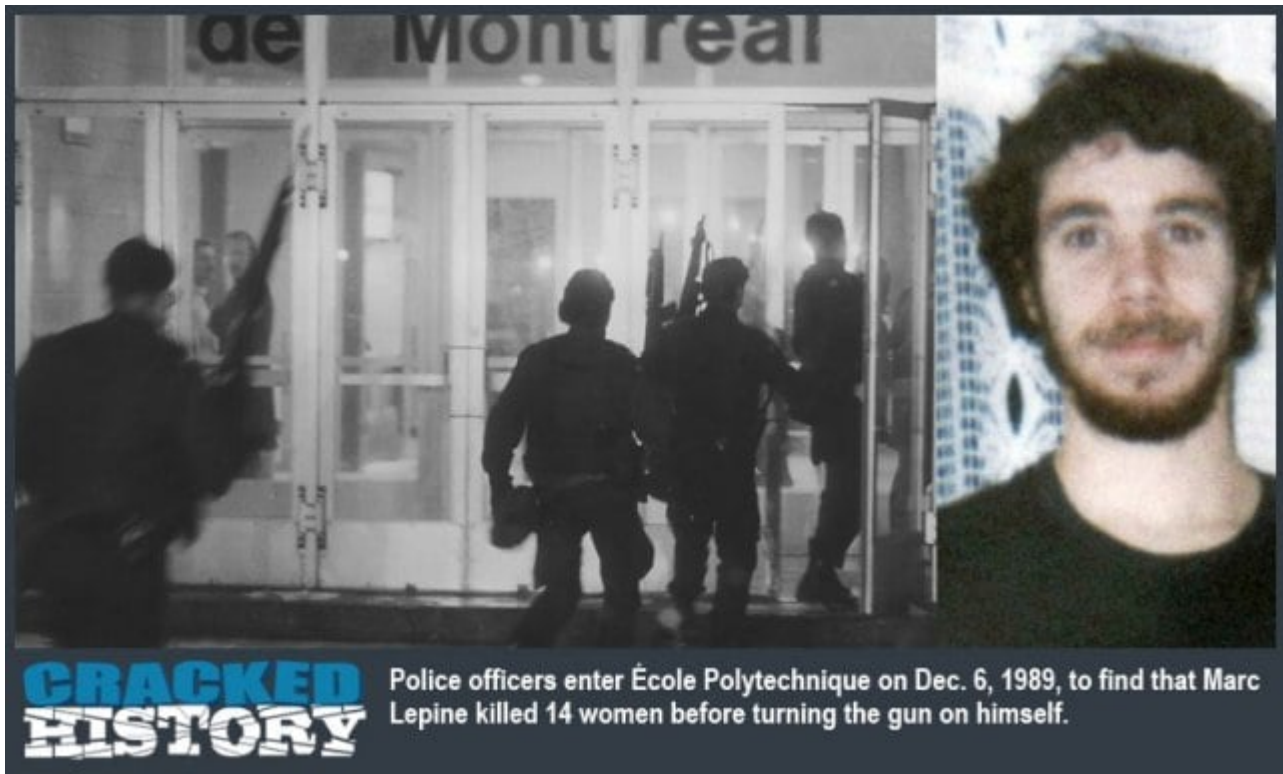


# Men Should Not Be Shamed on Dec. 6



More than three decades after the [Montreal](#) Massacre, the anniversary remains the occasion for [alarmist claims about violence against women](#) and the ritual shaming of men. Such shaming does nothing to prevent future [violence](#) and should cease immediately.

On Dec. 6, 1989, 25-year-old Marc Lépine (born Gamil Gharbi) shot to death 14 women at the engineering school of the University of Montreal. He left a suicide note ([pdf](#)) explaining his rage against feminists, who, he claimed, “always try to misrepresent [men] every time they can.” He also appended a list of particular women he would like to have killed if he’d had time.

Even before the note’s disturbing contents were revealed, most commentators ruled out of bounds the idea that Lépine was mentally ill or that his atrocious act was in any way

“incomprehensible.”

On the contrary, it was held to be representative of a woman-hating society. “If this is madness,” wrote a [journalist for La Presse newspaper](#), “never has it been so lucid, so calculated. ... The message is: there is a price for women’s liberation and the price is death.”

