

THE BRUNSWICKAN

NATIONAL NEWS
FROM UNIVERSITY NEWSROOMS ACROSS CANADA

Rally for a new mother's life

Protestors demonstrate in solidarity with woman sentenced to death in Nigeria

by Emma Sobel

MONTREAL (CUP) — Cars and pedestrians filled Sherbrooke St. in Montreal Tuesday evening as people honked and shouted for Amina Lawal, a Nigerian woman sentenced to death by stoning for giving birth to a child out of wedlock.

Almost 100 people attended the loud and lively demonstration.

"We hope to attract media attention," said protest organizer and Amnesty International member Lauryn Oates. "The media makes the biggest difference in the story. The President [of Nigeria] doesn't care, but he can be forced to care."

According to Sharia law, the religious law of Islam, which took effect three years ago in parts of Nigeria, Lawal's offence is punishable by death. Her sentence calls for her to be buried to the neck in earth and pelted to death with rocks.

Her execution is scheduled for January 2004, after she has finished weaning her child.

Lawal's case has attracted the attention of global political leaders and organizations, such as British Prime Minister Tony Blair and the United Nations, who have urged Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo to intervene.

Obasanjo has said that he will "weep for Amina and her family," but that he will not step in.

Protest organizer Gillian Morantz maintained that Obasanjo must not intervene because his political constituency consists largely of Islamic voters who support Sharia law.

Those in attendance at the rally decreed the severity of Lawal's sentence, saying it violates her basic human rights.

"Sharia law is extreme," said Andreeanne Grimard, International Development Studies student and Amnesty International member. "Certainly Amina does not deserve such a harsh sentence."

The peaceful protest, which was rescheduled from Friday due to rain, was meant to coincide with simultaneous protests in both Britain and Belgium. Organizers had promised their international counterparts at least 1,000 petition signatures to help Lawal's cause. By Tuesday, students collecting signatures said they had surpassed that goal and were aiming for 1,500 signatures.

Lawal maintains that her baby was conceived before Sharia law took effect in Nigeria. She also claims that she was not properly informed of her rights and that her trial was not conducted fairly. Lawal's defense lawyers will attempt to take the case to Nigeria's supreme court.

Obasanjo has expressed doubt that the sentence will be carried out, based on similar cases that have been appealed and won in the past.

Lawal's appeal of the sentence was rejected. "This is not an extended sentence," said Dr. Peter Leuprecht, Dean of Law at McGill and a speaker at the protest. "[Lawal] continues to live with the constant fear of death... This is one of the many examples of how religion has been used to violate human rights."



Demonstrators cause a scene at McGill in the hopes of drawing international attention to Amina Lawal's death sentence.

In a van down by the river

Man living on Dalhousie University campus solution to housing shortage?

by Christopher A. Walsh

HALIFAX (CUP) — A man named Jim has solved the same housing crisis faced by many university students in Halifax this year. He lives in a van on the Dalhousie campus.

Now comes the part in his story where we discuss the nagging cocaine and alcohol addiction that cost him his job and his wife... Only that wouldn't be true. Jim lives in a van like a vagrant at Dalhousie in the warmer months because he wants to. At 53, the self-proclaimed miser lives on less food a day than even the poorest student.

"I eat cornmeal and raisins for lunch everyday," he said. "My stomach doesn't know the difference once I'm full."

But all of this is self-inflicted. Jim used to work for the federal government in the Arctic Circle where he watched for Russian missiles aimed at the United States. There he saved

all of his money and lived well below his means. He had \$50,000 that he invested and now lives off the interest—or the smallest amount he can, now saving up for nothing.

He drives his van to Florida in the winter where he sleeps at rest stops and Wal-Marts. The road calls Jim and he answers only to it, begging for his privacy and scrounging for respect.

"A lot of people walk by me and think it's disgusting. I think they think, 'this guy is living in his vehicle and can't afford anything else,'" he calmly states. "For me, it's not out of desperation, it's out of choice and I like it."

Today, Jim has splurged for lunch and the thick stench of peanut butter hangs heavy on his breath as he steps out of the van. He's not particularly tall or stocky, just average build with short grey hair and a smooth face that smiles lightly, echoing his quiet demeanor. In other words, he fits the stale profile of a serial killer.

But Jim doesn't like that kind of action. He's a little dull, entertaining himself with books about investing.

"It's not an entertainment, it's a distraction," he admits. "And it's a challenge to try to keep myself from being too depressed about the

meaninglessness of life."

