

Home away from home

M.K.: Last weekend, at a newspaper conference in Newfoundland, a man from Sri Lanka was explaining why he was appropriate for the position of regional Human Rights coordinator. He knew how it felt to wake up in the morning, feeling utterly alone, like no one understood him, he said. It would not be any different if he went to Sri Lanka, because there he would now be considered a foreigner as well. "Wow," I thought, "I'm not alone. Others feel the same way as I do."

H.A.: Yes, I think that feeling is the same for many people who grow up knowing two different countries as home, usually one's own birthplace as well as one's parent's birthplace. My parents are from Ghana, and I was born there too, but we have lived in many different places, Halifax being the place we have settled longest. When people ask me "Where are you from?" I don't know what to say. I am both Canadian and African, but I cannot define myself with geographical location. In this sense, I have no home.

I was born in Halifax, but I often find myself telling people I don't feel like I was born here. My mother is from Israel and my father spent most of his childhood there, so I feel a very strong connection with "the land of milk and honey", especially considering my family's periodic visits there and the various Israeli knick knacks which adorn our home.

Our house is somewhat similar. My parents have adopted a North American lifestyle, but refer to Ghana as home. Wherever we go, we network with the local Ghanaian community. This makes their "adopted country" a piece of home. I know that when my parents retire, they will return to Ghana. In a way, I have also adopted each place that we have lived as a temporary home. This further clouds my sense of identity because, unlike my parents, I have nothing to go back to in Ghana. I am a visitor.

I sometimes wonder if I would have been happier growing up in Israeli society. But then I wonder if I am just responding to the underlying pressure to go back to Israel because it is the long-sought homeland of the Jewish people. I am grateful for my Jewish identity which virtually assures me a haven among Jewish people anywhere I am in the world, but, I have never really felt a connection with the North American Jewish community. On the other hand, there has always been an instant rapport between me and the occasional Israeli I meet. Speaking my first language, Hebrew, with a peer is a special treat.

I feel welcomed as part of the local Ghanaian community, however, I feel my experiences and feelings are closer to the African-Canadian community. I have grown up in this country, and face most of their sentiments and challenges. We share the same link and blood lines to the Motherland. They are very much a part of me.

I hope to go to Israel again sometime soon, on my own, just to look around, visit my relatives and see how I feel about the place, hopefully gaining an understanding of how it fits into my life "in the grand scheme of things." Maybe I'll settle there someday, or perhaps I'll manage to find my own unique niche in some other magical corner of the world.

As the saying goes "Home is where the heart is." I think this saying lends credence to the thoughts we have expressed, and the sentiments of the many people from fragmented backgrounds. Next week we will be celebrating the cultural diversity found on campus and across the nation. All of us have a heritage from many parts of the world, whether this heritage is first generation or twenty-first. Living in Canada or being Canadian must encompass an appreciation for our diversity. More than that, we should take the time to think of the many foreign and native cultures that enrich our lives immensely. Even though I do feel 'isolated' from a geographical home, I am thankful to the Africans and African-Canadians who have shaped my life, and given me a base to understand and define who I am and where I come from. There is no need to come from a place, when you come from a people.

Miriam Korn and Hermie Abraham

Erratum: Janis Weston wrote "Images", a poem that appeared in the March 4, 1993 issue of the Gazette.

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editorial

Queer and collected

The term homosexual has an interesting and brief history. It was first used in 1864 in an attempt to identify a certain type of sexual behavior. The development of the term homosexual evolved from the attempts at the Victorians to maintain their sexual behavior as natural, real, and legitimate and to therefore identify "other". The development of the term was primarily directed at limiting men in what had become an increasingly visible, although I doubt more frequent, mode of sexual expression. Sodomy laws before that had been directed at the restriction of anal sex between men. This seemed an extension of that law. If nothing else, it was a more convenient method of distinction between modes of sexual expression which were considered inferior, immoral and illegal.

The term also has a very clinical basis. The term itself can be separated into two distinct parts. "Homo" being same and "sexual" meaning "having sex; of reproduction by the union of male and female (Webster's Encyclopedic Dictionary 1988). The world of psychology, medicine and religion all played their role in the clinicalization of the term. The term heterosexual, which came about some thirty years later, has an equally clinical connotation and definition.

