

Accessory to murder

Legally speaking, North American women and men are equal. Theoretically, as a young woman, I can look forward to working side by side with my male counterparts for years to come, earning the same amount they do. Theoretically, we are no different.

Realistically, we are.

Realistically, in my lifetime, women will not always have the opportunity to work the same jobs or earn the same wages as men. We will not share the same freedoms.

Why not? It's simple biology.

Women bear children. And traditionally, we stayed at home with these children — devoting our lives to their care and the care of their fathers.

So what happens when a woman doesn't want to devote her life to others? What happens when a woman would

rather work or study or just fool around rather than bear children? Men have had this option for years. Women have to fight for it.

10 years ago, Canadian women were granted the right to "abortion on demand". Before 1988, women seeking abortions had to go through a three-doctor-panel supposed to determine whether the abortion was a medical necessity. If it wasn't, no abortion. So the 1988 decision was a major victory for women, bringing us as close as we've ever been to enjoying the same freedoms as a man.

The reproductive freedom abortion brings is only the beginning. In a world where a woman can still lose her job for becoming pregnant and where inadequate support systems mean most single-mother families are living well below the poverty line, the ability to terminate an unwanted pregnancy is a huge weight off women's shoulders.

Unfortunately, society is not willing to grant us this right. Abortion clinics are still hidden deep within our hospitals. And doctors are reluctant to provide this service for fear of their lives.

Just last week Dr. Barnett Slepian, a New York abortion doctor, was killed in his home by a sniper who shot him through the window. It was the first death in what is believed to be a series of five shootings over the last four years. All five attacks occurred within a few weeks of Remembrance Day and have become known as the "Remembrance Day shootings".

I was raised a Catholic and

"pro-choice" either. I take issue with the term itself. I don't believe abortion is a choice for any woman. A choice involves picking from a variety of options, each with their pros and cons, each appealing in it's own way.

You choose between chocolate or strawberry ice cream. You choose between Coke and Pepsi. You don't choose abortion; it's often the only alternative.

Faced with the chance of abandonment by a partner, having to quit school, losing a job, or raising a child alone and in poverty, many women feel there is no choice. By choosing to have the child, they stand to lose everything else they hold valuable. They feel they will never be able to give their child the life they deserve — that abortion is often the only fair thing to do.

Is it the fault of women that the distribution of wealth is skewed so that many cannot earn enough to support their families? Is it women's fault that the male-dominated government keeps ignoring pleas for universal daycare?

Perhaps anti-abortionists would make better use of their time lobbying the government to address women's inequality instead of badgering the already-tormented women outside abortion clinics.

Murdering an abortion provider does nothing to reduce the demand for abortion. The doctor is not the enemy. We all are.

As long as welfare mothers are ridiculed, child-care isn't free, and people refuse to admit that women are still not equal in our society, women are driven to abort their fetuses.

You can picket all you want, but if you're not also providing a viable long-term alternative, you're the reason they are there. If she's a murderer, so are you.

NATALIE MACLELLAN

Editorial

considered myself "pro-life" until very recently. I know the abortion debate from both sides. But I've begun to wonder how much of the debate is relevant. I don't know if an embryo is a person. I don't know if an unborn child has a soul or feels pain.

This is what I do know. A pregnant woman is a person. She feels pain. I also know she feels fear, guilt, regret and abandonment. Where do her feelings fit into the debate?

They don't — unless it's to point out that she's a coward. People say women should not be sexually active if they are not willing to deal with the consequences — that abortion is the "easy way out."

But it's not that simple. Abortion is not "easy" in any sense of the word.

So while I no longer consider myself "pro-life", I can't say I would ever label myself

Letters

Labelling *Playboy* as hate 'inaccurate'

To the editor,

As a feminist, journalist and university lecturer, I have spent many years following conflicts over what expression will be tolerated in a community, and so I have read about the controversy over *Playboy* reps on your campus with interest. Much of what I have seen seems the sort of healthy give-and-take the principals of free speech means to encourage. However, vilifying *Playboy* as hate literature contributes nothing to the discussion; the term is more loaded than enlightening, and in this case, it is inaccurate.

R.v. Butler (1992) does codify the theory that obscenity causes harm, but *Playboy* has never been ruled obscene, and *Butler* cites no credible, scientific evidence of this causal relationship because there is none. This is not for lack of trying. The charge has been made in

various guises as long as lewd pictures and writing have been around, which is a very long time. Women are disproportionately victims of sexual predation, and this abuse must be curtailed, but pretending that we will be protected before speech is suppressed is a triumph of wishful thinking. It is also dangerous thinking because it confuses a policing action with a political one and distracts us from activities that could genuinely improve women's lives. The application of *Butler* has demonstrated that censorship is no friend of women.

Whether representatives of *Playboy*, or any business intent on selling a product or "lifestyle," have a valid contribution to make to an academic community is a question that merits discussion, but no one is in physical or psychological danger because they are there.

Nan Levinson
Somerville, Massachusetts

Clarification: Last week's article, "Tea and history mark Person's Day" by Natalie MacLellan, attributed Kate Greenaway as saying "it was an oversight by men that led to women becoming persons".

Ms. Greenaway would like to clarify this was a paraphrase of her words and is incorrect. She says it was "a lot of work by righteous women" and not men's oversight that led to women becoming recognized as persons.

The Gazette apologizes to Ms. Greenaway for any inconvenience caused by this mistake.

THE GAZETTE presents a short fiction contest

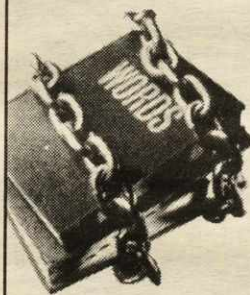
Read the Gazette for information regarding judges and prizes.

Three selected entries will be printed in the January 28th edition of the Gazette.

For information call 494-2507 or drop by the Gazette, room 312, SUB.

Guidelines:

- up to 2500 words
- any style of prose permitted (THE GAZETTE reserves the right to refuse offensive, racist, sexist, homophobic, hateful or other unsuitable materials at its sole discretion.)
- open only to Dalhousie students
- deadline January 15, 1999



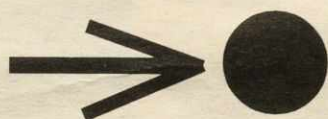
Dont keep it to yourself...

Oh look Reggie, more letters about that Stephen Brown controversy!

New topic Wilbur, new topic. I'm turning the page now Wilbur, here we go, right-o? Golly! Witches!



PRESS
HERE



Congratulations!
You have ink on your finger!

Get your hands dirty, write for the Gazette.
rm 312 SUB staff meetings@4:30 every monday

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All submissions must be typed double-spaced on paper, e-mailed, or on a Mac or IBM 3 1/2 inch disk, in a WP version not greater than Word 6.0 or equivalent. The deadline is Mondays at 4:30 p.m.

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