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Before #MeToo: The Fight against Sexual Harassment at Ontario Universities, 1979–1994

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ABSTRACT
This article examines the campaign against sexual harassment conducted at Ontario universities between 1979 and 1994, looking closely at four universities: York, Queen's, Toronto, and Carleton. Sources examined included campus newspapers, national media, and the *CAUT Bulletin*. The term "sexual harassment" was only coined in 1975, but it was quickly taken up by campus feminists in Ontario who successfully fought to have universities adopt policies and procedures to combat sexual harassment. By the late 1980s, they had broadened their campaign to look beyond predatory instructors, focusing on actions and behaviours that created a sexist climate that hindered women's learning and their full participation in campus life. The arguments of both the supporters and the opponents of the campaign are examined. The article concludes with the failure of the Ontario government to impose a "zero tolerance" policy on sexual harassment at universities. While sexual harassment continues to exist at Ontario universities, campus feminists made significant progress during these years.

RÉSUMÉ
Cet article analyse la campagne contre le harcèlement sexuel menée dans les universités ontariennes entre 1979 et 1994, examinant de près quatre universités : York, Queen's, Toronto et Carleton. Les sources étudiées comprenaient les journaux des campus, les médias nationaux et le Bulletin de l'ACPPU. L'expression « harcèlement sexuel » n'a été inventée qu'en 1975, mais elle a rapidement été reprise par les féministes des campus de l'Ontario qui se sont battues avec succès pour que les universités adoptent des politiques et des procédures pour lutter contre le harcèlement sexuel. À la fin des années 80, elles avaient élargi leur campagne; elles allaient au-delà de la dénonciation des instructeurs prédateurs, se concentrant sur les actions et les comportements à l'origine du climat sexiste qui empêchait l'apprentissage des femmes et leur pleine

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participation à la vie du campus. Les arguments des partisans et des opposants à la campagne sont tous deux pris en considération. L'article conclut à l'échec du gouvernement ontarien d'imposer une politique de « tolérance zéro » sur le harcèlement sexuel dans les universités. Toutefois, bien que ce dernier persiste au sein des universités ontariennes, les féministes des campus ont réalisé d'importants progrès au cours de ces années.

In early October of 1989, male students at Gordon House, a Queen's University residence, put up signs that mocked the "No Means No" campaign that was then being run by several groups on campus. The men's signs read: "no means maybe," "no means have another beer," "no means tie me up," and "no means kick her in the teeth."[1] The signs infuriated many campus feminists who launched a battle to have the perpetrators punished and to change the sexist culture of Queen's. While the Queen's incident generated headlines across Canada, similar battles were taking place at many university campuses. Feminist activists in universities across North America had long been fighting to punish harassers and create a less sexist campus environment. Activists started with a drive to have universities adopt sexual harassment policies and continued with a broader fight against campus cultures that trivialized or even valorized rape, demeaned women's bodies, and told young women that they were only valued on campus for their sexual availability. This paper will explore the fight against sexual harassment at Ontario universities from 1979 to 1994, years in which feminists struggled to bring the problem of sexual harassment to the attention of university administrations and fought hard for policies that would punish offenders.

We narrowed in on four universities: Carleton, University of Toronto, York, and Queen's, doing a close reading of the campus newspapers for any mention of sexual harassment. Campus newspapers provide a range of perspectives on these debates, which made them useful sources for examining how students responded to these issues. Other sources included the *CAUT* (Canadian Association of University Teachers) *Bulletin* for a faculty perspective; and the *Toronto Star,* the *Globe and Mail, Chatelaine,* and *Maclean's* for how leading news organizations addressed these events. These universities were chosen because they are large institutions whose impact on the culture of Ontario's universities is inescapable. We wanted a range of newer (York, Carleton) and older institutions (Toronto, Queen's). We also wanted to capture universities in a range of settings—Canada's largest city (Toronto and York), Canada's capital (Ottawa), and a smaller city (Queen's). We focus on two cases studies: York University, which was the first campus to adopt a sexual harassment policy in 1982, and Queen's University, which struggled to change a sexist campus culture in the late 1980s and early 1990s. While the struggle for a harassment-free campus continues, students and female faculty helped to create a language to fight against sexual harassment on campus during these years.[2]

This paper starts in 1979 with a sexual assault at York University that helped prompt the development of the first sexual harassment policy at an Ontario university and concludes in 1994 with the debate over the Ontario government's attempt to impose "zero tolerance" for sexual harassment at Ontario universities. During these

sixteen years, the definition of sexual harassment broadened, coming to encompass not just inappropriate sexual contact between faculty and students, but a sexist culture that made female students feel unwelcome on campus. There were parallel campaigns addressing the issue of sexual assault on campus, but this paper has put more focus on the issue of sexual harassment, in both its narrow and broader definitions. To the best of our knowledge, the majority of the activists we study here—although not all—were white, cis-gender women, and until the late 1980s, there was little discussion or recognition of the fact that Black, Indigenous, and people of colour (BIPOC) women were more likely to experience sexual harassment than white women.[3] In 1989, Fleurette Osborne, the founder and first president of Black Women of Canada, published an article in the *CAUT Bulletin* detailing the multiple forms of discrimination faced by women of colour in Canadian universities, paying particular attention to the issue of sexual harassment.[4] Unfortunately, it would take many more years for her analysis to be fully embraced by activists against sexual harassment, and few of our sources made any mention of race.

