

Violence amongst minorities only perpetuates stereotypes



IAN KETEKU

Much has been made in the past about violence at nightclubs here in Edmonton—as well as the ensuing discrimination that inevitably stems from it—and after the events of Saturday night at the Red Light Lounge, this issue is once again at the forefront of local media and public circles.

Unfortunately, I cannot deny that black males, violence and nightclubs go together all too often. I have known individuals that been the victims and victimizers of “black on black” violence in the nightclubs, and am not ignorant in this matter. I also cannot refute the fact that some of the discrimination on the part of the staff that takes place at these facilities of leisure is based on the intended protection of the other patrons, based on past instances of violence where ethnic minorities were involved. But this issue is complex and will not be solved by placing blame and pointing fingers. The solution lies in education.

Many of the black youth of this city need to seriously think about the ramifications of their public actions before they undertake them, moreso than is the case with white youth. This is unfortunate, but true. I doubt that the instigators understand the ramifications that their actions have on their communities, the

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reputation of their demographic and the future of the youth from that demographic. The effect of the actions of a few ethnic minorities unfortunately influences the perception that the mainstream citizenry have of their respective communities.

We need to question our role models and deconstruct the stereotypes that they perpetuate, a responsibility of every member of our society. The idea of buying a gun and using it to settle a beef with an adversary is not something that is taught in schools or by our parents; rather it derives from mass media and the image of what television, movies and popular music illustrate as the epitome of a young black male. We need to stop attempting to emulate 50 Cent and start emulating leaders in our community and individuals that help our youth prosper and grow.

But who’s going to administer such education and change? It’s not only the mission of these wannabe gangsters, their parents or the community but everyone else as well, from the government to the scriptwriters for television shows—and, most importantly, teachers. The lack of cultural competence and anti-racism training for current and potential teachers is appalling. The result is a plethora of immigrant and minority youth who

perform below average in school, don’t continue to postsecondary education and are left vulnerable to influences from gangs, violence and hate. Another factor is the less-than-effective promotion of stricter gun laws that were the advent of the Conservative government. Harper wishes to introduce a law that will establish a minimum sentence for gun crimes. This will only make it more difficult to obtain the weapons, but to use a cliché: “guns don’t kill people—people do.” It doesn’t remove the hate, fear and anger that are rampant among youth in our communities. These resources should be directed toward youth education programs that illustrate the consequences of joining gangs and promoting violence.

Finally, it’s imperative that we critically examine the types of crimes and criminals that the police service, politicians and media romanticize. The fact that they pay special attention to certain blue-collar crimes and ethnic-minority criminals creates a false perception that these types of crimes and criminals constitute the majority—a façade that will not lose ground until we all work together to eliminate the factors that produce situations of violence.

Hotheads wreaking havoc on youth

A little bit of tolerance can go a long way in preventing senseless violence



CHRIS SALTTEL

23 October, 2005—does that date ring a bell? It was the weekend before Halloween last year. It’s the day a gangster wannabe fired a gun at a group of girls in hopes of frightening them. It was on 134 Avenue and 124 Street, just a short walk from Orlando’s Pub, that my friend Sarah Easton was shot by this “gangster.” The bullet did more than scare them, as bullets to the head are rarely just frightening. Sarah died a senseless death that night while walking home with friends from her 18th birthday party.

The newspapers called it a random shooting. No one knew of any motivation for it. A friend that was with Sarah the night of the shooting told me that the guy was making advances on her and her entourage, and that he had been consistently rejected. Everyone thought he was just being a drunken asshole. He left the bar and waited for them in his car in the parking lot. They never even knew he was following them.

I can’t name very many people who deserved this less than Sarah did. Her friendships bridged the normal cliques of a high school, so you can imagine the size of her funeral. Sarah touched hearts—including mine—

and she is missed.

So as you parade out this weekend and fill night clubs and house parties, remember why you’re out in the first place. We go out to have a good time and create memories that we’ll laugh at later. Let’s remember that everyone is out to have a good time, there’s no reason to resolve our differences with violence.

Apparently I wasn’t the only one interested in her Moulin Rouge attire. Another guy sitting at the bar with me had been trying to pick her up all night, and it’s safe to say that the cock-block I laid down on him wasn’t appreciated.

Last Saturday I went to my neighborhood pub, the Horse Shu, and found myself in just this sort of predicament. I went to see the bartender, a friend of mine, in her Halloween costume, which consisted of a corset and Adrianna Lima-esque panties.

Apparently I wasn’t the only one interested in her Moulin Rouge attire. Another guy sitting at the bar with me had been trying to pick her up all night,

and it’s safe to say that the cock-block I laid down on him wasn’t appreciated. When he shook my hand he squeezed with fierceness and fire in his drunken, half-passed-out eyes. I diffused the situation by buying two Kokanees instead of one. I asked the fellow his name, we chatted about Dwayne Roloson’s outstanding shutout performance, and by the time he left, a fist-fight was out of the question between buddies as well acquainted as us.

I haven’t talked to anyone who’s enjoying the growing crime rate in our beloved city. Everyone seems to have the same sense that it’s unnecessary and unfortunate. Sunday morning’s shooting at the Red Light Lounge has unfortunately brought this back into the spotlight for at least a week or two.

So if a guy stares you down, buy him a beer and find out why. If he’s dancing with your significant other, remember you’re the one she’s going home with. The knowledge that it will be you, and not Mr Grinds-to-close, that will be going home with your girlfriend tonight should be enough to make you feel like a man without having to turn the parking lot at Cowboys into an Ultimate Fighting Championship octagon. And this goes for you too, ladies: you can be just as ill-tempered even without all that testosterone.

Sarah’s death doesn’t have to be senseless. It can be remembered as more than a random and fatal act of stupidity. So do me—and everyone else—a favour when you hit the streets on the weekend and keep a cool head.

OUR WEEKLY LINEUP

Mini Burger Mondays:
Cure that case of the “Mondays” with 99¢ mini burgers and \$10 jugs. House Rules Apply. 7pm to close

Karaoke Tuesdays:
Downstairs in the LIBRARY. Like Canadian Idol, only our \$8.99 nachos are cheesier than Ben Mulroney. 7pm to close

Wing Wednesdays:
Get in V-formation and migrate to the land o’ 25¢ wings. House Rules Apply 7pm to close

Loonie Thursdays:
\$1 Draught downstairs in the LIBRARY. Celebrate the invention of the loonie. 7pm to close

Finally Fridays: Extended Happy Hour.
“True North strong and nearly free” 3pm to 9pm

S.O.S. Saturdays:
\$2 Highballs downstairs in the LIBRARY. Your wallet is sending out an S.O.S. – Save On Spirits. 9pm to midnight

Music Trivia Sundays:
Test your music IQ. No studying required.
\$15 Buckets of Domestic beer! 7 pm to close

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