



**The New York Times** | <http://nyti.ms/1gwdf74>

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U.S.

# Campus Killings Set Off Anguished Conversation About the Treatment of Women

By **JENNIFER MEDINA** MAY 26, 2014

ISLA VISTA, Calif. — A deadly attack by a gunman obsessed by grievances toward women near the campus of the University of California, Santa Barbara, has touched off an anguished conversation here and on social media about the ways women are perceived sexually and the violence against them.

“If we don’t talk misogyny now, when are we going to talk about it?” asked Nancy Yang, a second-year global studies major, as she stood a few feet from a memorial created in the wake of the rampage on Friday night that left six people and the gunman dead and 13 wounded.

“Yes, we have to have compassion, and we don’t know what this perpetrator was going through, but there are underlying issues here,” she said. “We can’t do that without thinking about the way we talk about and speak to women. This act does not represent our campus at all, but at the same time there’s a palpable sense that there needs to be more dialogue about the factors that led to it.”

Even as students are still dealing with the shock of hearing gunshots in front of a local convenience store and seeing the dead and wounded bodies in

the street, many here are urging others to consider the implications of the attack. And they are also thinking about the catcalls, leers and the fears of sexual violence that have them traveling in packs and carrying pepper spray in their purses.

Of course, they say, a lewd look is not the same as a sexual assault. An unwanted comment is not the same as a gunshot. But many women interviewed on this sun-splashed campus and commenting online said they believed that some of the attitudes toward women expressed by the gunman, Elliot O. Rodger, in his perverse manifesto of rage and frustration reflect some views that are echoed in the mainstream culture.

This conversation comes as college administrators nationwide are confronting increased attention, including from the White House, over reports of sexual abuse against female students.

For many women here, the attacks were like a nightmare caricature of the safety concerns they deal with regularly on a campus where a **high-profile gang rape** recently prompted widespread concerns about safety and where an outsize reputation for alcohol-fueled parties led some to wonder if the beachside campus culture in any way played into the violence.

In dozens of interviews, women voiced concerns about incessantly hearing jokes about rape or what physical features make a woman desirable. At some parties, several women said, their buttocks have been grabbed at the entry door.

“I do live in fear — this is a difficult part of our reality,” said Maddie Clerides, 19, a sophomore majoring in global studies. Ms. Clerides said she was not alone in her worries. After the shootings, many women left the campus in fear or at the urging of their parents.

“We don’t walk in groups because we like being in cliques; we have real concerns,” she said. “We’re doing everything we can to be safe, but there’s no