The fight against sexual harassment was part of a much broader feminist movement that went far beyond university campuses. Although the wave metaphor has been rightly criticized for ignoring feminist activism in the middle decades of the twentieth century, the burgeoning of feminist activism in the late 1960s and 1970s, often referred to as the second wave of feminist activism, marked a significant change in the lives of many Canadian women.[5] An important moment was the establishment of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada in 1967. After holding commission meetings in church basements, community halls, and shopping centres, and hearing from women across the country, the commission released a report in 1970 with 167 recommendations, including equal opportunity to access education and careers, improved access to abortion and birth control, day-care services, and family law reform.[6] The National Action Committee on the Status of Women, formed in 1973 as a coalition of women's groups from across Canada, continued the fight for women's equality. Women's workforce participation rose dramatically during these decades, and, as Joan Sangster and Meg Luxton have shown, working-class women often involved themselves in feminist activism through their unions, fighting for equal pay, safer working conditions, and access to jobs traditionally restricted to men.[7] On university campuses, female faculty and students fought for the creation of women's studies programs and for equal pay for female faculty members.[8] As Megan Blair and Patrizia Gentile have shown, women also mobilized against beauty contests, including campus beauty contests.[9] Feminism in the 1970s and 1980s was a diverse and often highly fractured movement—we have chosen to describe our activists as feminists even while recognizing that not all feminists on campus were involved in the movement against sexual harassment.[10]

The fight against sexual harassment actually started on a campus, although it quickly moved beyond. The term was created by feminists in Ithaca, New York, who had gathered to support Carmita Wood, a woman who had resigned from her administrative position at Cornell University because of a professor's sexual advances towards her. Their press release condemning the phenomenon of "sexual harassment"

was released in April 1975. Subsequently, the Working Women United Institute organized a public "speak out" where 275 women protested what was now called sexual harassment.[11] In Boston, the Alliance against Sexual Coercion began publishing handbooks that described the dynamics of sexual harassment. *Ms. Magazine* put sexual harassment on its cover with a dramatic cartoon image of a boss with his hand in his secretary's shirt in 1977, bringing it to international attention. *Ms. Magazine* focused on the stories of secretaries, waitresses, students, and congressional aides, among others. In Canada, Constance Backhouse and Leah Cohen began gathering the stories of women for their book, *The Secret Oppression: Sexual Harassment of Working Women.*[12] The book, which was published in 1978, featured seven case studies, including a female electrician who was catcalled on her worksite, found a dildo in her lunchbox, and was repeatedly physically assaulted. A graduate student described how her supervisor sent her poems, dropped by her house unannounced, and kissed her without her permission. It was clear that sexual harassment was something experienced throughout the working world — in service industries, in the trades, and in the professions. Women who complained were not taken seriously, and many said nothing at all, aware that complaining could cost them their jobs. The book was a sensation: newspapers, radio, television, and magazines ran interviews with the authors and reviews of the book, giving the issue widespread attention. Looking back on the publication of the book more than thirty years later, Backhouse explained that discussion of the issue burgeoned in the late 1970s, partly because it had been given a name, partly because of the strength of the feminist movement, and partly because the sexual revolution of the 1960s had intensified the sexual pressures that women faced in the workplace.[13] In 1980, a human rights tribunal ruled that sexual harassment was not permitted under the Ontario Human Rights Code because it was a form of "sex discrimination."[14] The federal government prohibited sexual harassment under the Human Rights Act in 1985. In 1987, the Supreme Court of Canada decided in favour of Bonnie Robichaud, who had been physically assaulted by her male supervisor. Two years later, two Winnipeg waitresses were successful in a case against a restaurant cook. In response to this case, the Supreme Court would create a wide-ranging definition of sexual harassment that included an uncomfortable work environment. As a result, workplaces across Canada would create sexual harassment policies.[15]

During the 1960s and 1970s, the number of female students at Canadian universities dramatically increased. In 1967, women comprised 34.5 per cent of full-time undergraduate students in Canadian universities; by 1980, in Ontario universities, women accounted for 44.8 per cent of full-time undergraduates.[16] Through the combined efforts of women faculty and students, women's centres were established in some Ontario universities during the 1970s, including the first in Canada at York University in 1975 and one at Carleton University in 1976.[17] Women's centres launched many campaigns to improve the status of women on campuses, aiming both to raise awareness of women's issues among the student body and to pressure university administrations to take action. By the late 1970s, many student governments had created positions within their executive, or commissions, that were

exclusively focused on women's issues, both on individual campuses and within larger student associations, like the Ontario Federation of Students (OFS).[18] Finally, some university administrations also introduced positions and offices devoted to the status of women on their campuses. York University was one of the first to do so, creating the Office of the Advisor to the President on the Status of Women in 1975, as a result of its *Senate Task Force Report on the Status of Women*.[19] These would all be crucial advocates for sexual harassment codes, procedures, and education.

