



## Slain women remembered

### Dawson College shootings deepen the gravity of services marking an earlier tragedy in Montreal

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There were no tears when Hayder Kadhim realized a gunman marching past him into Montreal's Dawson College had shot him. Nor did he cry when he felt the bullet wounds in his head, neck and leg and looked at his hands, which appeared to have been dipped in a "sink full of blood."

But he couldn't stop sobbing three days later, when the fog of heavy medication lifted and he spotted a newspaper in his hospital room with the photo of his friend beneath the headline, "The perfect girl who did not deserve to die."

"Women are usually paying a high price due to gun violence, which makes it a true major issue we need to solve in our country," Kadhim told a Toronto crowd at a service marking the 17th anniversary of an earlier tragedy in the same city, at École Polytechnique — remembered as the Montreal massacre.

The memorial at the YWCA Toronto, which attracted about 150 people, was one of many throughout the city and country that remembered the 14 women gunned down by Marc Lépine in 1989. The 25-year-old loner, who blamed "feminists" for lost jobs, stormed the engineering school and separated men from women before opening fire on the women.

"I'm concerned about gun violence on women in our society," said Kadhim, who has become an activist for gun control. "I don't want to lose another friend like Anastasia."

The Sept. 13 shooting rampage by Kimveer Gill, 25, at Dawson College, which killed Anastasia De Sousa and injured 19 people, may not have been motivated by misogyny. But the issue of gun violence and violence against women are inextricably linked, said Kadhim.

He and other speakers used the memorial to call on Prime Minister Stephen Harper's government to maintain the federal gun registry and not soften gun-control laws.

"Most Canadian women killed with guns are killed with a shotgun or rifle — the very guns that opponents of the law say are not the cause of gun violence," said Paulette Senior, CEO of YWCA Canada, the country's largest provider of shelters for women.

Wendy Cukier, a Ryerson professor and president of the Coalition for Gun Control, said the registry has helped reduce the number of violent acts against women involving firearms.

"This law is a monument to the victims of the Montreal massacre," she said, adding, "Let's not let Stephen Harper destroy it."



CARLOS OSORIO/TORONTO STAR

Gerald Barron hugs Tricia Kennedy at a candlelight vigil last night to remember all women murdered by men. The vigil took place at the University of Toronto's Philosophers Walk, where 14 trees have been planted in memory of the women killed in the Montreal Massacre.

The number of women killed by firearms dropped by 67 per cent between 1991 and 2002, she said, adding that about 16,000 gun licences have been refused or revoked for public safety reasons since 1998.

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***Louise De Sousa,***

***mother of victim Anastasia, 18***

"Gun control won't prevent all violence, but without effective controls over legal firearms, you can't prevent their misuse or diversion to illegal markets," Cukier said. "All guns are potentially dangerous, so all guns need to be controlled."

Her comments were echoed by Attorney General Michael Bryant, who said that while the gun registry is not a panacea, it's part of a larger effort in tackling gun violence.

"If we're serious about doing everything we can, then we have to do everything," he said. That includes prevention, a handgun ban, addressing supply and demand for the illegal gun trade, and tracking guns from legal to illegal ownership, he said.

A candlelight vigil to remember all women murdered by men was held at Philosopher's Walk on the University of Toronto campus, where 14 red oak trees have been planted in memory of the women killed in Montreal.

At Queen's Park, 10 young women marked the day of mourning by speaking with politicians about introducing a women's studies course into the high school curriculum. The high school and university students from Guelph, London, Ottawa, Toronto and Waterloo are part of The Miss G Project, which is lobbying for a course that would cover women's contributions to politics, history, the media, sports and arts. The name is a nod to one of the first American women to attend university, known only as Miss G, whose early death in 1873 was blamed on overuse of her brain.

"We salute the women of the Montreal massacre," said Mallika Chaudhuri, a third-year student at the University of Western Ontario.

"The Montreal massacre was an eye-opener to the fact that we need this kind of education."

In Montreal, both shooting tragedies were remembered as about 50 women placed white roses on 14 steel monuments in a memorial park near École Polytechnique. This year, Louise De Sousa, the mother of 18-year-old Anastasia, joined them. A red rose in her memory was placed alongside one of the white flowers.

De Sousa said she finds it hard to believe that, even after the revulsion that followed the 1989 massacre, a tragedy like the Dawson shooting could have occurred.

"It blows my mind that, through 17 years, people weren't able to do anything," she said. "Now we've really got to apply more pressure. ... Something should have been done and it was not, and we've got to fight harder."

In a statement, Harper called on Canadians to "renew our national resolve to prevent and eliminate violence against women."

"The motive behind the Montreal massacre was hatred of women. That made it doubly horrifying because Canada not only prides itself as one of the most peaceful societies in the world, but also one that recognizes gender equality and upholds the rights of women."

With files from Canadian Press