

STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO SEXUALLY VIOLENT FACEBOOK THREAD

As has been publicized over various social media platforms, blogs and media outlets, on February 10th, 2014, I received a copy of a conversation held by five men who were presently or formerly elected to represent students at the University of Ottawa through various capacities. After my disgust at the contents of this conversation had been made clear to these men, four of them responded by threatening me legally, demanding I remain silent about this issue. To my knowledge, three of these men, Alexandre Giroux, Michel Fournier-Simard and Bart Tremblay, still hold intentions of pursuing me legally for my decision to speak publicly about this.

I first want to express how much I appreciate the outpouring of support I have received from the University of Ottawa community over the past few days. This process has been intimidating and difficult, and it is this support that has helped me to challenge and continue speaking out against this misogynistic behaviour. Situations like this remind me why I am so proud and honoured to have been elected to represent students as President of the Student Federation of the University of Ottawa.

Throughout this process I have met with two of the participants in this conversation, Pat Marquis and Alex Larochelle, to discuss accountability measures they can take in an attempt to address their contribution to rape culture on our campus. While we have not yet agreed on specific steps, it is my hope that steps can be taken to address this culture on our campus. It is incredibly disappointing that the other three participants in this conversation have made the decision to avoid taking responsibility for their actions.

The fact that the five men could so casually discuss and joke about me and the position students have elected me to hold in such sexually violent ways points to how normalized rape culture, misogyny and sexism are on our campus and in our society. This kind of behaviour has clear impacts on women; it creates an environment that is intimidating, threatening and toxic. Women on this campus and in our society deserve better.

We deserve to study at uOttawa without being concerned that we'll be one of the one in three women who experience sexual assault in their lifetime.

We deserve to attend events without wondering if the event organizers are contributing to a culture where we are told that if we are sexually assaulted while drinking we were asking for it.

We deserve to feel comfortable running for elected positions to make positive changes on our campus without fearing misogynistic retaliation whether in public or private.

Finally, when these things do happen, we deserve to be able to speak out about examples of rape culture without being threatened into silence, legally or otherwise. It is not enough to simply not engage in within this type of behaviour, we all have a role in actively challenging sexism and misogyny whenever possible.

It is important that we do not view this as an isolated issue and instead recognize this as a systemic form of sexism and misogyny that isn't only present generally on our campus, but also within some specific circles of our student representatives. I look forward to working with students across campus this year to challenge rape culture at our university and through policies and practices of our student representative structures that allow this culture to be perpetuated instead of challenged.

In solidarity,

Anne-Marie Roy

President at the Student Federation of the University of Ottawa