



August 19, 2010

CBC Ottawa - Ottawa Morning

Re: OCTEVAW responds to the Ottawa U research studying *Twilight* and the relationship between Bella and Edward

Thank you for interviewing the University of Ottawa PhD student Melinda Morgan studying *Twilight* and the relationship between Bella and Edward. Research like this is important because it allows us to see the affects that pop culture has on our real life norms and behaviours in intimate partnerships.

As a coalition working to end violence against women, we are concerned about the romanticization of the “controlling and over-protective” behaviours exhibited by Edward and the impact this romanticizing has on the way that women interpret healthy relationships. In our society, we need to stop associating the themes of danger and violence with passion and romance.

We have spoken to many high school students about dating violence and after hearing the warning signs of abuse, they are able to identify numerous signs within the *Twilight* series, i.e., Edward does not allow Bella to go places without him, he seems to know everything she does, he enters her home unannounced and watches her sleep in an obsessive state. In addition, the researcher mentioned that Edward’s sole priority is Bella. The fact that a man has a complete focus on his partner is not romantic, it is unhealthy. Unfortunately, the series goes further with the romance of kissing Bella entwined with the violence of biting her. That sends the message that love and abuse can coexist in intimate relationships.

Edward’s behaviours are unhealthy and abusive. Violence against women is about power and control. When a man feels as though he possesses a woman, that feeling can and frequently does escalate to behaviour motivated by extreme jealousy. This can include the isolation of her friends and family, calling or texting her many times throughout a day, stalking, criminal harassment and physical and sexual abuse.

So as a community filled with activists, journalists, academics and many others - what can we do?

- We need to send positive messages to our young women and men to help them critically assess what they see in the media, what they watch on TV and what they read. It is about having a conversation around the content of books and movies that bring up the nuances of unhealthy relationship behaviours that romanticize abuse.
- We need to deconstruct and speak out against pop culture phenomena in ways that do not paternalize women and give men permission to be abusive.



**Ottawa Coalition to End
Violence Against Women**

**Coalition d'Ottawa contre la
violence faite aux femmes**

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- We need to have discussions with youth and adults about the warnings signs of abuse versus healthy relationship behaviours, safety planning and finding meaningful resources.
 - We need research that addresses these issues head on.

Ms. Morgan and her research team are in a privileged position as academics to do some really interesting and meaningful research. We hope that they will seek out the resources available to them around abuse and dating violence and include this crucial analytical component in their findings. The Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women (OCTEVAW) would welcome the collaboration.

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