

# WEEK OF REFLECTION

## Turning the tables on helplessness

I am thankful for the rain. The cool droplets fall on my burning cheeks, acting as frigid substitutes for the frustrated tears I cannot bring myself to shed. I feel angry, bitter, spiteful. I feel helpless.

The slick pavement moves under my feet as though I were an apathetic traveller on a conveyor belt. I pause momentarily to wait for the walk signal, dispassionately observing the wavering pattern of reflected car and traffic lights on the rain-soaked intersection. As I cross to the other side of the street I am aware of my vulnerability. Perhaps that is the reason my heart begins to race as an oncoming car stops to let me pass. I am thinking about Lisa.

I am thinking about what it must have felt like to be dragged along beside a moving car, to support the enormous weight of rubber and steel with only a fragile ankle. I am thinking

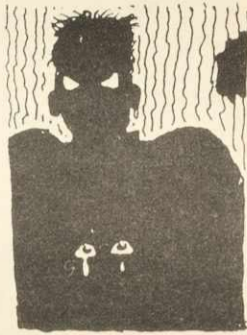
about helplessness.

The irony is that the most intense helplessness she felt wasn't during the accident, it was during the course of her last relationship. It was the feeling that came from suffering through a year of emotional abuse. The feeling that came from loving someone so much that she found herself forgiving him for calling her a psychotic bitch and a slut, for making her believe that he was the only man who would ever want her.

My friend is lying in a hospital. And is going to be there for a few more weeks; as long as the doctors need to graft skin onto the exposed flesh and bone of her right leg. They say she got off lucky...her bones were small enough that they weren't fractured when her ex-boyfriend drove over her as she pounded desperately on the window of his car. The only thing he broke was her nose, but that was before the "accident". That happened about the same

time he attempted to strangle her with a telephone cord.

Helplessness. An infant instinctively reaching out to be held and cuddled, trusting the arms that pluck it out of its isolation. Lisa has two chil-



dren from her former marriage. They are beautiful, healthy boys, ages one and two. I can't even imagine how confused they must have been when they heard the door slam open and their mother cry and scream in agony.

Did they understand the danger when their 5'3" mommy's 6'3" boyfriend screamed at them to "Shut the fuck up!!" as he reluctantly dialed 9-1-1?

Why am I writing this? I can't give Lisa back the year she spent falling in and out of love with this miserable excuse for a man. I can't take away his degree in electrical engineering or his fraternity status. I can't make sure he spends the rest of his life behind bars. I can't heal Lisa's leg or even make sure she is able to save the rest of her school year. I am helpless, but I am not hopeless, and therein lies the key.

I hope that the men reading this feel as angered as the women. I hope that they will ostracize and cease to condone through apathy and attitude the actions of abusive males. Women are, on average, physically weaker than men. Many men still use this to their advantage, regardless of advances made in gender equality. I hope that the next

time someone chooses to spout off about sexism he keeps this in mind and refrains from belittling gender issues with sour grapes. I hope that the women reading this will recognize the possible consequences of remaining in an abusive relationship. I hope that they will love themselves enough to feel equal and to get out. I hope that somehow, we can all, men and women, find a way to stop feeling helpless.

Lisa is a fighter. With all this talk of helplessness I have neglected to inform you that she is refusing to be a victim. When I left the hospital today she had a friend wheel her down to the exit to see me off. She is staying in school, and aiming high. She is pressing both civil and criminal charges. She is working hard to make sure her ex-boyfriend is the one who will soon feel helpless.

Tami Friesen  
Gateway, University of Alberta

# Balancing the gender equation

For Martin Yaqzan, a mathematics professor at the University of New Brunswick, the world is a rational place. It is ruled by numbers, concepts, and equations. Through sheer ignorance, or perhaps through misplaced intellectual vanity, Yaqzan attempted to apply his field of expertise to an issue with no mathematical connection. The issue of date rape.

