

to explain it separately, but because of the way our society, through its leaders and interest groups, reacted to that event.

Many dismissed it as the isolated, criminal act of a madman. Others reacted quite differently, setting in motion another reaction against that reaction as hysteria or extremism.

But the event and the issue soon lost the attention of the media, was replaced by new choices of what the media managers decided was news, and slipped out of the general collective consciousness. The event is dimming in public importance and the whole issue will probably not be front and centre until another bizarre act of violence against women or a woman is chosen as newsworthy.

In the meantime I doubt that many people can remember much about the event itself. Quite a few might remember the name of the murderer in Montreal, but I doubt that many could remember the names of any of the victims.

Let me begin by putting on record the names of those victims:

- Geneviève Bergeron
- Hélène Colgan
- Nathalie Croteau
- Barbara Daigneault
- Anne-Marie Edward
- Maud Haviernick
- Barbara Maria Klueznick
- Maryse Laganiere
- Maryse Leclair
- Anne-Marie Lemay
- Sonia Pelletier
- Michele Richard
- Annie St. Arneault
- Annie Turcotte

I will not put the name of the murderer on the record. We can forget his name in its place in infamy. He is the one that should be forgotten, not the victims.

I began wondering why the same horrible event could produce such contrasting reactions and whether, as is often the case in my experience, what we were seeing were the symptoms of some deeper social pathology.

I am convinced that there is more to this question of violence against women in our society than isolated events like the December one.

I do not know what it is, but let us examine some of the explanations that one hears: There is, of course, the one I just mentioned, namely, that they are simply the random action of lunatics. Another perhaps more impressive explanation is that it is the result of what social scientists call "learned behaviour." Children, for example, who see violence in the home against their mothers or sisters are unconsciously learning to treat women with violence.

Another explanation finds its source—if you can believe this—in religion and religious literature. Radio station CJRT in Toronto, the Ryerson School station, is doing a series on the subject of violence against women in our society and has recently done part of that series on the religious sources of such violence. In the Old Testament examples are found, according to this program, of group rape, rape of women in a population as a part of the spoils of military conquest, and incidents of the giving up of wives to attackers in order to save the lives of male colleagues.

Another theory is that it is a cultural matter and varies from culture to culture. Of course, that is true. But one must be careful not to excuse one's own society's social aberrations by taking comfort in the belief that it is worse in other cultures. That can be a convenient exculpatory excuse for refusing to look at the possible pathology in one's own society.

Some like to say that it is simply human nature, that it is part of the human condition to exhibit violence and, more particularly, to victimize women with violence.

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No one can deny that we are witnessing a transformation in the roles of men and the family in our society. If the Montreal incident was a bell weather signalling that women are in even greater jeopardy because of this transformation, is it not our duty as parliamentarians to examine that possibility? Remember, the murderer in that case made statements which would support the inference that it was this changing role that triggered his lunatic violence.

Then, as I said, there was the reaction of many people, mostly men, that to use this event as an example of a deeper pathology of violence against women in society was hysteria. Of course, women are used to being accused of hysteria. Many associate the word with women. Admittedly, it is very hard to disassociate oneself from one's own group, whatever that group might be, and it is natural to become defensive if one feels one's group—in this case, men—is being accused of antisocial, vicious behaviour.

I am sure that if debate proceeds, as I hope it will, others here will add to the list of possible explanations and theories. Some may maintain that there is no pathology here and that these are just random acts. I hope the explanations will be expanded and the list added to as debate is joined.

Apart from the CJRT program, I do not know of any forum where this issue has been or is being thoroughly debated and documented.

When some groups in our country, whom I take very seriously, are obviously taking this question very seriously, and no forum for its examination seems to be available, I see an opportunity for the Senate to provide such a forum for information and debate. That is why I have launched this inquiry.

At this stage I would like to stop talking and start listening. As I said, I sense that there is much more to the question than our society generally acknowledges. I invite my colleagues to join in the debate to instruct us all with information and opinion. If enough interest is shown, it seems to me that the