

Vancouver Rape Relief & Women's Shelter

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Feminist throws torch at 'flasher'

VANCOUVER — (CP) — Costumed feminists encountered male flashers and policemen during a two-hour march through the city Friday night.

One man pulled down his pants for the women's benefit. A woman threw a stick at the man's head, then tossed her flaming torch at him.

Only the intervention of a policeman prevented violence. Patrol cars followed the 120 protesters for the duration of the march.

Police tried to get the names and addresses of two women who spray-painted apartment blocks with anti-rape slogans. They gave up, however, after the women linked arms and chanted: "If one goes (to jail), all of us go."

Frustrated police finally drove off in a car covered with pamphlets distributed by the women and sporting a wreath on the hood.

The women shook tambourines and chanted: "There ain't no excuse for women abuse."

A stuffed male mannequin, with the word rapist across his mid-section, was stomped to shreds at the close of the march.

... Marching on the Spot ...

This year women as feminists have been urged, prodded and pressed into the streets of Toronto and other parts of Canada.

We marched to celebrate International Women's Day, to support a bill for equal pay for work of equal value, to oppose the use of computerization for the detection of high-risk pregnancy, to demand an end to nuclear proliferation and to cry out in rage in a 'Take Back the Night' march.

But what accomplishments are truly derived from such an outpouring of energy as is generated in a march? Is a march truly an instrument for change? Do the same people show up time and time again? Is the valuable energy and money used to organize and advertise marches being used effectively?

Since generally protest marches set up one or more demands as their primary focus, how often are these demands dealt with by the appropriate authorities in response to the march? International Women's Day is so diffuse and diverse in its representation of women's issues that the march receives little mainstream publicity and never any

followthrough action by government or industry. Ontario Hydro in response to anti-nuclear marches has spent millions telling Ontarians how lucky we are to have our uranium and that atomic energy is Ontario's 'energy future'.

Protest marches are often for crucial and critical issues. However, the format of marches actually diffuses the emotional rage of the participants. Slow wandering on the asphalt or pavement, sing songs and slogan shouting, placard carrying, long boring speeches and usually shoddy entertainment are the composition of most marches. The participants go home tired from standing, perhaps self-satisfied and sometimes disillusioned. Some women feel they have made an active contribution to a cause by being collectively and publicly visible at a march. They close the door on further political action and wait for the next march. There is little personal risk in protesting en masse. The largest component of accomplishment is usually nothing more than renewed public awareness of an issue.

Rarely is a march effective. Certainly protest against Anita Bryant in her travels were positive and presented a clear statement to the public in opposition to her beliefs. Women Against Violence Against Women (WAVAW) in Toronto effectively snuffed out 'Snuff'. The most innovative march I have been on was the 'Take Back the Night' march in the Beaches area of Toronto. The solidarity and uniqueness of a women's only march was uplifting. It was also creative. Noisemakers, horns, whistles, and flashlights in a night environment created a whole different tone of protest. This was a statement of light, noise and anger. The press listened, although in some cases not too carefully or with any great depth of understanding, but they listened. Even more so, people came out of their homes to join in, clap, wave and lend wonderful, warm support. We were in the community, not on a cement and asphalt space of uninspiring skyscrapers. This to me made sense and made a statement. That night, for that time at least, women had

'taken back the night.'

But the traditional march is outmoded, useless and inconsequential. Feminists are fully aware of the issues. Our mode of protest must be unique.

Let's not just walk around in circles or between traffic. Let's not just wave banners and cry out our well developed catch-all jingles. Let's not just stand and listen to political mumble-jumble.

Let's 'turn off' the city for a week to protest nuclear technology. Let's bring the kids to work or leave them with 'daddy' for better day care. Let's have spontaneous theatre groups communicating our protest throughout the city. Let's be innovative and creative in our struggle for change.

Seven years ago I participated in a traditional march to protest the injustices levelled against Jeanette Lavelle and native women who have lost their status due to inequities in the Indian Act. Many years and many marches later, they still wait for these changes. So do I.

