

# the Montreal Massacre

## Editorial: Montreal and the lessons learned

JENN BROWN

Upon completion of this, my first attempt at fulfilling my duties as Features Editor for *The Brunswickan*, I feel I have learned a few valuable lessons. I want to take a minute to share my new found wisdom with you.

Lesson one. Never choose a difficult topic for your first attempt at something. Learning something new is quite difficult enough without the added difficulty of an extremely intense topic. As a woman, it is obviously impossible to distance yourself from an issue that involves women in such a profound way.

The Montreal Massacre is something that should turn the stomachs of people everywhere. It was my intention in putting together this feature to get people thinking. I, however, did not consider what affect it would have on me personally. Like everyone else I know, every December 6th, I attend the memorial service in my area and do my best to ensure that what happened at the Montreal Massacre is never forgotten.

I now find myself questioning whether just attending a service is enough. Until now, I hadn't been forced to face this topic so directly, but gathering the necessary information for this feature has made me really take a look at what this means. One man was responsible for taking the lives of fourteen women. He did this because they were women. This is a frightening fact. He was angry with "feminists."

What I hope to accomplish with this feature is to remind men and women what it is to be a woman in today's society. Not that I think a woman is able to forget what it is that we go through on a daily basis, but I think sometimes we, as women, tend to forget what our responsibilities are.

My second valuable lesson was that not everyone is going to share one person's opinion or insight about how something should be done. I have been reminded several times that some of my feminist friends are going to be angry with me for including the work of men in this feature, however, I feel the issue of being a woman is directly affected by men. Instead of fighting against the men who want to work with us, why not just educate them on the topic and appreciate what it is that they want to do?

This is a problem that is not going to fix itself so we are given the responsibility of ensuring that women can go on about their daily lives without worrying about things like personal safety or discrimination.

I hope the people who read this section will take the time to really think about what it they are reading and decide what their personal responsibility is. If only one person decides to make a difference after this, then my job is done. I want nothing more than to present the facts and allow you to come up with your own conclusions.

## STU Memorial

On Friday, December 6th at four o'clock Saint Thomas University will be holding its annual Montreal Massacre Memorial Service. The service will be held in the Saint Thomas Chapel. This year the theme is "Open Our Eyes."

The Memorial Service is one hour of reflection designed to heighten awareness of the abuse in our society and the efforts being made by both women and men to counteract it. The organizers of the service this year are concerned with focusing on how violence reflects on us, both the victim and perpetrator. "We want to focus on the different aspects of abuse. The deaths of the fourteen women will be used as a background to look at violence," says Jane Galvin, one of this year's organizers.

The service will continue the tradition of previous years in that it will be a time of reflection through instrumental and song. There will also be individual reflections from both students and staff. The emphasis this year will be to look, not only at the Montreal Massacre but, also at violence in general and what can be done to prevent it.

Students, staff, faculty and members of the general public are invited to participate in the Memorial Service.

## Remembering the Montreal Massacre makes us rethink the male archetype

"...we as a society can pay all the lip service we want to equality, but our actions speak much louder than our words..."