Feminists charged that the massacre was a bloody enactment of what was already happening to women every day by “entitled” men. “Most women know one thing only too well,” a [contributor to Le Devoir](#) alleged: “It’s open season on women all year long!”

The idea that most women in Canada are victims is a baseless exaggeration. It’s true that [men abuse and kill](#) women every year. It’s also true that [women abuse and kill](#) men every year, a fact that undermines the “[gender-based violence](#)” explanation favored by feminists. If women are killed because men have power over them, how do we explain the men who are killed by women? Studies of domestic violence repeatedly show that [women participate in hitting, punching, and kicking intimate partners at least as often as men do](#), and for the same reasons; not infrequently, violent women cause [serious harm](#).

Overall, men are far more likely than women to be homicide victims. In 2018, [484 men, as compared to 163 women](#), were murdered in Canada. Moreover, men [kill themselves](#) far more often than they kill women. These facts are worth pondering not to minimize the horror of what happened in Montreal but to highlight the capacity of both sexes to cause harm, and our society’s silence about male suffering.

When Prime Minister Justin Trudeau [declared on Dec. 6, 2020](#), that “the safety of women must be the foundation of any society,” it was impossible not to notice the deliberate asymmetry. It’s a national tragedy when women are killed; men’s lack of safety, including their staggering [occupational](#)

[injuries and deaths](#), is a normal part of life that no leader publicly mourns.

The emphasis on Lépine as a symbol of male power required that the unhappy details of his real life be air-brushed away. His father, Rachid Gharbi, an immigrant from Algeria, had a history of psychiatric illness. According to Lépine's mother, [Monique Lépine](#), he had beaten both her and their son, once "slamm[ing] [his] son's face so hard the marks were there for a week."

When Marc was 7, his parents separated and his father disappeared. Later, Lépine would take his mother's maiden name (and change his first name to Marc) in an attempt at self-transformation. For about three of his teen years, Lépine had a Big Brother, a volunteer mentor, who also disappeared, possibly due to a conviction for alleged sexual abuse of a boy in his care. At 17, Lépine attempted to join the Canadian Armed Forces, but was rejected following his interview.

He grew up socially awkward, bullied by his peers, and considered unattractive because of his acne. Though he was intelligent, he abandoned or failed out of two post-secondary programs. He applied to study engineering at the University of Montreal, but was rejected. (I haven't been able to ascertain whether the school was proactively recruiting female students in the year it rejected Lépine. [Many engineering faculties have made no secret of doing so.](#))

Though Lépine's hostility toward [feminism](#) is undeniable, it didn't spring from male privilege, and it's unlikely he ever felt "entitled."

That was a useful story to justify male shame: "The day men start saying that they too are afraid of this kind of behaviour, that it hurts them too, that they don't want any more of it," [accused one feminist journalist](#), "that's the day when things will start to change. Not before."

It's not clear how men are to prevent attacks like Lépine's, but the charge that all men were implicated in the violence was one that no man could easily refute, and most didn't try.

Within two years, Dec. 6 became, officially, "[The National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women](#)" (in time [The 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence](#)). Canadian universities commemorate the event with gatherings and displays, sometimes spread over multiple days and usually attended by university presidents and other top-level officials. Participants make speeches about men "[unlearning toxic masculinity](#)" and enact rituals of angry mourning.

Men's approved role at such events has remained constant: accept their shameful affiliation with Lépine and work for women's advancement. Often, male students reiterate men's obligation to [stop consenting to women's oppression](#).

Such notions are dangerously misleading. Lépine did not kill because he was socialized into machismo or taught to control women. There's ample evidence that men's violence, like women's, is caused by multiple factors such as [mental illness, addictions, stress, and family of origin abuse](#).

Sadly, the Montreal Massacre anniversary has become a state-sanctioned occasion for anti-male posturing. For men looking on, the message is clear. No matter how many men die in Canada and globally, whether through suicide or violence or in [loving self-sacrifice](#), there will never be a day to honor them. Even Nov. 11 war memorials, as Lépine indicated in his suicide note, have been "equalized." While men's [sacrifices for their society](#) go unremarked, the bad behavior of a few men is magnified and made all men's responsibility.

It's far from clear that we can ever "end violence against women." But if we are serious about reducing violence, we should start by acknowledging that male victimization is equally tragic, and should seek to understand, rather than

demonize, those abject figures like Lépine whose “[toxic masculinity](#)” we love to hate.

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