Constance Backhouse, Leah Cohen, and Norma Bowen, a University of Guelph sociologist who conducted a study on sexual harassment, gave many talks on the topic on university campuses in 1980 and 1981.[20] All three were frequently featured as experts in stories on sexual harassment in student newspapers.[21] These feminists explained that sexual harassment was an abuse of power and a violent crime rather than simply sexual desire gone too far, and it was the outgrowth of a sexist society.[22] For example, at a Carleton University talk in 1981, Norma Bowen asserted that sexual harassment was "yet another symptom of sexism in our society which, like rape, is a form of social control that serves to limit women's autonomy and mobility."[23] In *The Secret Oppression*, Backhouse and Cohen attributed sexual harassment to the "broader phenomena of constructions of masculinity, socialization processes, and gendered hierarchies of material and social power."[24] Many feminist student groups adopted this systemic understanding of sexual harassment.

Student newspapers began drawing attention to sexual harassment in the late 1970s.[25] At the University of Toronto, the Women's Commission of the Students' Administrative Council (SAC) conducted an informal study on sexual harassment in early 1979, in which the majority of respondents claimed that their professors had sexually harassed them.[26] The council had distributed two thousand copies of the survey but they were not given out in any systematic way, likely skewing the results slightly. Nevertheless, the results of the survey were shocking to many in the university and prompted the graduate and undergraduate student unions to warn their members of harassment.[27] Students also brought formal complaints about specific cases of sexual harassment to the University of Toronto's ombudsman in 1979.[28]

In 1978, the University of Ottawa fired Dr. Rudi Strickler for repeatedly sexually harassing a female student.[29] While this was certainly not the first case of sexual harassment at a Canadian university, it was the first case that received wide publicity.[30] The following year, a teaching assistant (TA) assaulted a student at York University.[31] The student reported that her TA asked her to come over to his apartment in November 1979 to pick up some necessary books for an assignment, where he assaulted her. She notified the dean of her college about the incident in December, who turned over the investigation to William Farr, the vice-president of employee and student relations.[32] Although the student also talked to the police about the incident, they did not press any charges.[33] After investigating for several months, Farr decided to suspend the TA from teaching for three years in late March of 1980, although he was able to continue his graduate studies. Farr's reasoning was that while there was insufficient evidence to establish that he had raped the student, it was clear from the details of the case that the TA had taken "improper advantage of his instructional position."[34] This case

exposed how little York was prepared for these kinds of complaints. The lack of clarity in the investigation, as well as the length of time taken to come to a ruling, led to many calls for a formal process to be established.[35] The Women's Affairs Commission of the York Students Federation was particularly unhappy with the investigation and ruling, stating that the decision to find the TA innocent of rape, but guilty of abusing his position, was "contradictory."[36] Less than one month later, in April of 1980, York established its Presidential Advisory Committee on Sexual Harassment.[37]

In March of 1981, three female students in the school of journalism at Carleton University, speaking for twenty-five of their peers, claimed that one or more journalism faculty members had sexually harassed students, in ways ranging from "sexist jokes in class to sexual blackmail and physical assault."[38] These students did not name specific professors, because they were worried that doing so could compromise the anonymity of the women they represented.[39] Three professors sued the students for $180,000, arguing these students had slandered the professors' reputations by incriminating the entire department.[40] A "defense committee" composed of fifty students raised almost $4,000 for students' legal fees; the students received over two hundred letters of encouragement, and they had the support of the National Union of Students (NUS) and some Carleton faculty.[41] The courts refused to dismiss the suit, and the students were forced to apologize. In the meantime, Carleton produced a pamphlet called *Complaints*, explaining how students could get help in the case of sexual harassment.[42]

These prominent cases were covered extensively in student newspapers across Ontario, as well as in the *Toronto Star* and the *Globe and Mail,* and they served as a catalyst for institutional reform.[43] In addition to making people aware of the extent of the problem, they pointed to the glaring absence of procedures for dealing with sexual harassment in universities. Students had only two options at this time. They could bring a complaint to their department head or the dean of their college, who would then interview their colleague (and possible friend) to determine what had occurred, or they could take their case to the police and the press. Both options were ineffectual, and the latter led to unwanted media attention focused on the survivor, and a long and likely expensive trial process.