For those who are not familiar with Yaqzan, he wrote a controversial article excusing the criminal act of date rape. It appeared in the UNB university newspaper, the *Brunswickan*. Martin Yaqzan attempts to rationalize date rape with the cold authority one would use to solve a mathematical equation, explaining it as a "natural outlet" for young men to satisfy their sexual needs. Among his different points of reasoning was the argument that if a woman accompanies a man to his bedroom she should expect sex - with or without consent. Besides this, he claims that "so-called date rape" is only terrifying for women who were virgins before the violation. All other "promiscuous" women (ie. non-virgins) have no right to express anger. Instead, the victim should, "demand some monetary compensation for her inconvenience or discomfort rather than express moral outrage."

Since the article was published, Yaqzan has been suspended from teaching at the university. He has some defenders fighting this suspension, who believe that it impinges on Yaqzan's civil right to free speech.

The civil right argument may be applicable to most people, but Yaqzan is part of UNB and therefore is subject to the university's policy on sexual harassment. This probably means he will lose his teaching job along with his credibility. UNB may keep him on but it would only be due to legal technicalities. Hopefully, he will not be able to remain by means of manipulative legal binding. After all, he does not deserve his place as a promoter of higher education. His sentiments towards rape betrays everything that is sensible, progressive, and intelligent. Yaqzan is yesterday's asshole.

Males no longer dominate with any more authority than biology and backwards traditions provides us. "NO" means no, gentlemen. What Yaqzan, and many others, have failed to under-

stand is that religion is not the only reason for a woman to say no. There are other reasons, running as deep as love and as shallow as bad breath. Maybe she just isn't interested. Maybe she just wanted to be friends. If you can't understand her reasons then at least respect them. Otherwise, it's rape.

Yaqzan's assertion that "promiscuous women" should more or less expect date rape goes beyond sexist to criminal. Canadian courts no longer consider a woman's past sexual history when deliberating a rape case on the basis that it is irrelevant. What matters is whether consent was given on the particular occasion. If it wasn't it is rape.

His statement that a victim should be compensated by monetary means can only be interpreted as advocating an extraneous form of forced prostitution. Justice would not be served, just a further degeneration of the victim's dignity.

One of the main problems facing the female victim today is the terminology itself. Date rape is seen as something removed from rape itself, a separate and lesser offence. But they are the same thing; in some cases date rape can be considered worse, because often the victim is emotionally blackmailed or guilted into the act. The rapist is someone the victim knows, and may have liked and trusted. And in many cases, the victims blames themselves.

We are all familiar with what a date entails. It can be anything, a night out dancing, or maybe a quiet dinner. A couple can then be said to be dating. Rape is an act of violence that occurs when a man will not take "NO" seriously. He does not respect the female's right to have control over her own body. A night that should have ended with a simple kiss goodnight or a handshake, ends in a violent betrayal of her trust. Combining the two words "date" and "rape" obscures the reality of this violation.

Rape is a frightening and damaging experience, the emotional repercussions are extreme. It takes most victims a long time to regain their confidence, to connect with the world again. The last thing women need is a math professor to justify this dehumanizing act.

The Week of Reflection serves as more than just a memorial to the four-

teen women killed in Montreal, it also serves as a larger symbol of the violence perpetrated towards women. It is a reminder, gentlemen, that WE must move forward to change attitudes be-

fore another woman can be victimized. If Yaqzan chooses to move backwards, that is his decision, as long as he goes alone.

In mathematical terms, his answers

to the human equation don't add up. And if you are not part of the solution, Mr. Yaqzan, you are part of the problem.

Andrew Mitchell

### BLACK WOMEN, PLEASE FORGIVE US...

For disrespecting the womb from which we came;  
for not appreciating our first teacher who is God's representative to us;  
for always crying out and ignoring your pain;  
for hiding our weaknesses with brute force because you put us in our place;  
for telling you we loved you only to go to another bed;  
for dropping deposits in you and not having the courage to watch the seeds grow;  
for drinking and smoking and wondering why you would call us "no good";  
for looking at you as a physical entity and not recognizing the essence of your soul;

for running to white women or each other because we fear your strength;  
for being destructive and not leaving or building anything for our children;  
for being any- and everything but men but thinking we are...

Forgive Us, Black Women, for not being respectful, responsible, upright, dignified, spiritual, and loving to you, our Black Queens...

Please Forgive Us, Black Women, so we can one day march forward, together, forever, into the Eternal Kingdom...

by  
100 Black Men of Rutgers University  
submitted by Robert X Lyons

