

# Opinion

By Stephanie Douglas

I know, I know, there is an international day for just about everything these days. So many in fact, that many of us have stopped reading past the "for" part, and quickly scan ahead for something else to read. Every international, global, or annual day of something, has events and fundraisers attached to it.

The International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, March 21st, is no exception. There will be a number of events taking place in Charlottetown which are being co-sponsored by organisations such as the PEI Multicultural Council and the Human Rights Commission.

I'm not much of a group activity person, so my way of taking note of this day, and the effect that this issue plays in my life, is more of a solitary affair. I like to honour the growth I've gone through during the past year. Unfortunately, this growth is usually accomplished with quite a bit of pain. It's not so much growth in knowledge, but more like growth in the more vulnerable part of who I am, the one that feels hurt. This part seems to be growing rather than diminishing, because my experience of prejudice and discrimination is growing. Funny, how 30 years ago, I had never personally experienced racism, and yet during these past couple of years this has changed. These experiences with racism have begun to accumulate.

I have lived in Los Angeles, Spain, Victoria and Vancouver, and yet the only place where I have experienced both overt and covert racism, to the point where it has touched my heart, has been on PEI. At this juncture, anyone thinking or saying, "well, go back to where you came from," would simply make

the point for me. Where do I come from? What does that matter because where would I go back to, after 22 years of living, working, volunteering, giving birth and raising a child, not to mention burying a parent here, on this soil call Canada.

Maybe it is the fact that the word "racism" provokes so much defensiveness and protest from many Islanders, and it is in this protest that the lack of movement takes hold. Until an individual, a community, or a society acknowledges there are problems when it comes to interacting, understanding, valuing and accepting difference, then there will be no room for that difference to actually exist. Sometimes, awareness and sensitivity are more a state of acknowledgment than a state of action.

Racism, discrimination and prejudice all deal with elements of exclusion: of covertly or overtly being told that you do not belong, you are not a part of something larger than yourself, and that you lack value in being considered a part of this larger whole. In fact, you are excluded from the whole because in racist terms "there really aren't enough of you to bother showing that you exist." UPEI's promotional material this year in the form of its course calendar and its television ads are blatantly racist and discriminatory. If we acknowledge that media imagery is powerful and tends to use symbolism to press its message, the racism inherent in this year's imagery is definitely not subtle.

I believe in always giving someone the benefit of the doubt. So, rather than thinking it was on purpose, I thought that there was an oversight, or a lack of awareness or of sensitivity. However, I was told

this was not the case and that the media promotions were well thought out by professionals who know their jobs. That being the case, I feel this discrimination is intentional.

In reality, UPEI's student population reflects the larger Island community. In addition to First Nations people, there are a growing number of mature students, as well as people who strive beyond physical or mental challenges in order to gain an education. UPEI also

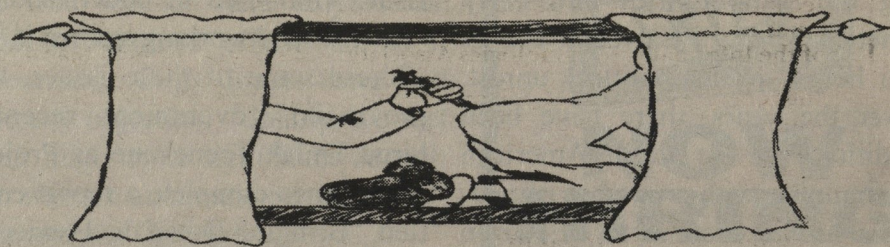
reflects the growing cultural diversity in PEI. On this campus there is global representation in the form of students from Morocco, Asia, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Lebanon, Liberia and Latin America, to name a few. Our exclusion from the promotional material, well lets just say, I've already said it and it is why in the 21st Century, we still need an International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.



UPEI Theatre Society and  
DEparturE frOm SANity PRODUCTIONS  
presents

## IT RUNS IN THE FAMILY

a british comedy by:  
Ray Cooney



By special arrangement with Samuel French Inc.  
Directed by Danny Maloney

**Location:** Carrefour Theatre

**When:** 8 pm March 22, 23, 24

**Cost:** \$5 Students and Seniors  
\$8 Adults

**Why:** To find out what happens when a lie  
gets out of control!!!

Featuring:

Adam Gauthier  
Joshua Hooper  
Tawnya MacKinnon  
Juhli Lyncaster

Jarren Richards  
Stephanie McCormick  
Lori Doiron  
Andrew MacPhee

Melanie Stavert  
Gary Vincent  
Anne Van Eyk  
Jennifer Campbell