

The Garneau Sisterhood responds to the Aspen Gardens rape

The Garneau Sisterhood is appalled to hear of the recent rape in Aspen Gardens. We stand in solidarity with the survivor as well as all women in Edmonton who are suffering the effects of this horrifying event.

We are outraged that women's ability to feel safe in their neighbourhoods has been diminished by this attack. We might as well have a female-only curfew in effect in Garneau and Aspen Gardens.

We do, however, want to take issue with some of the responses we've seen from police and the media over the past few days.

In Tuesday's *Journal*, Edmonton police "encouraged" women to be "vigilant about locking their doors and their windows and securing their homes." This lock-your-doors advice puts the onus solely on individual women to protect themselves and leaves them open to blame if they are attacked.

First of all, it's probably safe to say that most women in this city already lock their doors on a regular basis. Secondly, this focus on locking doors as a method of protection distracts from our culture of rape in which one in four women and one in eight men will be sexually assaulted during their lifetimes. The vast majority of survivors know their perpetrators.

Locked doors do not protect women from their family members, partners, and dates. This is the context of violence that we, the Garneau Sisters, are seeking address. We need to publicly denounce all perpetrators of sexual assault. Each of us in this city needs to ask ourselves what we can do to stop all rape, not just this particular rapist.

We're also questioning the police refusal to release specific information about the attacks. If something is happening to women in this community, why can't we have all the details? What would be the disadvantage of having an empowered and informed community? Why not use a strategy that could combat fear, rather than perpetuating it with vague, shadowy details under newspaper headlines that simply run up tallies of attacks as if there's nothing that we can do about it?

Lastly, we'd like to comment on the use of the term vigilante to describe us. We certainly aren't out roaming the streets with guns. But if putting up a show of solidarity and empowering women in our neighbourhood by challenging rape myths makes us vigilantes, then we will happily accept that label.

And lastly, our posters have been described as 'threatening.' We certainly hope the perpetrator feels as threatened as we do.