

Femicide: There's Not Enough Outrage

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by Antonia Zerbisias

"There's not enough outrage," lamented one women's rights activist at a candlelight vigil for the three women cut down last Tuesday night in a Pittsburgh-area aerobics class.

As the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette noted, only 75 people showed up to mourn Heidi Overmier, 46, Elizabeth Gannon, 49, and Jody Billingsley, 38, massacred by a man, who didn't know them, simply because they were women.

That's unusual as the vast majority of femicide victims are killed by their intimate partners or male relatives.

But, as Toronto author Brian Vallee points out in his 2007 book *The War on Women*, nobody counts the dead, nobody connects the dots, nobody calls out the problem.

"Compare the raw numbers," he writes of the period 2000-06. "In the same seven-year period when 4,588 U.S. soldiers and police officers were killed by hostiles or by accident, more than 8,000 women - nearly twice as many - were shot, stabbed, strangled, or beaten to death by the intimate males in their lives. In Canada, compared to the 101 Canadian soldiers and police officers killed, more than 500 women - nearly five times as many - met the same fate."

There's not enough outrage.

As we all know now, George Sodini, 48 - whose racist and misogynist online diary reads like a terrorist manifesto - couldn't get a date, couldn't get sex, couldn't lure any women to his modest side-split furnished with, as he points out in a spooky video, "Couch and chair; they match. The women will really be impressed."

Well, they weren't.

And so Sodini's "exit plan" was to go down in history in a blaze of gunfire, taking as many women with him as he could.

Just like Marc Lépine, who hated "the feminists" so much he slaughtered 14 women at Montreal's École Polytechnique in 1989, just like Charles Carl Roberts who executed Amish school girls three years ago, and, arguably, even like Virginia Tech shooter Seung-Hui Cho, a reported stalker of female students who took up-the-skirt photos, yet another violent act of misogyny takes place.

No, no, we say. They were just loners, losers, crazies with guns.

There's not enough outrage.

That only feminist bloggers and a very few mainstream pundits called last week's fitness club massacre the hate crime it was should jolt us out of our sexist complacency.

"We profess to being shocked at one or another of these outlandish crimes, but the shock wears off quickly in an environment in which the rape, murder and humiliation of females is not only a staple of the news, but an important cornerstone of the nation's entertainment," The New York Times's Bob Herbert noted on Friday.

"The mainstream culture is filled with the most gruesome forms of misogyny, and pornography is now a multi-billion-dollar industry - much of it controlled by mainstream U.S. corporations."

When I blogged about the massacre last week, my "men's rights activist" regulars - whose comments did not get past the moderators - expressed little or no sympathy.

Instead, they complained that "feminists" demand special treatment for female victims of crime.

Two blog readers even pointed to the recent Wisconsin episode of the philandering husband - who has since been charged with child and sexual abuse - whose penis was glued to his abdomen by a trio of vengeful women as somehow having equivalence to the Pittsburgh massacre.

Cruise the men's rights forums and you'll be shocked by the sickening posts calling for the legal and sexual subservience of women and praising Sodini as a "hero" and "for being a symbol for the consequences of denying men sex ... But something like this has to happen, perhaps hundreds of times over again, before feminists get the message."

There's not enough outrage.

Antonia Zerbisias is a Living section columnist for The Star.

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