The Development of a Sexual Harassment Policy at York University

York University was the first university in Ontario to develop a sexual harassment policy. Partly this was because of the assault case referenced earlier. But York was in the vanguard of promoting women's issues in Ontario universities. Its president, Ian Macdonald, had a reputation for being responsive to women's concerns. York had been early to develop women's studies courses, had established a Resource Centre for Women's Studies in the mid-1970s, and was the home of one of the first women's studies journals in Canada, *Canadian Woman Studies*.[44] As a relatively new university, York was more diverse and had more women on faculty than most Canadian universities.[45] In the 1970s and 1980s, York produced a number of reports on women faculty, staff, and mature students and led the way with the establishment of the

Women's Centre, their women's studies program offerings, and a women's resource library.[46] Even the York University Faculty Association (YUFA) was ahead in this regard, as it was eager to see York establish a sexual harassment policy. In fact, one of YUFA's proposed solutions to sexual harassment in 1980 was the implementation of an affirmative action program for hiring faculty, in order to "begin to correct the gender-based imbalance of power relations which underlies the issue of sexual harassment."[47]

Such a progressive attitude contrasted sharply with many other faculty associations, which can be partially attributed to which associations had unionized. According to Gillian Creese and Pamela Sugiman, sexual harassment was receiving considerable discussion in unions in Canada by the 1970s. It was one of many issues brought to the fore by female unionists as part of a larger effort to achieve gender equality within the labour movement.[48] Faculty began forming unions in the mid-1970s, in response to attempts by university administrations to cut costs by introducing tenure quotas and terminating redundant faculty.[49] The faculties of Carleton and York were among the early adopters of unionization, beginning the union certification process to join the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) in 1974 and 1975, respectively.[50] By contrast, faculty at Queen's did not unionize until the early 1990s, and the University of Toronto faculty association remains one of the few non-unionized faculty associations in Canada to this day.

York's Presidential Advisory Committee on Sexual Harassment was established in April 1980. The committee produced a preliminary report in September 1980 that recommended the establishment of guidelines for conduct and procedures for complaints, a system for storing complaint information, and the establishment of an administration-funded sexual harassment centre to assist victims (the word often used at the time) and promote awareness.[51] This was the first report of its kind in Canada.[52] The committee received over two hundred requests for copies of the preliminary report from various institutions and individuals across Canada and the United States.[53] The report was studied by the student governments of the University of Toronto and Carleton University,[54] and was also favourably received at an OFS fall 1980 conference.[55] In fact, the OFS proposed using the report's recommendations as a model for other universities, in part because the OFS Women's Issues Committee independently released a report of its own with very similar recommendations, including the establishment of a sexual harassment office funded by the university administration, whose duties would include education, support for victims, counselling, etc.[56]

York's student newspaper, *Excalibur,* praised the report but opposed the idea of the sexual harassment complaint centre representing the alleged victim, but not the alleged offender, and the committee's proposal to establish a classified complaint filing cabinet, in which evidence could be accumulated against professors over time to establish a case, without their knowledge.[57] YUFA worried that its members would not get due process in sexual harassment cases.[58] This would become a concern at other universities as well. Some professors and students also objected to some of the report's list of sexually harassing behaviours; they thought that leering and sexist

remarks should be understood merely as examples of rudeness, while others thought that a sexual harassment and education complaint centre was not justified by the extent of the problem.[59] This would be contentious at other Ontario universities as well, particularly at the University of Toronto, where engineering professor Richard Hummel was banned from the Hart House pool in 1989 for ogling women while he was swimming.[60] Many commentators asserted that there was nothing wrong with staring at members of the opposite sex, that it was merely "nature's way."[61] Hummel's supporters even started a defence fund for his legal expenses, a luxury that the complainant, who had the moral but not the financial support of groups like the Women's Caucus of OISE and the University of Toronto Law Faculty Women's Caucus, did not enjoy.[62]

Significantly, while York's committee was still meeting, the provincial government introduced changes to the Ontario Human Rights Code that strengthened protections against sexual harassment and other forms of discrimination.[63] In its final form, York's report recommended that the Sexual Harassment Education and Complaint Centre would assist, but not formally represent, complainants. It also recommended that the centre store records of all reported incidents for statistical and educational purposes, but keep the names of the people involved confidential.[64] Significantly, the definition of sexual harassment provided in the final report included "sexually oriented remarks and behaviour which may reasonably be perceived to create a negative psychological and emotional environment for work and study."[65] In 1983, York created the Sexual Harassment Education and Complaint Centre.[66]