□Judy Stanleigh

...from Broadside

If you're keen on finding out more you may want to look at a few more broadsheets in our "Rape Relief Files":

- see file:
- ** TAKE BACK THE NIGHT - Canadian Herstory
- ** TAKE BACK THE NIGHT - American Herstory

** TAKE BACK THE NIGHT - Traditions

** WHY TAKE BACK THE NIGHT

** TAKE BACK THE NIGHT - Vancouver Herstory

** TAKE BACK THE NIGHT - Agit-Prop

** TAKE BACK THE NIGHT - March Checklist

** WHO IS THIS MAN, PATTISON?

** SONGS OF RESISTANCE

MARCHING AGAINST RAPE

Through speaking engagements, conferences, radio shows, community meetings, and other public events, rape crisis centers have attempted to reach people with a feminist perspective on the issue of violence against women. The feedback from these events is positive but constitutes only piecemeal response — we have to mentally add up audiences to see just how many people we have reached. And, while our efforts have generated more sensitivity and understanding towards women who have been raped, are we also providing channels for women to deal with their rage?

A march is one way that support for an issue can be assessed. Marches can bring together many women to voice protest, propose concrete solutions, provide each other with morale-building support, and gain publicity. Marches held recently in cities like Austin, Texas; Hartford, Connecticut; and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania show that the silence around rape has clearly ended. Anger is taking its place as women insist — loudly and publicly — that something be done about violence against women. (At the same time, women are also seeking to create some of our own solutions.)

Some of the marches have been touched off by a particular rallying point such as a series of "unresolved" rapes, or sexist decision by judges or the courts. Others are a culmination of ongoing organizing by local anti-rape groups. A coalition of anti-rape groups in New York City has been marching through Central Park on a night in August for the past several years.

All of the recent marches have been well-attended and well-publicized. Over the past year, marches to protest rape have also taken place in England, Germany, Italy and Australia, some with thousands of participants. Media coverage has been excellent in all cases, this being a prime objective of the organizers of the marches. A march staged by Los Angeles WAVAW and the Feminist Studio Workshop recently provided the media with a "visual statement" as well as a march. Participants dressed up as roosters to portray record company executives as strutting cocks, sure of their profits as they bring out their newest violent album, while women confronted them with signs saying, "This is a crime against women."

In Hartford, Conn., Neighborhood Women Against Rape, a new group, held a well-publicized march with hundreds of women last fall. NWAR publishes a monthly "Rape Alert" — a list describing men known to have committed rape — and the current list was read at the march. Marchers also tied red banners on street signs — one for every rape known to have occurred on each street through which the marchers passed. A few weeks after the march, NWAR staged a protest aimed at "violence against women" in advertising. Heublein, makers of Black Velvet whiskey, had its stockholders meeting interrupted by women protesting Black Velvet ads which display women as vulnerable sex objects. Several stockholders not involved in the protest expressed their support for the demonstrators.

A letter from Save Our Selves, a recently formed community organization in Pittsburgh, Pa., describes the march which was their most recent action.

"SOS initiated a coalition of three anti-violence against women groups which organized a highly successful march, on the night of October 18, 1977 around the theme of 'Women Take Back the Night.' We were enormously pleased with the march for several reasons. First, the turn-out — over three hundred people — was incredible. The march also represented a real first step toward building a mass movement around violence against women in Pittsburgh. It was truly a united and spirited effort which did much to raise the issue of violence against women as a political issue in the community. We were pleased with the excellent coverage we received in the press and TV. And, as a final 'victory,' we had the pleasure of seeing the city back down, in the face of so many militant protesters, and at the last minute, give us permission to march in the streets, rather than on the sidewalk, as we had been previously told. In fact, the mayor himself gave this last minute order."

Within the past approximately six months, SOS has held a city-wide conference on violence against women in addition to helping mobilize people for the march. SOS's next campaign is a proposal to set up "safe houses" on individual blocks to which women in trouble could go for temporary shelter and help in dealing with the problem.



London

Increasingly, the significance of our marches will depend on our demands. Even with thousands of women marching through the streets, our determination and anger, not our objectives, are mainly conveyed. For now, it is important to know how much support we are generating; it is important to be moving, to be visible, and to be strong. Now is also the time, however, for feminists to begin to develop proposals toward the elimination of rape — solutions, long-range and short-range, that future marchers will rally behind.



Los Angeles

In Mourning and in Rage

In December, 1977 Los Angeles waited suspensefully as each new victim of the "Hillside Strangler" was uncovered. Soon there were ten women, all strangled and left dead on the sides of roads. The mass media sensationalized these victim's lives, contributing to a climate of fear and superstition among city residents. No political analysis of the terrorization of women entered these stories; they focused instead on the randomness of the crimes.

