

Do as I do

By Bill Kilpatrick

As someone who has worked as a domestic violence group facilitator for the past 13 years it's deeply troubling to see the numbers of domestic violence and family violence incidents climbing all across Canada. As I stood in Millennium Park on Dec. 6 to hold vigil for the 14 women who were slain at Montreal's École Polytechnique 35 years ago, and as I placed a white rose on the picture of 23-year-old Hélène Colgan I could not help but think of my daughter and all the other daughters out there who must be feeling quite anxious and unsafe as they ponder what the future may hold for them. When there's a man in the most powerful political office in the world who has unashamedly admitted to sexually assaulting women and been found liable of the same charge, and has been democratically voted into power, it signals that we are most likely going to see more violence towards women and girls and not less. In Michael Moore's 2002 award winning movie *Bowling for Columbine* he posed the question about why children have become so violent and who's to blame. He then showed multiple news clips of political talking heads listing all the things that they think contribute to the increase in violent behaviour in children. They blamed heavy metal music, TV, violent video games, Satan, cartoons, parents, and the list goes on and on, but there was one person whose name kept popping up and that was musician Marilyn Manson, so Moore went and interviewed him. Manson was articulate and well spoken and pointed out that music does not make people commit acts of violence, but often music is a form of escape from violent and abusive situations. I remember as a kid growing up in a violent abusive alcoholic home and using music just for that purpose. It allowed me to channel many of the angry feelings that I felt about being powerless to change the abusive situation. I remember my mother going into my room while I was at school and taking down all of my posters on my wall because she thought that it was the music that was making me angry, when it was the abuse, both physical and mental, and my inability to do anything about it that was making me angry. Manson also pointed out something that no one in America really wanted to talk about then or now, and that's the connection between how a nation behaves and solves problems and how its people behave and solve problems. Manson said, 'Who's the bigger influence [on people's behaviour] the president or Marilyn Manson. I'd like to think me, but I'm going to go with the president.' At the time of Manson's comments there was another sexual predator in the white house named Bill Clinton, but because Clinton was charming and well spoken, many people in the media gave him a pass, but regardless he still used his power to take advantage of an intern, much like Donald Trump has done and no doubt will continue to do. While many people despise Trump and his behaviour, it has been argued that Trump represents what America has always been if you took away the public relations handlers, in other words if you took the masks off of Clinton, Bush, Reagan, and yes Obama too, you would find the same propensity towards the use of coercion and violence to solve problems. Remember that Osama bin Laden was ordered to be killed by Obama, not brought to trial, not brought to justice, but instead murdered in retaliation for 9-11. Keep in mind during Obama's Nobel Peace Prize speech that he said he was: 'mindful of what Martin Luther King said in this same ceremony years ago? Violence never brings permanent peace. It solves no social problem: it merely creates new and more complicated ones.' As someone who stands here as a direct consequence of Dr. King's life's work, I am living testimony to the moral force of nonviolence. I know there is nothing weak? nothing passive, nothing naïve? in the creed and lives of [Mahatma] Gandhi and [Martin Luther] King Jr.. But as a head of state sworn to protect and defend my nation, I cannot be guided by their examples alone. I face the world as it is, and cannot stand idle in the face of threats to the American people. For make no mistake: evil does exist in the world. A non-violent movement could not have halted Hitler's armies. Negotiations cannot convince al Qaeda's leaders to lay down their arms. To say that force is sometimes necessary is not a call to cynicism -- it is a recognition of history; the imperfections of man and the limits of reason. These are powerful words that resonate and who can argue with the notion that violence is sometimes necessary? Let me now change the context of Obama's words to help drive my point home about the connection between state violence, and domestic violence, which come from the exact same reasoning, that violence is 'sometimes' necessary. I know there is nothing weak? nothing passive, nothing naïve? in the creed and lives of Gandhi and King. But as the head of a household, I am sworn to protect and defend my manhood, I cannot be guided by their examples alone. I face the world as I have created it, and cannot stand idle in the face of threats to my household. For make no mistake: evil does exist in the world. A non-violent movement could not have halted Hitler's armies. Negotiations cannot convince my partner that I should be able to do what I want when I want. To say that force is necessary is not a call to cynicism? it is a recognition of history; the imperfections of man and the limits of reason. I have heard the same self-justifying arguments, couched in less articulate language, from multiple men over the years: 'If she didn't do that or say that, I wouldn't have hit her,' 'I just lost control,' 'She had it coming,' 'She wouldn't stop pushing my buttons.' Sadly, all of these arguments can be fit into Obama's Nobel

Peace Prize speech justifying force. The first argument, 'If she did do that or say that, I wouldn't have hit her' is basically saying, 'I cannot stand idle in the face of threats.' The second argument, 'I just lost control' blames the imperfections of man. The third argument 'she had it coming' is responding to a threat and using the justification of the 'limits of reason' for violence. The fourth argument, 'she wouldn't stop pushing my buttons' also invokes 'the limits of reason' as justification for violence and implies that 'negotiations' or in other words communication, is useless. What do all of these excuses, including the ones listed above like violent video games etcetera have in common? All of them deflect the blame for someone's behaviour onto someone or something else which allows the individual or nation to avoid all responsibility for their behaviour. There is a reason that the United States is not a member of the International Criminal Court, they don't want to be held accountable for their behaviour. Marc Lépine also didn't want to be held accountable for his behaviour and instead blamed all women for his problems and took no responsibility for his choices that led to his miserable existence and ultimately to his choice to take the lives of 14 innocent women. While I agree that man is imperfect, and that violence is a part of history, these are excuses that are all too often used to justify current violence, but the reality is that to behave violently remains a choice that all of us have to make; defending ourselves is one thing, but when those in power encourage aggressive violence or sexual assault, they need to be held accountable before more innocents have to die. To do otherwise is to condone that behaviour.