Not only was York the first university to introduce a sexual harassment policy, the university also had a particularly inclusive process in developing that policy. The committee was composed of eighteen members representing many groups on campus, including the university administration, staff, faculty, experts from Osgoode Law School, CUPE, CUEW, and students from the council of the York Student Federation, Glendon College, and the Women's Centre.[67] The committee welcomed community engagement, holding over forty committee meetings and forums from July 1980 to October 1981.[68] While other universities developed sexual harassment policies, including Carleton later that year, Queen's in 1986, and the University of Toronto in 1987, they did not benefit from the same degree of inclusion.[69] Carleton's policy was mainly developed by the Office for the Status of Women, as well as Carleton's president, Robert Edwards, the Committee of Deans, and the university's Management Committee.[70] Student groups were largely excluded. Toronto's policy development process was quite inclusive and comprehensive, including extensive consultation with student groups, although opposition from the University of Toronto Faculty Association watered it down. Finally, Queen's policy was quickly developed by the administration, and there was so little student engagement with the issue of sexual harassment on campus that it initially did not generate any noticeable debate.

York's trailblazing on this issue was partly due to the vibrant feminist movement on that campus. Women's groups and student government positions focused on women's issues were the leading opponents of sexual harassment and the first to press university administrations to address the problem. They were also responsible for most of

the education and consciousness-raising on sexual harassment on campus, sponsoring and organizing important forums and workshops on the topic.[71] These women's groups kept tabs on developments in other universities, exchanged ideas at student federation conferences and meetings, and even coordinated some events together. For example, in January of 1979, a forum on sexual harassment at Innis College Town Hall was co-sponsored by the women's committees of both the University of Toronto's Students' Administrative Council (SAC) and York University's College of York Students Federation (CYSF).[72] The women's centres at York and Toronto played prominent roles in pressuring their administrations to take action.[73] By comparison, the Queen's Women's Centre was internally divided and weak, likely contributing to the low level of student engagement with sexual harassment in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The rare instances of the Queen's Women's Centre appearing in the *Queen's Journal* portrayed an organization that sometimes lacked a consistent public message or goal. For example, Suzie-Q Week was an annual tradition at Queen's in which gender roles would be reversed for a week, and women were encouraged to perform traditionally male responsibilities such as opening doors for men, asking men to dance, and paying for dinner on dates. In 1978, one member of the Queen's Women's Centre told Suzie Q Week organizers that the Women's Centre approved of the event provided it was "fun in nature," while the coordinator of the Women's Centre stated that the week operated to preserve sexual and gender inequality.[74] There also appeared to be some hesitancy about describing themselves as feminists. One member told the *Queen's Journal* in 1985 that the Queen's Women's Centre was "not a feminist centre," because "the word feminist tends to have bad connotations."[75]

The presence or lack of "political opportunities" likely influenced the timing and content of sexual harassment policies at each university. In social movement literature, political opportunities refer to "dimensions of the political environment or of change in that environment that provide incentives for collective action."[76] One type of potential opportunity is the incidence of a key or dramatic event, which can produce favourable conditions, either objective or perceived, for a social movement to effect change, resulting in increased mobilization.[77] The presence of such trigger events was probably a factor in the development of initial sexual harassment policies at York and Carleton. The case of the York student who was assaulted by her teaching assistant in 1979, and the case of the "journalism three" at Carleton in 1981, sparked outrage on each campus respectively, and also brought relatively intense media coverage. Both cases created urgency on the part of both campus women's groups and the administration, and sexual harassment policies at each institution were approved in relatively short order. Likewise, although feminist organizing at Queen's had traditionally been weak, the publication in 1986 of a twenty-page memorandum entitled "Gender Bias Within the Law School," written by a law professor, Sheila McIntyre, received considerable negative media attention and led directly to the establishment of the Coalition for Voices Against Sexism, which successfully undertook various campaigns to pressure the administration to address sexism and sexual harassment on campus more comprehensively, including strengthening the very weak sexual harassment policy that had been passed with very little discussion just before the

publication of McIntyre's memo.[78] There was no comparable trigger event at the University of Toronto. The initial survey, conducted by the Women's Commission of the SAC in 1979, did not receive similar levels of media attention as the events discussed above had, and there were no clearly identifiable survivors. The lack of a trigger event thus partially explains the slow pace of sexual harassment policy development at the University of Toronto.