This performance offered an alternative interpretation to the case through the news, one which included a strong feminist analysis of violence. Women from the Woman's Building, Women Against Violence Against Women, the Rape Hotline Alliance, and the City Council joined with women from the feminist community in creating a public ritual for television, which expressed both rage and grief for the crimes.

Sixty women formed a motorcade of bearing funeral stickers and 'stop violence against women' stickers. They followed a hearse to city hall, where news media reporters waited with members of city council. Out of the hearse climbed ten tall women robed in black mourning dress. These women each spoke of a different violence perpetrated against women as they received a scarlet red cloak. Women from the motorcade chorused after each statement, "In memory of our sisters, we fight back!"

City Council members voiced support to the Rape Hotline Alliance, pledging to start self defense classes for women in the city. Holly Near, songwriter and singer, created "Fight Back" for the event. The audience joined her and spontaneously erupted into a circle dance to end the ritual.

The Rape Relief Files

Take Back the Night International Lancaster

This is the best high-flying demo I've EVER been on! Hundreds of women wailing and dancing through the streets of Soho. "Sexist crap, sexist crap, SEXIST CRAP!" startling bystanders.

The manager of The Pussy Parlour tight-jawed, face flesh quivering as he scrapes stickers off his windows. "What does this mean?" he hisses at me as I take his picture. "Can't you read?" I say. THIS DEGRADES WOMEN, THIS EXPLOITS WOMEN.

One woman is running ahead squirting windows with water, followed by others slapping stickers on with such exuberant violence you think the windows must break, and hope they will.

A man steps out of fluorescent-lit doorway and gets his chest squirted then slapped with a sticker.

Not like any other march. No stewards, cowed by police, cajoling people to keep the ranks. No. We are all over. Humming, buzzing, shouting. A real woman's march—a rampage. Surging, droning, chanting. Women Fight Rape.

Yes means yes
No means no
However we dress
Wherever we go.

Flame-lit faces of people who have found the spirit to fight a mammoth war. One woman stops another to get a light for her torch. A young black man comes over, blows out the torch and turns to run off to his smirking mates. She belts him over the back with it and it re-ignites, burning a hole in his jacket. Women's laughter in the torchlight. Men looking at the jacket under the streetlight.

It is a measure of how confident men feel of their unconditional right to abuse women that so many of them step into our group and smugly insult individual women. Sometimes other women rally round in defence and the men wander off.

One delightful woman has a bag of maggots for sprinkling on the offending males.

It is so fluid this "march"—very fast at times, running around, at, over cars, stopping traffic. I think police are not used to running. They come along behind ripping down stickers, muttering comfortably into radios—little gestures, by stiff spectators.

Around the event, before and after, there are objections: that it should have been held locally, not in Soho; that it might be confused with a Mary Whitehouse-type campaign; an ex-prostitute told me she didn't agree with it because she thought it would be bad for the business of the prostitutes in Soho. I'm sure there were more that I didn't hear. But this event isn't the be-all and the end-all, the definitive perfect demonstration. It should be a starting point, an inspiration, a learning experience, a step forward. It does not preclude other actions. Women's liberation is about supporting other women. Let's do it.

Whatever politicking went on to do with the organisation of it (and I wasn't in on it) it was a blow-out to be there. It was wild. There. There, where normally we walk silently, stewing inside, keeping our disgust to ourselves. It was exhilarating just to MOVE, express our feelings, instead of the eyes-down-look-like-you're-going-somewhere walk, the woman alone walk. We ran and jumped, and argued and stretched ourselves.

At the end we meet in Leicester Square. And all the piggy men. I sense a sporting violence from them.

"Wot you doin' 'ere? You ain't even ugly." (This man got bopped in the face.)

"I should come here to pick up my chicks." (A denim-clad slickster.) Horrible, slimy men.

May the day come when sex shop owners and strip club owners can't buy insurance, are afraid to do business for fear of their plate glass being smashed, for fear of their plushy interiors being messed up, for fear of their own crummy lives. I saw fear in the eyes of those traffickers. They are afraid of our rage. They should be.



We met in the Women's Centre and left in procession, 27 of us, at 11pm. We started out slightly hysterical, giggling our way along but we calmed down fast enough when we started getting abuse from men.

