

# Female assault has no place in modern Canadian society

By JACIE B. PALMER  
Herald Special

In last weekend's issue of the Herald we read of an account of an assault in which the female victim was pushed to the floor and hit several times over the back of the head. It goes without saying that this was not likely the first incident of violence between them because, a victim rarely goes to police the first time. In fact a woman is beaten 35 times, on average, prior to taking such action.

Although most assaults occur without being preceded by arguments, this incident allegedly occurred after one - and yet - I have to wonder at the presence of mind the male abuser had. He didn't slap her across the face, punch her in the abdomen or even kick her in the legs. According to the published report, he drove her to the floor and belted her over the back of the head where bumps and bruises are not readily visible. What a professional! Only a professional would have the presence of mind to be certain the assault wouldn't leave visible injuries.

There is no doubt police prefer dealing with assaults where the injuries are multiple and severe. A lawyer once told me the police love lots of blood. Give them broken limbs, blood, stitches, bruises and facial injuries and the case will receive some kind of priority because the injuries are more serious.

The assault I wrote of will likely be given very little priority by police and our court system. The victim needs to follow-up regularly with police to assure a successful conviction. Police and the courts simply don't appear to care about these kind of "minor" assaults. I'm convinced that some members of the police force believe women deserve to be abused.

The sad part is that, if this woman had retaliated against her male abusive partner and visibly injured him she'd in all likelihood be crucified by our male-dominated system.

Yet all assaults should be taken very seriously. Our society is



becoming more and more accustomed to violence and the majority of us seem to accept this violence without even batting an eye. We are conditioned to violence and as long as it doesn't affect us directly we seem satisfied to be a part of the status quo.

However, violence indirectly affects all of us - whether it be a mother who's assaulted, a daughter who's sexually abused or children who recreate acts of violence they've seen on television or in the movies. Each act of violence affects us for a lifetime.

Abusers cannot be stopped unless violent acts are given priority by the police and our judicial system. More counselling and stiffer penalties are needed - even for first time offenders who are really repeat offenders finally in court for the first time.

Every time our court system finds an abuser not guilty of his crime it tells him that what he did was OK. No woman wants to be hit. No woman asks to be hit. We need to, and the system needs to recognize that an assault has long-lasting implications.

A few weeks ago a disgruntled father shared the story of his daughter's assault with me. She was attacked in a mall and received facial injuries but the

court system let the young man off. That was over three years ago. Now she carries brass knuckles and spray bombs with her at all times. According to her father she says: "They'll never do this to me again."

Disappointment and broken trust - men and our system. It is only recently she's begun to trust men again and finally has a boyfriend. This attractive, lovely young lady has had several years of her life taken from her. When she should have been out enjoying the freedom of youth, she was terrified of receiving another assault.

The guilty go free and the victims continue to suffer. Usually victims suffer in silence because they know they have to get on with their lives and can't afford to allow that negative mind set to continue. Responsible members of our community need to stand together and say "Enough is enough!" Let's protect our women.

Endnote: Statistics quoted are from the Ontario Women's Directorate publications.

Feel free to contact Jacie by directing letters to her attention at The Herald. All correspondence will remain confidential. Should you wish to speak to Jacie, call the Distress Centre at 877-1211 and your call will be returned. If you are a woman or child in crisis or an abusive male wanting help, call the Distress Centre or dial 911.



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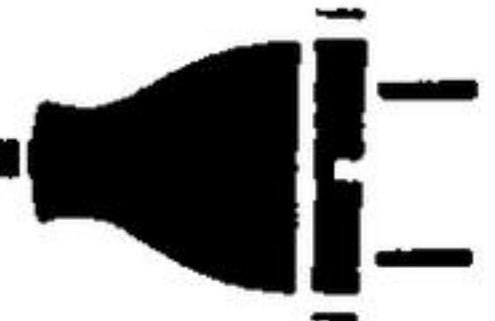
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