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# Remembering Montreal: December 6th 1989

### The death throes of the old

Like Kent State or Tiananmen Square, the Montreal Massacre has shocked our hearts. The view that Marc Lépine's atrocious act was no more than an isolated instance of violence against women has not prevailed. As Doris Lessing once noted, it is by the failures and misfits of a civilization that one can best judge its' weaknesses. There was method in his madness; he was angry, he felt emasculated, like any bully he picked on people he felt he could beat. A million women a year are battered by their husbands or partners in Canada; some are killed. Stopping violence against women is as urgent a social issue as eradicating AIDS. We can say that now. There has been a crisis of conscience.

There has also been a conspiracy of silence. The Massacre is taboo in some quarters. So is feminism. But, more than before, campus mores are being seen as part of a whole pattern of social behaviour and attitudes. Insensitivity to women's legitimate aspirations is less and less tolerated. The university is not an ivory tower; it is neither pure nor invulnerable. The moral culpability of armchair intellectuals who turn a blind eye - who tolerate - social injustice is now coming under (verbal) fire.

Twenty years ago, the Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada envisioned a "totally new climate." Perhaps Marc Lépine's mass murder-suicide is to be interpreted, in the larger scheme of things, as the death throes of the old.

- Wendy Robbins, Department of English, University of New Brunswick

## Some reflections....

"It's going to be extremely low key. We don't want to make a big fuss about it. It's going to be held in memory (of the victims) and as much as possible, in silence."

- Administration director André Bazergui of U of M Ecole Polytechnique commenting on their memorial service. \*

"Silence about violence against women has been our worst enemy."

- Ms. Judy Rebick of the National Committee on the Status of Women\*

"It is only by talking about the level of violence against women that we are going to solve it. Any by not talking about it, we feed the denial that a lot of people in this society have. They want to believe that this act was an isolated act, that it did not have anything to do with violence against women. ... That's what we always hear when there is a murder of a woman or a rape, and it's not true.

- Ms. Judy Rebick of the National Committee on the Status of Women\*

"It is unfortunate that the institution will forever be seen as the place where a number of women were !illed, but that is their (the institution's ) destiny. It is how they deal with that destiny that will make them great. And sure as hell, the way they are dealing with it now will not make them great."

-Mr. Patrick Quinn, a Toronto engineer \*

"The girls and guys don't want to be separated like they were in the class by Lepine." "They don't want to get into this crazy logic of Marc Lepine. They are saying, "This happened to us as a community and we want to stick together."

-Mr. Gilles Lussier, a psychologist at the U of M École Polytechnique \*

"Marc Lepine did something crazy. Now he's gone, and we are left to pay for it." - a male student at École Polytechnique\*

"Some feminists used this event to make a point about the way feminists are treated.

They didn't care what happened." - a male student at École Polytechnique\*

"They say there is a little Marc Lepine in all of us," said a third, bitterly.

a male student at École Polytechnique\*

"I understand why the students don't want to discuss the events at the Polytechnique. They are touched too directly by it. They saw people dying around them. I would not ask them to take a leadership role in the debate on violence against women. On the other hand, if other women and men want to pursue that debate, they must not be prevented from doing so."

- Francoise David of L'R des centres des

\*Extracted from the Globe and Mail.(Dec 4) Article was by Michelle LaLonde

They do not know yet how effective counselling of children from violent homes will be. They do not claim, for example, that such counselling would have erased the violent delusions of Mr. Lépine, who shot 14 women to death last year at the University of Montreal's École Polytechnique.

"We'll never know," said Dr. Peter Jaffe, director of the London (Ont.) Family Court Clinic. "I Can't say that it would." But he saidhe would like to think that children who experience violence at home, as Marc Lépine did, will receive attention from mental health

From the Globe and Mail, December 5, article by Sean Fine

#### Coping

Protesters meet that night at the Women's Centre at the University of Toronto. The coldest, darkest demo I've ever attended, and one of my last.

Between speeches, my friend Maggie will be reading a poem she just wrote about the murders. I ask how she is.

"O.K. You know. This always happens," she says. "I expect to break down next week sometime. In the middle of the supermarket..."

We march off, dozens of women whose candles won't stay lit. Some tears, even laughter. Mostly silence. Until we pass a frat house.

Three young men are leaning out of a top floor window. One bellows: "WE LOVE CHICKS!"

Maggie, who's been walking silently beside me, turns on her heels, slips on the ice."SHUTUP! SHUTUP! SHUTUP!" she screams, waving her arms helplessly, bent double, slipping again.

I manage to grab her flailing arms and, both of us skidding along the icy sidewalk, I hustle her away. "Let's just keep walking. Here we go. Walking down the street. Come on."

For the first time since I met her, Maggie seems smaller than I am.

Graham has been walking with us. Seen and heard the whole thing. Graham is at every demonstration, even this one; few of the men in our political circle are here, perhaps thinking they wouldn't be welcome.

Graham shakes his head. "Can you, I mean, can you believe those guys? Sheesh! Jerks."

And I don't know whether to kiss him

Which I guess is sort of the point. Reprinted with permission from Catholic New Times.

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Prime Minister Brian Mulroney The Honorable Justice Minister, Kim Campbell

House of Commons

As December 6th approaches we cannot help but be reminded of our shared losses.

We are extremely distressed to hear that your government is proceeding to shelve the proposed amendment to the present gun control law. We are, therefore, imploring you to reconsider this move and revive Bill C-80. We realize that guns are not the only factor leading to violence in our society. However, we believe that easy access

to guns and lack of control of their use is a contributing factor to this rising violence. We, the parents and families of the victims, are living the inadequacies of the current legislation everyday.

We want tougher gun control. And we are not alone. More than half a million Canadians vocally supported our call. We are shocked to see the voice of the people has been drowned out by the loud persistance of a minority of gun lobbyists.

If the Canadian government does not change the gun control law, the potential for tragedy in the future will remain the same as it was on December 6,1989.

#### Remember...

James Matheson Edward

Suzanne Edward, James A. Edward,

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

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