He finds the meaning of his life in the freedom of going wherever he wants to go, when he wants to. That absolute independence affords him a different view of things—a choice of what to do next. He has no idea what's next, but doesn't seem to mind.

"I might live like this the rest of my life," he says. "I might want to live inside sometime. But it's having the choice that's important to me."

It's the choice that drives Jim. He hangs out at Dalhousie to use the books and internet on campus, disappearing into the shadows of the maple trees that cover the campus. Perhaps some of you have seen him lurking about, with thoughts of investing and the general calmness that comes with having no schedule or specific place to be. He has become a type of phantom, with rumors and folklore made up to explain him. He's already flown south for the winter, planning to return to Dalhousie next spring.

"Why should there be an end?" he said. "I don't want to be aware of my end. To me, that's like watching a movie when you know the ending. I don't want to know the ending, I want it to be a surprise."

Where is the chili pepper?

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Swapceinski believes the sexiness rating enhances the entertainment value of his Web site.

"I thought it would be fun for the students," said Swapceinski. "In the comments students were writing 'he's cute' or 'she's cute.'"

Swapceinski says the site should act as a source for students selecting professors or courses, not as a measure of their attractiveness.

Morton agrees, pointing to the practical uses.

"I think it's a great resource. I think that anything that students can do to empower themselves is a good idea."

Ducusin says that students could miss the point of the site and might use it to attack their professors.

"Ideally the site could provide students with a chance to express their feelings about their professors without feeling a need to censor themselves," he said. "In actuality, you have students looking at the site as an excuse to bash a professor mercilessly or just be witty. I see problems with people going overboard and writing things that aren't appropriate."

Swapceinski says the website goes through several levels of screening to ensure nothing libelous or profane is presented on the site. A filter automatically removes any profanity and

comments are read by screeners within 24 hours of being posted. A red flag system is also in place for users to alert the screeners of any inappropriate comments.

"It's a form of freedom of speech," stated Morton. "As long as the comments on the site are not targeting qualities of the individual that are irrelevant to teaching."

One thing all three seem to agree on is the merit of being able to criticize a professor.

Swapceinski said the focus of the Web site is on the student not on the teacher. "It's not a concern of mine if professors like the site," he said.

"Professors, by virtue of the job they have, legitimately open themselves up to that kind of feedback and criticism," said Morton, noting the site could serve as an alternative or a compliment to the institutional course evaluations.

Ducusin says the site can offer one thing course evaluations might not be able to - comfort.

"You almost feel because you're being evaluated by your professors, that you can't be as open as you'd like to be," he said.

The Web site has had mixed reviews from professors.

"Some professors have written in and demanded to be taken off," admitted Swapceinski. "Others write in and jokingly complain that they have no chili pepper [the sexiness symbol]."

My Tuition and the Federal Government.

Interested in finding out what the Federal Government does for UNB?
Want to talk about problems and solutions to federal programs like Student Loans, Millennium Scholarships, Debt Reduction Program?
If so, why not attend

My Tuition and The Federal Government
A UNB Student Union Forum
Tuesday, Oct. 15th
5:00pm-7:00pm
Tilley Auditorium.

Andy Scott, MP for the Fredericton Region, will be on hand for the government to listen to what you have to say, and answer any questions you may have.

For more information, contact John Campbell, VP Executive at suexec@unb.ca, or 458-7164



STUDENT UNION UNIVERSITY OF NEW BRUNSWICK 2002 Fall By-Election NOMINATIONS EXTENDED

Nominations for the Student Union Fall By-Election have been extended until 4:30 p.m. on Friday, October 11th, 2002. for the following positions:

- Computer Science Representative
- Science Representative
- Education Representative
- 1 Year Senate
- SUBS Inc Board of Directors Seat

The Campaign period will run from 6:00 p.m. on October 8th to 9 p.m. on October 15th.

Voting begins on October 16th, and ends on October 19th at 11:55 p.m. The election will be entirely on-line again this year - there will be no paper ballots. To cast your vote, please go to the UNB homepage () and click on my UNB e-services. After you log into e-services with your email id and pin, click on the voting tab in the upper left corner. From there you may read about the positions, find out who the nominees are, check the voter eligibility requirements, read the by-laws that govern this election, and of course cast your vote!

If you have any questions please contact Pam, the Chief Returning Officer, at cro@unb.ca

All candidates must be 19 years of age