

# Have we forgotten?

Natalie Crouteau, the name is forever engraved on my heart. She was one of the fourteen now nameless women killed on December 6 in Montreal.

I know what you are probably saying. "Enough already. I'm sick and tired of hearing about that. It was just one isolated incident involving a madman." But it was not an isolated incident. It will reoccur. In fact it is probably reoccurring at this instant. Somewhere out there someone is being raped, or a lover beaten, or a job is denied to a woman, or someone is afraid to walk the streets, or ... the list is endless.

So what now? It is January 11, and it has been over a month since the killings occurred. Enough time for the wounds to begin to heal, and the faces to blur. What remains is our anger at not only this incident but at a society in which such an outrage can happen.

So what now? Now we have to take action! We have to change

our ways. And it starts with me, and each and every one of you. I must not allow those nameless women to have died in vain. There must be something I can learn, some action I can take to prevent this tragedy from reoccurring in another form.

But what can I do? The problem seems hopeless with no end in sight. I can get involved, I can try and change something. There are many agencies and organizations in Halifax where I can start. Here is a list of a few of them, ranging from band-aid crisis centres to long-term citizen advocacy groups pressing for social change.

Please get involved. The involvement can be as personal as questioning your own beliefs and values or it can involve working through an agency. The important thing is that change happens. In order to achieve action TAKE ACTION!!! Please don't let them die in vain.

Shannon Gowans

• Veith House 453-4320  
• Services for Sexual Assault Victims 455-4240  
• Men's Coalition Against Violence to Women 453-4320

• Adsum House 429-4443  
• Bryony House 423-7183  
• Women's Employment Out reach Centre\* 422-8023



# o p i n i o n

## It's not a surprise in a society like this

by Rachel Gray  
reprinted from The Varsity

(CUP) — We should not be having this discussion at all. There can be no doubt. It is time to make the connections about all of these things.

A man carrying a new semi-automatic rifle walks into a traditionally male-dominated

institution, and kills 14 women. In the hallways, he mainly ignores men and hunts women. In the classroom, he separates the women from the men before killing them. At some point during the carnage he rails against feminists. He turns the gun on himself and dies with a suicide note in his pocket which identifies women and feminists as the source of his

unhappiness.

This all seems very clear. Is it not obvious who he intended to kill? Who is dead? What is up for debate?

Now, there are those who would have us believe that this is the work of a sick and demented mind, and that it is an isolated incident. There are those who would have us believe that this is a human tragedy with no more bearing on women's lives than on men's. There are those who agree we live in a sexist society, but who say that "this thing in Montreal" has no place in a discussion about violence against women because violence can't be qualified according to sex.

On the campus at Queen's University a bunch of self-proclaimed "friendly guys" feel misunderstood. They say, "No means kick her in the teeth." They say, "OK, so it may have been in bad taste but it was just a joke. My dad says that worse things happened in his days there. It was a prank. Queen's is a great university. What are they complaining about?"

These friendly guys have a need to make jokes about women being raped. The language they use for joking about rape involves gang bangs, kicking her teeth in and tying her down. How much time would you want to spend with these friendly guys? Have they ever considered the woman who is raped — a real person — being gang banged, tied down and given a mouth full of broken teeth?

If rape jokes are acceptable material now, is it because women are safe; safe from rape, sexual harassment and assault, exploitative images that use our bodies to sell cars and beer, safe from violence at home and on the street, ... safe from murder? These boys don't have to think about rape and therefore it's fine to joke about it.

What is not their consciousness, their experience, is not their concern. And if I don't take a joke about suffering and pain and violence and hatred then I'm the one with the problem — not them.

When I walk home at night I am cautious and quite often afraid. When statistics tell me

that one out of ten women will be violently attacked by the men who share their beds and their lives this affects me differently than it does my brothers. When my friends talk about being raped I know those boys at Queen's have never thought about what it is like to be a woman in a woman-hating society. They haven't had to. Don't you think it's time they did?

As long as it's okay to make jokes about rape, the "thing in Montreal" should not shock us. It illustrates the hatred and violence that is accepted and justified and joked about. For women who have been raped, who are beaten in their kitchens, who walk home at night knowing the keys gripped tightly in hand are a poor defense, who feel hostility because of the way they dress, or the work they do, or the independence they seek or the conventions they reject ... for all of us women this is not a shock. It may be our worst nightmare come true, but it should not be a shock.

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