. Perhaps a few hamburger-toting people were puzzled when the theme of last Thursday's "Sexual Orientation Orientation barbecue" was announced, nevertheless, a wholehearted welcome extended to all new students to Dalhousie, not just the white, heterosexual, able-bodied men of traditional portrayals of college life, rang through.

Fortunately, the scenes of homogeneous campus are now archaic. Indeed, society has too long seemed like a big high school with a very exclusive "in" crowd. Now, it's time to spruce up our attitudes towards each other, recognizing the subtle and not-so-subtle aspects of living in a diverse community.

The staff of the *Dalhousie Gazette* apologizes for our oversight and promises to make every effort to make sure similar mistakes do not happen again. We plan to hold a "Racial Sensitivity Workshop" for everyone involved in the newspaper and encourage all members of the student community to provide their input. There is a lot more to a university education than just academics. The importance of keeping an open mind could be the most valuable lesson we learn.

Miriam Korn

the Gazette

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Contributors

Mike Asuncion
Mike Zelle
Michael Sean Morris
Michael Graham
Adam Newman
Chantal Saxe
Leslie Furlong
Bruce Gilcrest
Jeffrey Somebody

Editors

Jennifer Beck
Miriam Korn

Typesetter

Tammy Rogers

Ad/Business

Manager

Connie Clarke
494-2507

Student Union Building, Dalhousie University,
6136 University Ave., Halifax, N.S., B3H 4J2

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homophobic or libelous nature. Deadline for commentary, letters to the editor, and announcements is noon on Friday before publication (Thursday of each week). Submissions may be left at the SUB Enquiry Desk c/o The *Gazette*. Commentary should not exceed 500 words. Letters should not exceed 300 words. No unsigned material will be accepted, but anonymity may be granted upon request.

Advertising copy deadline is noon Monday before publication. The *Gazette* offices are located on the third floor of the SUB. Come up and have a coffee and tell us what's going on. The views expressed in The *Gazette* are not necessarily those of the Students' Union, the editors or the collective staff.