

Anti-Date Rape Posters Defaced on Campus

Obscenities, notes left on "NO means NO" material

By MELISSA DOUCETTE

Please note that the following article contains graphic language.

Posters with an anti-date rape message are being defaced at UPEI. The posters are only up in Main building. So far, at least one has been ripped down, and at least three have had obscenities written on them.

"If someone wants to write that, they should have the courage to sign their name. Cowardice is the first ingredient of a rapist."

**Lyle Berhault,
Rape Crisis Centre**

The posters were first produced in Ontario in 1991 by the Ontario Federation of Students (OFS), and several years later became a national campaign of the Canadian Federation of Students, of which the OFS were members. The defacement of these posters is not a new occurrence. One of the most vicious backlashes against the "NO means NO" posters happened at Queen's University in the early nineties, where lurid parodies of the posters appeared.

Each poster has a blank spot followed by the words "means no." At UPEI, the comments "drive your cock in me," "bone my dry cunt," and "fuck my red asshole" have been written in black marker in the blank area, in what appears to be the same hand. The defaced post-

ers have since been removed and replaced.

The vandalizing has students, community groups, and UPEI administration outraged.

"It's a very immature response to a very serious issue . . . Two-year olds do that. I don't find it funny at all," commented Nanette Gauthier, fifth-year Religious Studies major and Women's Centre volunteer. The founding of the Women's Centre several years ago stems from a brutal rape that was alleged to take place on campus.

Lyle Berhault, former Coordinator of the Rape Crisis Centre, also expressed her anger at the obscenities.

"It's hard to respond to it because it's so blatantly ugly. It's absolutely disgusting," Berhault asserted. "It's no secret that UPEI, as in any university, has that element [ideas expressed in the defacement]. They think they are going to university for education, but they need education badly. Some minds are so closed that they're wasting their time at university. It's just sad," she continued, and noted that the "NO means NO" poster is kept at the Rape Crisis Centre.

Berhault also questioned why whoever is responsible for the graffiti has left no identifying marks on their comments.

"If someone wants to write that, they should have the courage to sign their name. Cowardice is the first ingredient of a rapist," said Berhault. "It really makes it clear how horrifying rape is - this is the kind of mind it comes from."

Dr. John Crossley, Vice-President of Academic Support for UPEI, added to the comments about the defacement of the "NO means NO" posters.

"It's stupid and offensive, but not unpredictable behaviour," said Crossley. He added that the defamers belonged to "a sub-category of jerks."

Other comments have been left on the posters, including typed notes that react to some of the text of the poster itself.

One such note reads "Not now means NOT NOW. I have a boyfriend/girlfriend

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**Anita Zaenker,
National Women's
Commissioner,
CFS.**

means I HAVE A BOY-FRIEND/GIRLFRIEND. Maybe later means MAYBE LATER.

You've I've been drinking means YOU'VE/ I'VE BEEN DRINKING.

I'm not sure means I'M NOT SURE.

You're not my type means YOU'RE NOT MY TYPE.

If you mean NO, better to just say NO."

The typed note has also elicited comments. Crossley calls the "NO means NO" message, which has been used by many different groups for years, a

"fundamentally important campaign. . . [that has had] a lot of positive impact over the years."

He also referred to the typed notes as "obscene because of the message behind them."

Berhault, who used to work for the Rape Crisis Centre, is concerned about the message the notes send to women who have been raped.

"It's really hard for someone who sees that [the notes] and is feeling they've done something to bring it [rape] on," she commented.

Berhault further indicated that a natural reaction for anybody who has experienced a major trauma is to blame themselves. Rape takes away all of a person's control, and blaming one's actions for causing the rape is a method victims sometimes use to regain a sense of control over their lives.

Gauthier agrees.

"It would be very upsetting for a woman to see that. She probably said 'no' and wasn't listened to," said Gauthier.

Anita Zaenker, National Women's Commissioner for the Canadian Federation of Students, was also disturbed about the negative reactions to the "NO means NO" posters.

"The No means No campaign was started as a way of educating people about date rape. One out of 6 women on Canadian campuses will experience sexualized violence. No means No sends the message to survivors that they have the right to say no however they can," she commented.

She further noted that women have the force of law behind the "NO means NO" message. The Supreme Court of Canada recently overturned a ruling where a man was acquitted of sexual as-

sault on the basis that the victim had given "complied consent."

She had said no several times, her behaviour was not accommodating, and her attacker verbally noted her fear more than once, but the Alberta Judge found that the victim had not been conservatively dressed, and acquitted the accused on this basis.

In responding to the case, Supreme Court Justice L'Heureux-Dube noted that the original ruling "does not derive from the findings of fact but from mythical assumptions. It denies women's sexual autonomy and implies that women are in a state of constant consent to sexual activity."

Supreme Court Justice Major also noted that "although she [the victim] was extremely afraid throughout the encounter, she had done everything possible to project a confident demeanour, in the belief that this would improve her chances of avoiding a violent assault."

The large anti-date rape posters have a black background with the word "No" and "Date Rape" written in purple, and other text written in white.

NO (definition)

NO means NO. Not now means NO. I have a boyfriend/girlfriend means NO. Maybe later means NO. No thanks means NO. You're not my type means NO. \$#@!! means NO. I'd rather be alone right now means NO. Don't touch me means NO. I really like you but . . . means NO. Let's just go to sleep means NO. I'm not sure means NO. You've/I've been drinking means NO. Silence means NO. _____ means NO.

DATE RAPE
Not understanding NO