The Use of the Language of Sexual Harassment to Oppose Sexism in Universities

In her 1988 book, *MisEducation: Women and Canadian Universities*, University of Waterloo professor Anne Innis Dagg painted a compelling picture of the sexism women faced on Canadian university campuses. At the University of Toronto, for instance, the initiation for male students into Victoria College included "kneeling down and kissing a piece of carpet soaked in fish oil and splattered with chicken blood called a 'muff,'" as well as the simulated rape of an inflatable female doll.[79] In classes, the overwhelmingly male faculty might tell jokes that demeaned and trivialized women. One professor assured his students that a theory was "so simple 'even a housewife could understand,'" while another concluded a class on Aristotle's beliefs about women with "but we all know one thing women are good for."[80]

The frosh activities at Queen's had a reputation for being extreme and offensive in general, and could include men simulating sex by performing pushups over women on the football field, and even the simulated gang rape of the football mascot or some other stand-in for a woman.[81] Women walking around campus were often subjected to harassing and humiliating remarks, such as "show your tits."[82] Victoria Hall, a women-only residence, was frequently the site of sexist chants and obscenities, so much so that Dean of Women Elspeth Baugh described its perimeter as a "meat market."[83] It was also subject to "raids" by male undergraduates, who broke into the rooms of women students and stole their underwear or vandalized the residence, while co-ed residences on campus had a tradition of male students "tucking in" the female students.[84] Women's groups had long held that sexual harassment should encompass issues of a sexist climate in addition to cases of individual harassment. The definition provided by the Ontario Federation of Students Women's Committee in 1981, for example, stated that sexual harassment could include situations in which "women students, as a group, are made to feel uncomfortable because of comments made about the value of women students, women's opinions, women in a field of study, etc."[85]

By the late 1980s, sexual harassment policies had been established in most Ontario universities. There was widespread agreement that unwanted sexual solicitations, sexual comments, and touching of students by professors should not be allowed, and that offering to exchange sex for benefits, or threatening reprisals if the student should refuse, all constituted clear examples of sexual harassment. However, the idea of applying sexual harassment to activities such as "leering" or the creation of a "hostile environment" through sexist jokes or remarks directed at women in general, was

still highly contested. Many saw these behaviours as a normal part of everyday interactions between men and women and worried that viewing them as sexual harassment would infringe on personal liberties. While similar debates took place on other campuses, the best-known controversy took place at Queen's University.[86]

The signs at Gordon House mocking the "No means No" campaign, mentioned at the beginning of this article, fractured the university community. They enraged members of the growing feminist movement on campus, which had been gathering strength, sparked in part by Sheila McIntyre's previously mentioned memo on sexism in the law school. In the years leading up to the "No means No" campaign, Queen's students had participated in Kingston's Take Back the Night protests, they had repeatedly complained about the sexist content in the Engineering Society's newspaper, *Golden Words*, and several new women's groups were established.[87] Some students dismissed the posters as a relatively harmless joke, while others expressed concern that Queen's reputation was being damaged.[88] Some groups on campus called strongly for some kind of punishment for the students who had put up the signs, in order to send a message to the entire campus that misogyny was unacceptable.[89] However, disciplinary action was not forthcoming. The Main Campus Residence Council, responsible for handling issues in residences, decided that it would be unfair to symbolically punish a few students when a large group was likely involved. They felt that the signs were put up because of "ignorance, not malice."[90] The council recommended that a task force be established with a mandate of educating students about date rape. Many students were outraged by this lacklustre response. Jessica Slights, chair of the Alma Mater Society Gender Issues Committee, asserted that the refusal to punish those responsible was "tantamount to condoning misogynistic behavior."[91]

The controversy generated national media attention.[92] This threatened the reputation of Queen's University, which was immensely important to its students, alumni, faculty, and administration.[93] Queen's had just begun a $50 million fundraising campaign, and many alumni threatened to withhold their donations.[94] This threat to the Queen's brand encouraged the administration to take action, not just on this specific issue, but also on sexism in general.

Another significant factor in pressuring the administration was the mobilization of women's groups on campus. Many women students were fed up with the administration's failure to act on women's issues at Queen's. The Radical Obnoxious Fucking Feminists (ROFF), an "independent collective of militant feminists," formed in the wake of the Gordon House signs. ROFF responded by spray painting "no means no" all over campus, and sending letters to the parents of the nine men involved.[95] More significant were the actions of a group of about thirty women who, wearing scarves to hide their identity, occupied Principal Smith's office on November 9 for twenty-nine hours to protest the administration's inaction and failure to challenge the culture of sexism at Queen's.[96] Their specific demands included a review of homecoming and orientation events and that Principal Smith, who had to this point opted not to intervene in the Gordon House incident, publicly denounce the actions of the offending students.[97] Since these women chose to hide their identities for fear of reprisals, and because no one organization claimed responsibility, the occupation cannot be

attributed to any single women's group at Queen's, although twenty years later one of the participants asserted that it was the work of ROFF.[98]

The occupation was controversial. Some argued that these women's actions were too aggressive and disruptive, and many criticized them for refusing to reveal their identities, claiming that it weakened their cause.[99] However, many supported the occupation as an effective means of peaceful protest, and emphasized the importance of changing attitudes towards sexism, sexual harassment, and sexual assault on campus.[100] The president's office protest forced a discussion of sexism within the Queen's community and led to significant and concrete action by the administration.[101] One month later, the murder of fourteen women at Montreal's École Polytechnique by a man who blamed feminists for ruining his life, emboldened sexual harassers across the country. At the University of Western Ontario, graffiti appeared saying "kill feminist bitches," while male students at Queen's reportedly "entered classrooms, pointed their fingers at female students and pretended to pull imaginary triggers."[102] The massacre prompted a national debate about the degree to which a sexist culture could be held responsible for the murders.[103] By the end of 1989, the political culture of Queen's community and administration had shifted to the point where sexism, sexual harassment, and sexual assault were suddenly pressing issues.

