
September 15, 2015

Statement on Recent Threats against Women at the University of Toronto

Dear Members and the community,

The new school year is meant to be a time for students to be provided with new learning opportunities, as well as opportunities for academic development. On September 5th, 2015 however, a violent threat was posted online that targeted women, specifically those in Women and Gender Studies, those in the Sociology department, as well as feminists at the University of Toronto. Given the ongoing efforts to combat rape culture and gender-based violence on campus, the threats have further provoked a hostile learning and working environment for women at the University of Toronto.

Though the comments directed at women had come as a shock, what left the community under the most surprise was the University's response. On September 10th, 2015, a campus-wide email was issued regarding Campus Safety, which spoke of heightened police presence. However, the email de-emphasized the gendered attacks which had led to bulking up security on campus, and students at the University of Toronto were left worried and confused if nothing else. Furthermore, it was discovered that the University had been aware of similar threats made in June 2015, but failed to act on the issue in a diligent and proactive manner. Rather than receiving pertinent information from our University's administrative bodies, mainstream media has been much more informative on the issue.

The recent threat called to question is a deeply-rooted problem that manifests itself through much more than solely threatening comments. Misogyny is the dislike or hatred of women, and it reveals itself in various ways, and has been made evident through the threatening comments that have been circulating. It silences women in the classroom, in workplace settings, and in our community. It tells men that hyper-masculinity is more accepted than sensitivity and allyship. It also promotes the rape culture that is accepted in our society. Further, people are differently impacted by misogyny based on their intersecting identities; their race, class, religious practices/beliefs, ability, sexual orientation, gender expression, etc.

With an understanding of the recent threats as a systemic issue, the Scarborough Campus Students' Union recognizes that the one-track solution of heightened police presence does not solve the problem. The University has an obligation to ensure that a welcoming campus environment is established. That said, though extra security measures presents as a solution to some, it may work to further intimidate some women on campus. The Scarborough Campus Students' Union has a stern commitment to challenging the systems of oppression that work to intimidate and silence marginalized identities. We recognize the resilience of the women impacted by the recent incident, and will continue to actively work to empower those students, faculty, and members of the community who have been affected.

In Solidarity,

The Scarborough Campus Students' Union

UTSC Women's & Trans* Centre