The centre of Lancaster seemed to be crawling with police... It was very noticeable that in the areas immediately outside the centre, in the places where women are most likely to have trouble, there were no police present at all.

The best thing was the constant warmth and support we got from other women. There was no arguing about us being "extreme" or "crazy" or "anti-men". They knew exactly what we were shouting about and shouted their support back. These contacts made all the wind and the wet worth it.

from Lancaster WL newsletter

Manchester

Over the Pennines about 400 women had turned out, marching in from their local areas. "We wanted to show that it's not just the city centre where women are attacked, it's in the local streets that you live on," said Lesley Merryfinch.

The planning group in Manchester decided not to contact the police beforehand. In their leaflet they said, "The police attitude is 'Stay at home' which means we're imprisoned in our homes to avoid attacks, while the men who might attack us can walk around freely. We want to say we've had enough of male violence and male justifications for it. We're walking together tonight in the streets because we've got a right to be here. It's men's violence that's got to stop. We agree that men's attitudes won't change overnight, but at least we're showing that we're no longer content to accept this situation and we're angry about it."

On the night the police turned up at the meeting points, but after some discussion agreed to put policewomen on the escort. "They did show some tact," said Lesley.

Brighton

Women walked all over the town, giving out leaflets, banging saucepan lids, blowing whistles and singing. Many wore white makeup or had women's signs painted on their cheeks.

Bristol

The police were very unwilling to let the women march through the city-centre, so there was a silent torch-lit procession through dark residential areas, where there have been several sexual assaults. "It was too cold to wear anything fancy! But we had lots of placards, and the Bristol Women's Liberation Group banner in front."

Leeds

"I never dared go out alone after dark. When I saw the leaflet about the night demo I knew I had to go but I was so scared. I was even sick before going out but I did and it really changed how I felt. I'm not alone. I know that now. It's wonderful."

Women unite, reclaim the night! 130 Leeds women congregating in City Square, torchlit figures shouting in the windy darkness, and suddenly we're in a big circle holding hands. Voices hoarse from singing rise again in memory of the walk down to town from Woodhouse, where rapists lurk on the moor, or Chapeltown, Ripper '77 territory. Strong knowing our sisters all over Britain are marching tonight too.

City Square is a wild spontaneous women's takeover, singing, dancing, a speech—"We've got this space but it's not enough. What are we going to do to take more?"

Reclaim the Night group

Vancouver B.C.



Amsterdam



Newcastle

A hundred women turned up equipped with home-made torches, and the demonstration ended with an impromptu party and meeting.

Take Back the Night International WE TOOK BACK THE NIGHT

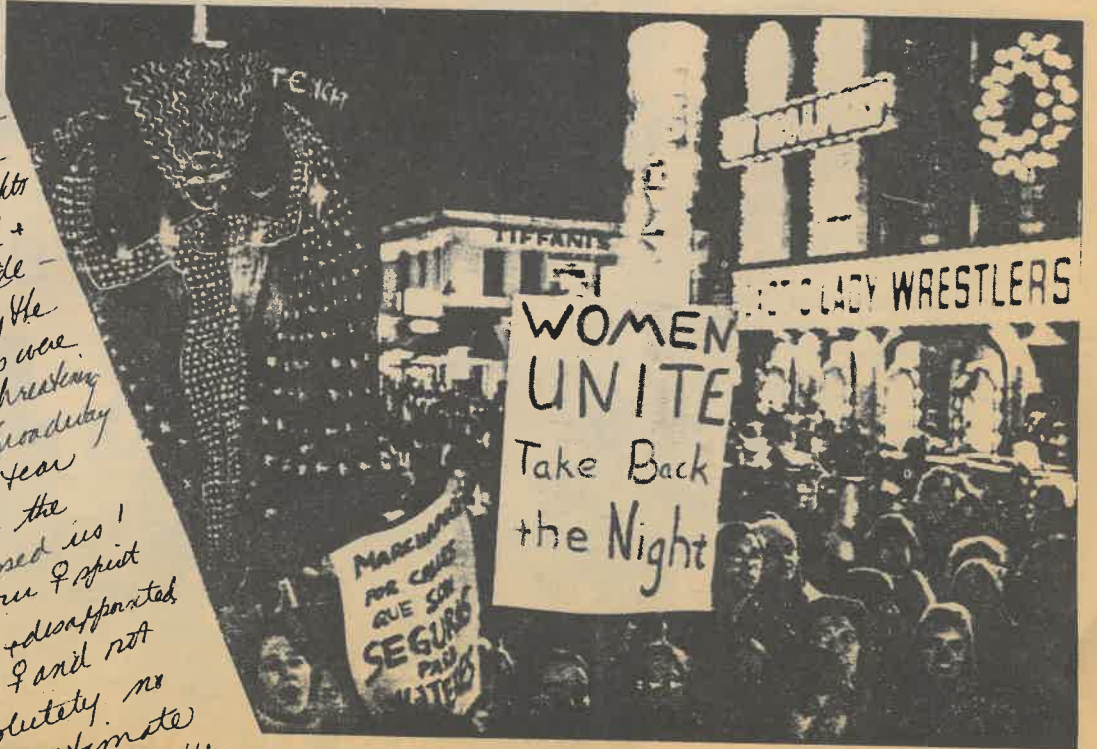
On Saturday night, November 18, three thousand marchers heard Andrea Dworkin's Exhortation to March, and then left Galileo H.S. to head toward San Francisco's pornography center near Columbus and Broadway. The long line of marchers, many of whom carried signs, leaflets, candles, and flashlights, stretched for blocks, filling the sidewalks and spilling over into the streets.

