

No Safe Place ...

Today's so-called online mentality conveys a sense of power and lack of rules. At times it also demonstrates a void where basic human empathy should reside and complete moral and ethical detachment. This mentality makes it somehow acceptable, maybe even cool, to brutally rape someone and then distribute the photos online. For the 16 year old girl in British Columbia who was gang raped by seven men at a September 10th party, it must be akin to experiencing the rape over and over again. One of the attackers displayed a jaw-dropping moral vacuity by taking photographs and videotaping the attack. He then uploaded the photos to Facebook, where they of course rapidly went viral. Characteristic of the internet, the spread of the images cannot be contained. The odds are high that explicit photos of a drugged 16-year-old girl being attacked in a field will probably never be expunged from the internet. Besides Facebook, the graphic photos have spread to cell phones and vicious untrue comments are being made about the victim online. Within hours of the attack, the images were posted on YouTube and were only removed when police became aware of them. However, copies had been downloaded and have since gone into circulation. **(Vancouver Sun, September 17th, 2010)**

The father of the girl is pleading for people to stop distributing the photos and delete them from their computers and cell phones. Every time the photos are downloaded, viewed or shared, the girl is being revictimized, making her healing difficult if not impossible. Canadian law enforcement officials have made it clear that the attack was a rape and that anyone who is caught possessing or distributing the photos will be subject to penalties imposed by child pornography laws.

More than 7,200 people have joined the "Support for 16yr old victim in Pitt Meadows" Facebook group since it was created. An opposing group, "Reasonable doubt in Pitt Meadows," has also formed. Its description says it is

"for the people who have yet to jump on the bandwagon headed out to lynch the men/boys involved." Several members have claimed the girl voluntarily took drugs, lied to police and agreed to have sex with multiple partners. **(CTV news)**

With roots in the 1970's, the Take Back the Night marches began as a protest against the violence and fear women encountered at night. By marching, women and girls can symbolically reclaim their bodies, homes, workplaces, streets, and their lives. The event raises public awareness and engages communities to act to end the many ways women experience violence both outside on the streets and inside in homes and workplaces. Take Back the Night forces us to recognize the connection between poverty and violence and acknowledge the rising numbers of women who disappear from our streets. The first Take Back the Night march in Canada was held in 1978 in Vancouver, British Columbia, organized by the "Fly-By-Night Collective". The Vancouver Rape Relief held Take Back the Night marches from 1980-1985. In 1981, The Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centers declared the third Friday of September the evening for Take Back the Night marches nationwide. In 2001, the international headquarters and charitable 501 (c) 3 foundation of Take Back the Night was established.

The need for awareness of violence towards women continues on and is even more crucial today. On a global view, women in worn torn countries are subjected to sexual violence on a daily basis. The Congo has been described as the worst country to be a woman, due to sexual atrocities being committed in the eastern part of the country. Rape and other forms of sexual violence in Darfur are being used as a weapon of war in order to humiliate, punish, control, inflict fear and displace women and their communities.

- In a 10-country study on women's health and domestic violence conducted by WHO, between 15% and 71% of women reported physical or sexual violence by a husband or partner.

- Many women said that their first sexual experience was not consensual. (24% in rural Peru, 28% in Tanzania, 30% in rural Bangladesh, and 40% in South Africa).
 - Every year, about 5,000 women are murdered by family members in the name of honour each year worldwide.
 - Trafficking of women and girls for forced labour and sex is widespread and often affects the most vulnerable.
 - Forced marriages and child marriages violate the human rights of women and girls, yet they are widely practiced in many countries in Asia, the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa.
 - Worldwide, up to one in five women and one in 10 men report experiencing sexual abuse as children. Children subjected to sexual abuse are much more likely to encounter other forms of abuse later in life.
- (World Health Organization)**

Tamara's House will be participating in the Take Back the Night March, an annual community event to end violence and raise awareness in the community. This year Take Back the Night will be held on Monday, September 27th, starting at 7pm at the Vimy Ridge Band Shell in Kiwanis Park (off of 20th Street and Spadina Cres.) and ending at Third Ave United Church. There will be refreshments and live music to conclude the evening at Third Ave United Church. All ages and genders are welcome. There will be a bus provided for those who wish to participate and are unable to walk.