

school won't provide any guarantees. But it can't help but increase the odds in our favour.

Courses like Wen-Do force us to confront the possibility of becoming a victim of violence. They stress awareness and avoidance as the first line of defence and urge us to trust our gut instinct when things start to feel weird. They identify the most vulnerable parts of the human anatomy and let us know that we are more than capable of inflicting minor to serious injuries in order to give ourselves time to escape. Most importantly perhaps, they assure us that we are worth defending — that we have a moral as well as a legal right to ensure our own safety, and that we are never expected to tolerate physical abuse.

A reasonably sustained, universal self-defence training program has the potential to change lives as well as perceptions. If it was common knowledge that a significant portion of the female population had received such instruction, women wouldn't be considered such easy targets anymore. And who knows? Our bodies might very well react instinctively — even if the person threatening us was someone we knew and loved.

As *The War on Women* points out, there aren't nearly enough rape crisis centres or battered women's shelters. Particularly in these tough economic times, funding is limited. Although it's easy to say that the money should be re-directed from somewhere else, three NDP provincial governments are currently discovering that there are more good causes than there is money.

Perhaps even more heartbreaking, shelters are beginning to report second generation clients. Women who, as children, fled with their abused mothers are now themselves requiring sanctuary. It is hard to escape the feeling that our best efforts continue to miss the mark by a long shot.

Female self-defence training in junior and senior high school should become a primary goal of the Canadian women's movement. If wisely administered, such instruction need not disrupt current educational curriculums significantly and, over the long term, should contribute relatively little strain to school board budgets. Setting up such a program will require some investment, to be sure. But once

every newly-graduated health and physical education teacher knows how to teach these skills, costs should be minimal.

Nearly ten years ago, I took the basic Wen-Do course for the first time. Near the end of the last class, while other students volunteered to come forward and break a one-inch-thick piece of wood with their hand, all my public school insecurities came flooding back. Yes, I was willing to admit that other people could do this sort of thing — but not me, the klutz.

In truth, I had no problem at all. I broke my board in half — as did everyone else. When the instructor then told us that fracturing someone's collarbone requires only a third as much strength, I began to believe that I really *could* take care of myself.

But I remember being angry at the time, as well. Even though this kind of training was so simple and straightforward, I'd had to make a special effort to seek it out. Because, even though I'd regularly found myself fearing for my personal safety, an educational system which endeavored to equip me with the skills necessary to lead a full, productive life hadn't prepared me for this. And because, even though there'd been ample opportunity, I'd been taught nothing half as valuable in physical education classes over the years.

Every time I read about another woman found strangled, stabbed or beaten to death this anger returns. We could have at least given her a fighting chance. It might have been enough to tip the balance and save her life.

¹ I am indebted to Carolyne F. Swift for the public health disease prevention analogy. See "The Prevention of Rape" in *Rape and Sexual Assault, A Research Handbook*, Anne Wolbert Burgess, editor. New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1985, pp. 413-426.

² Montreal Assault Prevention Centre, "One of a Kind" in *Healthsharing*, Vol. 12, No. 2, Summer 1991, p. 16.

³ Report of the Standing Committee on Health and Welfare, Social Affairs, Seniors and the Status of Women, the *War Against Women*, Barbara Greene, MP, Chair. Ottawa: Queen's Printer for Canada, June 1991.

⁴ "Fiscal crisis turns OPP into Ontario's Part-time Police," *The Globe and Mail*, February 3, 1992, pp. A1, A3.

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HEATHER CADSBY The girls of the fifties

We thought our thighs were too fat
our hair too curly, and our
mothers boring.
We learned how to iron
and polish silver.
Our bathing suits were one-piece
and our skirts were *ballerina*.
We didn't like Debbie Reynolds
our sisters, or all-girl summer
camps.

The boys of the fifties
wore ties to the drive-in
gave us their school rings, went
steady.
They taught us to jive and sang
dirty songs
they thought we didn't get.
We wore *fire 'n ice* lipstick
and white underpants.
We were the last of the virgins.
Fabulous.
We knew everything.

Lytton Strachey and Dora Carrington: The gender equity poem

In the beginning she was twenty-two
and he was an old maid of a man.
She was a boy
and he was a mother in a shawl.
He drooped when he stood up
sagged when he sat down
and dragged his daddy-long-legs
from room to room.
She had a strange enchanting strength
and other men crazy for her.
He was alone, proud, and given to
fevers.
In the beginning they talked
and watched each other.
She was used to a fiery man.
So was he.