

Women reporting sexual harassment in record numbers

by Sara Singer
and Christine F. de Leon

Reports of sexual harassment against women are sweeping across Canadian university campuses. More women than ever before are beginning to report cases of abuse, from death threats to verbal and physical assaults.

Sharon Chimming, advisor for the York Sexual Harassment Education and Complaint Centre, said reports of sexual harassment have increased by 30 to 40 per cent each year at York University.

"The rise is due to more reporting, not an increase of incidents," Chimming explained.

According to Chimming, incidents of harassment in the past two years have been linked increasingly to anti-feminist backlash.

"We've seen more anti-feminist graffiti triggered by the publicity of the 'no means no' campaign at Queen's where the posters were defaced by things like 'no means harder' and 'no means kick her in the teeth,'" she said.

"With more work done for equity, some groups begin to exhibit a strong reaction directed at women who are active."

On Oct. 29, death threats were made to female editorial members of *Surface*, a Queen's university magazine. The message was sent in

a cut-and-pasted letter which threatened to rape and kill all feminists: "We will kill any and all feminists slowly... suck all cocks. U silence us white men," it read.

The letter listed the names of the eight women on the editorial staff to whom the message was addressed.

Earlier in October, a woman in Halifax at the University of Cape Breton reported a case of sexual assault to the RCMP and in doing so, was further harassed by the officer who received her complaint. "He threatened to humiliate me further if I did not cooperate by changing my story," she said.

When she changed her statement during a second interview, the police accused her of lying, questioned her extensively and charged her with mischief. The police "used words like 'baloney' and 'bull' when I tried to explain what happened," she said.

In the same month at Carleton University in Ottawa, graffiti was spray-painted across the campus carrying the message "Rape Girls."

"It's disappointing. I don't understand why these things happen at university, we're supposed to be open-minded," said Judith Lewis, a collective member of the York's women's centre.

Lewis linked these incidents to the tragic

and unforgettable incident at the University of Montreal two years ago when fourteen women in engineering were gunned down in a violent act of misogyny.

"Remembering what he [Mark Lepine] said as he shot the women, it was more than likely an act of misogyny," said Lewis. Before the attack Lepine said, "You're all a bunch of feminists, I hate feminists."

Closer to home on York campus, cases of violence and harassment are extensive. In September, a hate message saying "kill women" was found on a Scott Library computer. In October with the scheduling of the band Two Nice Girls at the Underground, dozens of phone calls were made complaining about the programming of a "dyke band," while posters advertising the band were ripped down and even urinated upon.

"I'd say the incidents are anti-feminist. It really seems that telling people to kill women is misogynist," said Lewis.

A recent study done by the Canadian Union of Educational Workers' Women's Caucus at York focuses on women's safety and security on York campus.

The study, conducted by Ramona Morris, reveals frightening statistics not only in terms of the number of women who have experienced

harassment, but also the number of women who fear for their safety and their lives on campus and consequently avoid using it.

In the survey Morris writes, "Women simply do not use the campuses in the evening because they are too afraid to make their way to their car or bus. This is a clear impairment of their rights and privileges as members of the York community and as employees of the university."

Nancy Johnston, a member of CUEW and a contributor to the report, said the study was partly prompted by the members the Women's Caucus feeling the desire and the need to take control of their own safety.

The statistics from the study have consequently been used in fighting the administration for better campus safety conditions. The installation of telephones in offices was one of the many recommendations made in the report, and was won in CUEW contract negotiations last month.

"Having telephones in offices means more safety and control," Johnston said. "Rather than relying on the police to come to the rescue, which perpetuates the notion of women as passive victims, phones would allow women to take more control of their own safety, which is what we want to encourage."

Students flock to food banks as aid falls short

by Krishna Rau
CANADIAN UNIVERSITY PRESS

TORONTO — Thousands of university students in Toronto are being forced to use food banks.

According to Gerrard Kennedy, the director of the Daily Bread Food Bank, about three per cent of the bank's recipients are attending college or university.

Kennedy said that amounts to about 4,000 people.

"There's no question that students are using the food banks," he said. "It puts a little edge to the poor student thing."

He said even more students are using other food banks and shelters. People tend not to realize how badly off many students are, he added.

"There's almost a casual thing about students being poor. This shows the lassitude in various social agencies that allows this to happen, even though they (students) don't fit the stereotypical image."

Kennedy said a recent survey of the bank's users showed 18 per cent have some level of post-secondary education. He said 43 per cent of the people have graduated from high school, compared to 13 per cent in 1987.

Last week a food bank opened on the University of Alberta campus after the Graduate Students' Association found some students could not afford enough food.

There is also a food bank at Simon Fraser University in British Columbia, and the University of British Columbia has had one in the past.

This year, the campus ministry at Concordia University in Montreal has been giving out approximately \$500 a month in food stamps. Money for this program comes from Christmas fundraisers.

Deanne Fisher, the liaison officer at the University of Toronto's part-time students' association, said the majority of students using food banks are probably part-timers, many of whom would be single parents.

"They're generally people who have a lot more responsibility and aren't dependent on their parents."

Fisher said Canada's student aid programs do not help students in those situations.

"Both the (Ontario Student Assistance Program) and Canada Student Loans are very youth-oriented programs. They're for people who can live with their parents or hold part-time jobs."



Fatim Juma (left) and Nancy Buttu wave the Palestinian flag on Palestine Day, November 27, in the Student Centre.

Aya Esolk



Mark Lyall / The Varsity

Students stock up at a food bank on Dufferin Street in downtown Toronto. Three per cent of food bank users are in university or college — many of them part-time students trying to raise children.

Black students doubt police shooting story

by Trevor Burnett

Members of York's Black community are expressing anger and disbelief over the recent shooting of Johnathon Phillip Howell by a Metro police officer.

Howell, 22, was shot in the head on the morning of Nov. 9 at approximately 4.30 am, by 41-year-old Detective Constable Carl Sololowski, a 21-year veteran of the force.

Howell became the fifth Black person shot by police in Metro Toronto over the last three years. In all five incidents, the police have claimed the shootings were accidents or acts of self-defense.

According to police reports, Sololowski and other officers were responding to a tip about a possible

break-in at a warehouse in Etobicoke. They arrived and found three men loading video equipment into a car. The men ran from the scene, a chase ensued and a shot was fired.

Police reports also state that Howell was unarmed and crouching near a fence when Sololowski accidentally "tripped or stumbled" over Howell and the gun went off.

According to the Police Act police officers are not allowed to draw a revolver unless their life is being threatened.

Alwyn Fredricks, president of the Caribbean Students Association and a friend of Howell, expressed disbelief at the police reports.

"I find it very difficult to see how someone can trip and shoot someone in the head. It's just another example of the police practicing genocide

against Black people, specifically Black youth," Fredricks said.

"The police make you feel that being Black is a crime," added Diamond Tobin-West, president of the African Students Association.

CSA member Michelle Malcolm said, "The police are just using Blacks as target practice."

CSA Political Coordinator Hannibal X stressed that despite the recurring shootings and the feelings of helplessness Blacks must still fight for justice. "We can't let the court decisions [acquittals of police officers accused of shooting Blacks] be our reason to quit," he said.

Hannibal said he has been attending forums to discuss the shootings and meeting with other community groups. He said he hopes to coordinate a massive protest.