In response to the events at Queen's, Principal David Smith created the Principal's Working Group on Gender Issues and installed Dean of Women Elspeth Baugh as its chair in late November of 1989. The mandate of this group was to change Queen's sexist culture, and it advised cracking down on a variety of traditions and rituals, including the banning of sexist coveralls. Students regularly attended football games with slogans such as "Lick it, Slam it, Suck it," or "I saw, I conquered, I came," on the back of their coveralls.[104] They recommended banning sexist chants like the infamous rugby songs that contained hateful, misogynistic, pro-rape lyrics.[105] They also recommended that sexism no longer be tolerated in *Golden Words*, including its regular "Slut of the Week" feature.[106] These recommendations would all be approved by the senate the following year.[107] Also in November of 1989, Smith called upon the Principal's Standing Committee on the Status of Women to address sexism in orientation and alumni weekends specifically. Their findings resulted in the creation of a joint committee composed of faculty and students in January of 1990.[108] After conducting an investigation and holding a forum open to Queen's students and the Kingston public, the committee published a report advocating for extensive changes.[109] These changes were implemented fairly quickly, and the *Queen's Journal* reported that the September 1990 orientation was much "kinder and gentler" than it had been in past years.[110]

The 1990s ushered in a period of tense debate over sexual harassment on campuses. Campus feminists intensified their campaigns against harassment and sexual assault.[111] As a result, there was an uptick in reports of date rape, as well as reports of sexist graffiti.[112] At York, Sharon Chimming, the advisor for the York Sexual Harassment and Education Centre, reported that cases of sexual harassment were increasing by 30 to 40 per cent per year, although she attributed this to increased reporting, rather than increased incidence. She also reported that there was more

anti-feminist graffiti than ever before, inspired by the events at Queen's University.[113] At Queen's, the eight women on the editorial staff of the magazine *Surface* received a note threatening to rape and kill all feminists. Also at Queen's, a well-publicized case saw three female students accuse a single engineering student of assault. The judge found in favour of the accused, saying that although he was a "hedonistic Casanova," he was not guilty of rape.[114] At Carleton, graffiti appeared across campus with the message "Rape Girls."[115] At the University of Toronto, the former SAC president, Peter Guo, was charged with public mischief for writing sexually threatening graffiti in the SAC offices. He had a history of conflict with feminist leaders on campus and had earlier withheld funds for a date-rape awareness campaign.[116]

A growing number of faculty and journalists accused feminist crusaders against sexual harassment and sexual assault of endangering free speech on campus. In 1991, *Maclean's* ran a special issue on "The Silencers," featuring a gagged man and a woman wearing mortar boards.[117] *Maclean's* claimed that a wave of political correctness was terrifying professors and imperiling the quality of education. Oddly, the issue swept together movements against sexism and racism, domestic violence, smoking, and the animal rights movement.[118] A group of Ontario professors formed the Society for Academic Freedom and Scholarship, to lobby against policies against sexual harassment and racism that they believed were jeopardizing academic freedom.[119] The opposition intensified in 1993, when the Ontario Ministry for Education and Training released guidelines for universities to follow with regards to discrimination and harassment. Frequently referred to as the "zero tolerance" policy, the guidelines required universities to enact policies that would cover "conduct or comment that creates and maintains an offensive, hostile, or intimidating climate for study or work."[120] Petitions against the document circulated at universities across the province, and after an acrimonious debate, the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) asked that the implementation of the document's recommendations be delayed.[121] Minister Dave Cooke eventually backed away from the guidelines, saying that they were a "model," and that they could not be imposed on universities.[122] Although some universities complied with the provincial guidelines, it seems that many others ignored them, regarding their existing policies as sufficient.[123]

Sexual harassment on Ontario university campuses has not gone away. A 2018 survey showed that 63.2 per cent of Ontario university students reported experiencing sexual harassment one or more times.[124] Eternity Martis's autobiographical account of her years at Western reveals how widespread sexual harassment continues to be, especially for BIPOC women.[125] Even so, thanks to the activism of women's groups on campus, considerable progress has been made in terms of putting complaint policy and procedures in place and in enlarging the definition of what constitutes sexual harassment. When universities first implemented sexual harassment policies in the early 1980s, sexual harassment was primarily understood as the abuse of authority to elicit sexual favours. Throughout the 1980s, female students and faculty fought to include a variety of behaviours and attitudes that create a "poisoned environment" for women collectively. Tragically, it was the Montreal massacre that finally legitimized their concerns and shifted the conversation towards an understanding of systemic

discrimination that occurred on campus, although this was highly contested. The timing and content of the policies depended on the institutional culture, the strength of women's groups and women's representation on campus, the influence of faculty unions and/or associations, important "trigger events," and the extent to which the policy development process was inclusive. The battle against sexual harassment on Ontario campuses continues, but in the two decades following the invention of the term in 1975, campus feminists made significant progress in having the issue taken seriously by administrators, faculty, and students.