hart caplan

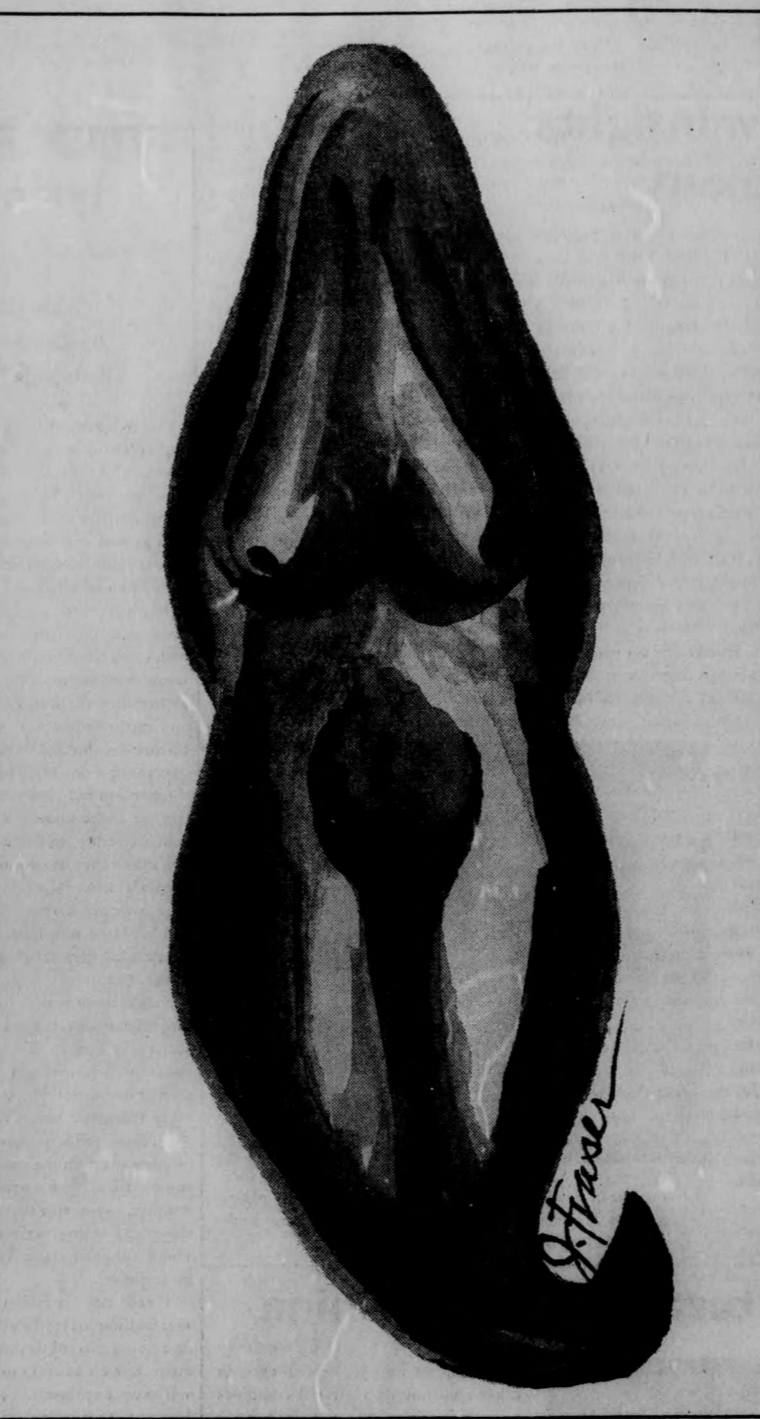
I was in Montréal when Marc Lepine killed fourteen Université de Montréal students. His victims on that bloody day were not chosen randomly. He chose very carefully, not by race or occupation, but by their sex.

Marc Lepine decided to murder women. That his victims were women is a fact of this story that should never be understated.

Throughout history women have been the target of a male homicidal rage. Whether it is the witch trials of the sixteenth century (collective male rage) or Jack the Ripper's blade, or Lepine's gun, women have been savagely attacked by male aggression.

In the last century, women have been the chosen targets of serial and mass murderers in some socially emblematic ways. In the late nineteenth century, Jack the Ripper murdered six prostitutes on the streets of London. In the 1960's, Richard Speck murdered nine nurses in their dorm rooms.

In 1989 Marc Lepine methodically murdered fourteen female students, after first ordering all



JULIANN FRASER ARTWORK

## 'So get over it?'

ELISE CRAFT

It's strange to me that every year I hear someone say, about the Montreal Massacre, "Why don't you just get over it?" Strange because the facts of the event aren't hidden, because we know that it was a hate crime against women. Strange because how could I possibly get over something that I have just begun to comprehend?

This year it came in diluted form from the Student Union. First, Trish Davidson stated that Social Issues was too feminist last year, then Social Issues told a member of the Womyn's Collective that it would be not only taking over the Womyn's Collective Silhouette Campaign, but would be toning down this year's commemoration. Apparently someone called the Polytechnique and had been told that it was going to be doing so. They are not, however, the same thing but instead two parts of one whole.

