



December 3, 2015

## Remember their Names, Work for Change

December 6<sup>th</sup> is commemorated each year as the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women in Canada

On this day in 1989, fourteen young women studying to be engineers at the École Polytechnique in Montreal were gunned down by a man who said he hated feminists. Their names were:

*Geneviève Bergeron, Helene Colgan, Nathalie Croteau, Barbara Daigneault, Anne-Marie Edward, Maud Haviernick, Barbara Klucznik-Widajewicz, Maryse Laganière, Maryse Leclair, Anne-Marie Lemay, Sonia Pelletier, Michèle Richard, Annie St-Arneault, Annie Turcotte.*

On this day, we remember these young women and we renew our commitment to work for change.

Violence against women still affects us all – in our workplaces, our homes, our bodies and our minds. It affects our co-workers, friends and loved ones.

We have made some gains in moving women's equality issues forward but we have much more to do. Women's contributions are still not fully valued and cultural norms makes violence against women seem normal and inescapable, Sisters routinely experience violence, especially further marginalized – women with disabilities, racialized and Indigenous women, poor women, immigrant women and LGBTQ women.

Women who bravely attempt to break down barriers also often experience violence and threats. We witness this happening every day. It is our duty to speak out and challenge it, wherever we can.

*Half of all women in Canada have experienced at least one incident of physical or sexual violence since the age of 16.*

*67% of all Canadians say they personally know at least one woman who has been sexually or physically assaulted.*

*On average, every six days a woman in Canada is killed by her intimate partner. In 2011, from the 89 police reported spousal homicides, 76 of the victims (over 85%) were women.*

*On any given day in Canada, more than 3,300 women (along with their 3,000 children) are forced to sleep in an emergency shelter to escape domestic violence. Every night, about 200 women are turned away because the shelters are full.*

*As of 2010, there were 582 known cases of missing or murdered Aboriginal women in Canada. Both Amnesty International and the United Nations have called upon the Canadian government to take action on this issue. According to the Native Women's Association of Canada, "if this figure were applied proportionately to the rest of the female population there would be over 18,000 missing Canadian women and girls."*

In 2015, there are many things we can do to take action to stop violence against women.

We must hold the federal Liberal government to its election promise and expectations stated federal minister's mandate letters: to launch a national inquiry on missing and murdered indigenous women; implement a comprehensive federal gender violence strategy and action plan with provincial partners; and to ensure that Parliament and federal institutions are workplaces free from harassment and sexual violence.

The Liberal government has also made a commitment to ensuring that "no one fleeing domestic violence is left without a place to turn to" by increasing the network of shelters and programs to address the issues that surround and exacerbate violence against women.

All of us can do our part to work towards a world where violence is no longer culturally associated with successful masculinity and no longer normalized when it is directed at women and girls.

Support our Sisters. Believe them. Work for change. Hold our governments accountable.

In solidarity,

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