Notes

1 Emma Waverman, "Gender Issues Talks at Gordon House," *Queen's Journal*, October 20, 1989; Sheila Hepworth, "Gordon Window Signs Undermine Hard-won Date Rape Awareness," *Queen's Journal*, October 20, 1989.

2 The unfortunate continuation of sexual harassment and sexual assault on Ontario universities is detailed in Taylor Mackenzie, "A Case Study of Sexual Assault on University Campuses," *Journal of Social Thought* 3, no. 1 (July 2019): 1–9; Dawn Moore, "A Galvanizing Process: Unpacking Ontario's New Postsecondary Sexual Violence Policies," *Academic Matters,* Winter 2016, https://academicmatters.ca/galvanizing-process-unpacking-ontarios-new-postsecondary-sexual-violence-policies/.

3 One of the leading faculty activists on this issue, Professor Norma Bowen of the University of Guelph, was Black, but even though she was also an anti-racist advocate, her work on sexual harassment does not deal with intersectionality. See, for example, her outline of a book that she was writing on sexual harassment before her death, which intended to take ethnicity into account, but not race. "A Theoretical Model for Understanding Sexual Harassment," RE1UOG104503, University of Guelph Archives. It was difficult to determine the racial identity of many of the women, because it was not mentioned in the documents we examined, and it was hard to trace many of them through internet sleuthing. We do know that as the Alma Mater Society (AMS) education commissioner at Queen's, Kam Rao played an active role in fighting sexism on campus. Duncan McDowall, *Queen's University.* Vol. 3. *1961–2004: Testing Tradition* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2016), 376. For a good analysis of intersectionality with regards to sexual harassment, see Kimberlé Crenshaw, "We Still Have Not Learned from Anita Hill's Testimony," *UCLA Women's Law Journal* 26, no. 1 (2017): 17–20. In their co-authored book, *Feminist Organizing for Change* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), Nancy Adamson, Linda Briskin, and Margaret McPhail address racism in the women's movement and the additional vulnerability of women of colour to sexual harassment and assault, 107–08.

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Perspectives on Canada (Toronto: Pearson Canada, 2004); Lynn Marks, Margaret Little, Megan Gaucher, and T. R. Noddings, "'A Job that Should Be Respected': Contested Visions of Motherhood and English Canada's Second Wave Women's Movements, 1970–1990," *Women's History Review* 25, no. 5 (2016): 771–90.

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7 Meg Luxton, "Feminism as a Class Act: Working-Class Feminism and the Women's Movement in Canada," *Labour/Le Travail* 48 (Fall 2001): 63–88; Joan Sangster, *Transforming Labour: Women and Work in Post-war Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010).

8 Wendy Robbins, Meg Luxton, Margrit Eichler, and Francine Descarries, *Minds of Our Own: Inventing Feminist Scholarship and Women's Studies in Canada and Québec, 1966–1976* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2008); Anne Innis Dagg and Patricia J. Thompson, *MisEducation: Women and Canadian Universities* (Toronto: OISE Press, 1988).

9 Megan Blair, "Miss Canadian University, 1970: Campus Pageants as Places of Protest," *Histoire sociale/Social History* 52 (2019): 355–68; Patrizia Gentile, *Queen of the Maple Leaf: Beauty Contests and Settler Femininity* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2020).

10 Adamson, Briskin, and McPhail, *Feminist Organizing for Change*.

11 Carrie N. Baker, *The Women's Movement Against Sexual Harassment* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 28–32.

12 Constance Backhouse and Leah Cohen, *The Secret Oppression: Sexual Harassment of Working Women* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1978).

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14 Backhouse, "Sexual Harassment," 296.

15 Backhouse, "Sexual Harassment," 297–98; Sandy Welsh, Myrna Dawson, and Annette Nierobisz, "Legal Factors, Extra-Legal Factors or Changes in the Law? Using Criminal Justice Research to Understand the Resolution of Sexual Harassment Complaints," *Social Problems* 49, no. 4 (2002): 609–10.

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29 Victor W. Slim, "Strickler Dismissal Upheld," *CAUT Bulletin*, December 1980, 5–6.

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