That the Polytechnique decides to change how they are remembering this event doesn't mean that I, my friends, or the Womyn's Collective must also do so. For the people at the Polytechnique, this is an intensely personal tragedy that is inseparable from the place they work and live. For those who live elsewhere, it is a terrifying foreshadowing of what could come for us next. It is an event that has become a symbol of the spectre of violence against women that haunts us all. I commemorate this event, these women's lives and their lost futures, not for L'Ecole Polytechnique. I do it for myself, my sister, my mother, every woman and every man who will have their lives torn apart by the violence that this world reaps upon us.

We were collectively shocked that this happened at a university, collectively outraged at the murder. Some people have tucked the massacre away in the part of their mind reserved for senseless and random violence. Others know that this was calculated and symptomatic of the society that we live in. As members of an academic community, we should be particularly aware of our role in this.

We exist here, in an environment of study, where we take classes, write papers and develop our minds. But at the same time we learn to be "normal." We learn to accept How It Is and How It Should Be. We marginalise study that is not considered legitimate, including the study of women's history and issues. ML found accessible targets at L'Ecole Polytechnique in that like any other school it is a place where we all go to learn and hopefully express our views. He saw women at this engineering school as representative of the feminists who were ruining his life. What had they done wrong? Nothing. They were simply pushing the limits of tradition and learning something that had been historically dominated by men.

the male students out of the room. And it is no coincidence that just about every American movie of the week is on the subject of homicidal maniacs and seeks to be about the stalking and the near murder of some unsuspecting female victim.

Some will suggest that the examples I cite are few and far between; that to take the actions of homicidal maniacs as emblematic of social mores is ludicrous. These individuals by their very nature are insane. As a result, we should only view their actions as a blip or an anomaly on the moral history of the world. I couldn't disagree more.

These men were insane. I cannot think of a better definition of insanity than one who murders a room full of women. No disagreement there. However, rather than being considered aberrant individuals, these men are extreme representatives of a considerable portion of the male population.

The fact that women are time and again the target of insane men tells a lot about the culture in which we live. These insane men did not murder their pets, their bosses, nor their dry

cleaners. If dry cleaners were the target of male aggression over a long period of time in a multitude of Western nations, then we could conclude that there exists a pervasive dry cleaner hatred, which underpins Western culture. But, of course, dry cleaners are not the target of male aggression, women are.

These are not the musings of a self-hating man, nor is it male guilt talking. This is a humiliating social reality. It is 'humiliating' because the fact that women are unsafe in Canada speaks volumes about our society. The fact that women are unsafe in Western countries stands directly in the way of our social evolution, along with chronic double digit unemployment, institutionalized racism, and a host of other issues.

Daily, if not hourly, women are being injured all over our country. I defy any man to feel truly safe in a country where over half the population is the potential target of attack.

We as a society can pay all the lip service we want to equality, but our actions speak much louder than our words. Recently the Secretary of the American Armed Forces, Togo West Jr., announced on national television that women

## remember, think, learn

in memoriam

Here, in alphabetical order, are the names of the fourteen women who were massacred on December 6, 1989, at the Polytechnique, the University of Montreal's School of Engineering.

**GENEVIEVE BERGERON, 21,** was a second-year scholarship student in civil engineering.

**MARYSE LAGANIERE, 25,** worked in the budget department of the Polytechnique.

**HELENE COLGAN, 23,** was in her final year of mechanical engineering and planned to take her master's degree.

**MARYSE LECLAIR, 23,** was a fourth-year student in engineering materials.

**NATHALIE CROTEAU, 22,** was in her final year of mechanical engineering.

**ANNE-MARIE LEMAY, 27,** was a fourth-year student in mechanical engineering.

**BARBARA DAIGNEAULT, 22,** was in her final year of mechanical engineering and held a teaching assistantship.

**SONIA PELLETIER, 28,** was to graduate the next day in mechanical engineering. She was awarded a degree posthumously.

**ANNE-MARIE EDWARD, 22,** was a first-year student in chemical engineering.

**MICHELE RICHARD, 21,** was a second-year student in engineering materials.

**MAUD HAVIERNICK, 29,** was a second-year student in engineering materials, a branch of metallurgy, and a graduate in environmental design.