Essentially, what I am trying to demonstrate is that for years the world existed, functioned and continued without the need for the categorization of sexualities into very limited and restrictive categories of expression. However, I do not believe that eliminating these categories will assume the annihilation of oppression. One does not necessarily defuse op-

Victorians tried to maintain their sexual behavior as natural, real and legitimate

pression by rejecting the categories which make it identifiable. It is necessary to examine the origins and apparent need for these categories to exist. Do they exist to solidify and strengthen modes of peripheral sexuality that would be otherwise ignored or do they exist for the purposes of oppression through identification? I highly doubt that many people would believe these categories originated to provide queer people with a solidified identity; although I will grant

that many people may feel empowered by claiming membership in the category of "homosexual" due to the present social and political environment.

Politically it is very powerful to coalesce under a common goal but does that necessarily entail accepting the limited diametrically opposed categories of "homosexual" and "heterosexual"? It is with much apprehension that I would accept these categories and find it difficult to collect under a common aim if I in fact reject them. I therefore find myself aligned with many political groups in an effort to satisfy my social, political and personal goals. Does that necessarily mean that I have lost important political clout? I don't think so. I can maintain a strong voice without conceding to the narrow absolute goals of one political group.

Accepting the terms "homosexual" and "heterosexual" therefore has obvious political implications. Although it may appear to limit political organisation and action, that is not necessarily the result. Question and reflect as to why you may accept the terminology and categories we so often incorporate into our vocabulary. The results may surprise you.

Anthony Roberts BGLAD!



LETTERS

The Dalhousie Gazette welcomes letters to the editor. Letters should not exceed 300 words in length and should be typed and double-spaced. The deadline for letters is Monday noon before publication. Letters may be submitted on Mac or IBM-compatible 3.5" disk.

The swimsuit issue

To the editor:

As an avid sports fan, I thoroughly enjoyed the Dal/SMU basketball game at the Dalplex on March 3. I left the game in somewhat wilted spirits however, only partly due to the final score. During the first half of the game St. Mary's was on the foul line when several male Dalhousie fans took it upon themselves to distract the shooter by standing behind the endline and unrolling a poster of a nearly naked woman. It is to these individuals that this letter is directed.

I do not issue with your desire to distract the shooter. I am angered and offended by your modis operandi. While you saw breasts, long hair, and sexy legs on your poster, I saw a poster that said, "I objectify women. My friends do too." Your poster was an insult.

Several thoughts ran through my head as I observed your inanity from across the court. First, what rock did you crawl out from under? I am astounded by your lack of awareness of gender issues, and wonder why you chose to advertise it. Secondly, I wonder if you realize the full extent of your actions. My friends and I felt as if you

were saying that we didn't belong here — in your pre-historic mind set, men belong in sports and women should be seen and not heard. In my athletic career I have faced sexism from umpires, referees, school budget committees, and insurance companies. Women are constantly demeaned and belittled in sport. Your poster was a blatant reminder of this during a basketball game that I was enjoying, and I'll now add "peers" to the above list of offenders.

Christine Cleghorn

anatomy bashing

To the editor:

Shame on you. I would have thought that a special women's issue of the Gazette would provide an opportunity to deal with some important issues of concern for Dal women. Silly me, I was wrong.

When I opened the first page I was disappointed and angered by the childish, offensive and just plain dumb "Personal Bill of Rights for Women Who Do Too Much". I hope that your readers are intelligent enough to realize that statements such as "I have the right to hate you because you have a

penis" do not reflect the opinions of most feminists, women and human beings. Sadly, this statement does reflect a smirking hatred of men by the person or persons at the Gazette who were too cowardly to sign their name to this awful manifesto.

Was this bill of rights an ironic satire of "women who do too much"? I can only hope so, but the way in which it was written did not make me chuckle. Statements such as these are not funny, and they do nothing but harm the improvement of relations between the sexes. Your little bill of rights will convince many male and female readers that the feminist cause is simply one of vengeance and self-righteousness, devoid of intellectual basis or even common sense. Forget a feminist backlash — this male anatomy bashing statement is a case of women stupidly slapping their own sex across the face. And that is a grim, rather than a humorous irony.

K.D. Orr

Letters

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