



## **25 November: UN Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women**

**25 November is designated as the UN day for the eradication of violence against women. But what is the significance of this date and why is it often marked with butterfly logos?**

On 25 November, 1960; three young women and political activists from the Dominican Republic, known as the Mirabal Sisters, were killed, it is believed, on the orders of the Dominican Republic dictator Rafael Trujillo. There were four sisters: Minerva, Maria Teresa, Patria and Dedé. They all married and raised families. Dedé was at first mainly focused on the home and farm as her husband did not support her to attend college or take part in political activism though she joined her sisters later. Minerva graduated in law but her access to practicing law was blocked after she allegedly rejected the sexual advances of Trujillo. Minerva remained politically active and her sisters Maria Teresa and Patria joined her. Patria was motivated after having witnessed Trujillo's men commit a massacre on the 14th of June. This later came to be the name given to their group: "The movement of the Fourteenth of June" but they actually called themselves Las Mariposas - the butterflies. They collated and distributed information on torture, disappearances and extra-judicial killings and started stockpiling weapons for when the revolution would take hold. They and their husbands experienced spells in prison and other harassment.

25 November, 1960; Patria, Minerva and Maria Teresa, along with their driver, were stopped when returning from a visit to their husbands in prison by some members of Trujillo's secret police force. They were beaten and put back in their vehicle which was pushed off a mountainside to fake an apparent accident. In 1961, the Mirabal sisters' awaited revolution kicked in and Trujillo was assassinated. Thereafter information emerged that confirmed that the killers were Trujillo's men. It is broadly assumed that they were killed on his orders although he denied this. However it is widely believed that such an event by his own men could only have occurred unchallenged, if not on his orders, then with his knowledge.

The date of 25 November was established in 1999 as the UN date for the elimination of violence against women.

**It is marvellous that today we can see so many people – men and women – taking action on the UN day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. The wearing of a white ribbon is just one form of activism that has become associated with this day – why?**

"You're all a bunch of feminists and I hate feminists"

On 6 December 1989 a young man, Marc Lépine, burst into a college classroom at the École Polytechnique in Montreal, Canada. Lépine had not been accepted on to the engineering course and was very upset and angry about women taking up what he felt was a male domain. He ordered the men to leave and began shooting the women shouting, as he did so, "You're all a bunch of feminists and I hate feminists."

Six women were killed on the spot and three more were injured. He then proceeded about the



college buildings specifically targeting women. Lépine eventually shot himself. after 4 women were dead and 10 injured. Four men were also hurt in the crossfire.

There were many who described it as the actions of a madman and suggested that the women were just collateral rather than the target in his rampage. He may have had mental health troubles but he went out of his way to declare his misogyny as the cause of his actions and had a list of women he wished to target. Among them was Francine Pelletier a feminist journalist and columnist who obtained a copy of his [suicide note](#)

"Would you note that if I commit suicide today it is not for economic reasons ... but for political reasons," it read. "Because I have decided to send the feminists, who have always ruined my life, to their Maker ... I have decided to put an end to those viragos."

Michael Kaufmann and other pro-feminist men wanted to demonstrate that they acknowledged the role of misogyny and machismo in this incident and in so much of the violence experienced by women. They launched the white ribbon campaign as a way to encourage other men to stand up against violence against women.

"I myself have never been able to find out precisely what feminism is: I only know that people call me a feminist whenever I express sentiments that differentiate me from a doormat."  
? [Rebecca West](#)

"Now I know the things I know, and I do the things I do; and if you do not like me so, to hell, my love, with you!" Dorothy Parker

"Men have had every advantage of us in telling their own story. Education has been theirs in so much higher a degree; the pen has been in their hands.' Jane Austen, Persuasion

"No woman gets an orgasm from shining the kitchen floor." [Betty Friedan](#)

"The thing women have yet to learn is nobody gives you power. You just take it." [Roseanne Barr](#)

"Well behaved women seldom make history." Laurel thatcher Uhlich

"Men are afraid that women will laugh at them. Women are afraid that men will kill them." [Margaret Atwood](#)

"As long as she thinks of a man, nobody objects to a woman thinking." [Virginia Woolf](#), [Orlando](#)

"For most of history, anonymous was a woman." Virginia Woolf

"To die for the revolution is a one-shot deal; to live for the revolution means taking on the more difficult commitment of changing our day-to-day life patterns." Frances M. Beal

"We cannot all succeed when half of us are held back." Malala Yousufzai



“I am not free while any woman is unfree even when her shackles are very different from my own.” Audre Lorde

“Never make someone a priority when all you are to them is an option”. Maya Angelou

“You may not control all the events that happen to you, but you can decide not to be reduced by them.” Maya Angelou

“My mission in life is not merely to survive, but to thrive; and to do so with some passion, some compassion, some humor, and some style.” Maya Angelou

“I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.” Maya Angelou

“I love to see a young girl go out and grab the world by the lapels. Life's a bitch. You've got to go out and kick ass.” Maya Angelou

“The average sentence for someone convicted of raping a black woman is two years, and the sentence for raping a white woman is ten. This is what happens when our movements are pitted against each other. Women lose. People of color lose. We all lose.” Kimberly Crenshaw (U.S.)

“If any female feels she need anything beyond herself to legitimate and validate her existence, she is already giving away her power to be self-defining, her agency.”

[Bell Hooks](#)

“Better be left by twenty dears

Than lie in a love-less bed;

Better a loaf that's wet with tears,

Than cold, unsalted bread.”

Dorothy parker

“It serves me right for putting all my eggs in one bastard.” Dorothy Parker

“By the time you swear you're his,  
Shivering and sighing,  
And he vows his passion is  
Infinite, undying -  
Lady, make a note of this:  
One of you is lying.”



Dorothy Parker

“I became a feminist as an alternative to becoming a masochist.” Sally Kempton

“It is hard to fight an enemy who has outposts in your head.” Sally Kempton

“Men define intelligence, men define usefulness, men tell us what is beautiful, men even tell us what is womanly.” Sally Kempton