**ANNIE ST-ARNEAULT, 23,** was a mechanical engineering student.

**ANNIE TURCOTTE, 21,** was a first-year student in engineering materials.

**BARBARA MARIA KLUCZNICK, 31,** was a second-year engineering student specializing in engineering materials.

Information from *The Montreal Massacre*, by Louise Malette and Marie Chalouh

## December 6th

JENN BROWN

At approximately 5:00 pm on Wednesday, December 6th, 1989 a twenty-five year old man entered the University of Montreal's School of Engineering building and killed nineteen women. His weapon was a .223 calibre semi-automatic rifle.

He walked into a classroom shouting that he wanted the women. He divided the men and the women and ordered the men to leave the room. After lining the women up against the wall he yelled "You are all feminists," and then he began shooting. All nine women in the room were either killed or wounded.

Before walking into the room he had killed a woman near the copying room. After leaving

the room he walked through the corridors firing randomly. He then entered the cafeteria, killed three more women, went into another classroom and murdered three more women before killing himself. The death toll at the end of his spree was fourteen. All of them women. Thirteen more were injured: nine women and four men.

Many people do not know the story of the Montreal Massacre and in order to understand the magnitude of what happened, having all the facts is important. The most important fact to know about what happened is that the women who were murdered had their lives stolen from them simply because they were women. To ensure that something like this NEVER happens again we must think about, remember and learn what we can from what happened.

## Look for the silhouettes, hear what they say.

During the week of December 1-6 you will probably be confronted with purple cut-outs in the shape of women's bodies. These 'silhouettes' will be placed in several buildings on campus to raise awareness of the Montreal Massacre of December 6, 1989.

The silhouettes may seem shocking; many were startled by them last year. The murder of fourteen innocent women should be something that shocks everyone. When UNB's Women's Collective came up with this idea it was our

intent to focus on the fact that this was a hate crime against women and not a random act of violence. The murderer made it very clear that his was an act against women and particularly feminists.

For this reason we have proudly painted the silhouettes purple, the symbolic feminist colour. When you see the silhouettes, hear the feminist voice that speaks for all women, we are still here and we will not be silenced!

Juliann Fraser  
UNB Womyn's Collective

in the American military should not be subjected to continual harassment, which report after report suggests that they are. Is this 1996 or 1896?

While I commend Mr. West for his stance on this issue, in late twentieth century society, does this need to be stated? Should it not be obvious? It seems that the men of North American society do not understand the gravity of this issue. We as a people, a nation, a society, will never be considered civilized until we seriously address this concern. Though women have quite rightly been the driving force behind campaigns concerning violence against women - this is not just a women's issue.

Soon after the Montreal Massacre, women's groups organized a Take Back the Night March. There were many men who wanted to participate in this event to show support for women's safety issues; to help women recognize that men were not a homogenous group of violators, and to express our legitimate outrage that such a thing occurred. But, we were not allowed to participate. We were told in no uncertain terms that to show up would be a

further violation. As everyone recognized the anger and sadness that permeated this event, no one seriously challenged the ban, however, in retrospect, perhaps someone should have.

Am I suggesting those women were wrong to exclude men six years ago in Montreal? Not necessarily. I recognize the need for women's solidarity. Hell, I support the program, but the ills of society are not fixable by only slightly more than half of society. Certainly women's groups must recognize the need to involve men in any sort of plausible solution. And, surely men who feel strongly about this issue, as I do, need to stand up to help educate other men, as Men Against Sexual Aggression (MASA) is helping to do on the UNB campus.

Just as important is the need for men to confront their friends, family members, and acquaintances on improper language and behaviour. Just so there is no confusion on the subject, this has nothing to do with political correctness or the language police; this has to do with the personal freedom, safety, and general happiness of fifty one percent of our population; this has to do with our prospects of social evolution and ultimately our very survival in the coming millennium.