The TAKE BACK THE NIGHT March was one of dozens which have been taking place all over the world (most recently in London, Philadelphia, Denver, and Northampton, Massachusetts), and protested all forms of violence against women.

When the March reached Broadway, which was crowded with tourists, barkers, and neon signs advertising the street's live sex shows, adult book stores, and porn theaters, marchers first lined both sides of the street, chanting slogans such as "No more profits off of women's bodies!"

As the women lined both sides of Broadway, a float, created by Ariadne: A Social Art Network, was driven through the crowd. The float was designed to convey the theme of the oppression of women by juxtaposing images of madonna and whore.

Then, in an instant, the marchers filled the street entirely, blocking off traffic and completely occupying Broadway for three blocks. Holly Near, whose voice was amplified to carry throughout the district, led the marchers in "Fight Back". For an hour, and for the first time ever, Broadway belonged not to the barkers, the pimps, the pornographers, or to the theater owners, not to potential rapists, not to whistles, hassles, or catcalls. It belonged instead to the songs, voices, rage, vision, strength, and presence of three thousand women who took back the night.



taken from file on WAVPM anti-porn conference San Francisco, 1978

... a day of direct action against pornography.

TAKE BACK THE NIGHT

Andrea Dworkin gave a powerful rallying speech - between 4,000-5,000 women + children with music, banners, flashlights took to the streets - The monitors had passed out "how to march + what will happen" sheets - We were to march on the side + walk, stop for red lights + were presented (physically) by the monitors from taking over a strip joint (Dixies on Bikes were told not to come on bikes - too much of a powerful threatening image) For 5 minutes, we were allowed to flood Broadway + stop traffic - listen to music - watch LA witches tear sidewalks + to a big float. Then we were told "Back to the and encouraged us to chant to blessedness of our ♀ spirit + bodies. I came away feeling grieved + disappointed. You don't stir up anger - justifiably - 500 ♀ and not let go a bit. We got mixed messages + absolutely no satisfaction from the orderly march. She underestimate in ♀ so passive creatures - boring / fearing authority. We were not effective - didn't even make the papers, only seconds on the news. We could have taken over Broadway protected by Dukes on Bikes - letting traffic "out" but not in - we could have ripped down disgusting posters etc etc etc

③ rallied, sang - Stopped the businesses leafletting people going into porn shops - ANYTHING to let the businesses know we were angry + powerful -

Take Back The Night

The Women's Building
Box 9
3543 18th Street
San Francisco, CA 94110

... California, the United States, ... for women. Right now, San Francisco has the highest rate of reported rape in the world—since the U.S. has the highest rate of reported rape in the world—that San Francisco is one of the most dangerous cities in the world for

The women in this country who face the greatest risk of rape are prostitutes and workers in pornography. And if it is hard for other women to report rape to the police, for prostitutes and other sex-workers, it is almost impossible. They, after all, are considered to be the "criminal."

Before women who work as prostitutes or in pornography can feel safe, the work that they do must be recognized for what it is, WORK. The criminal sanctions and the scarlet letter stigma must be removed from them.

WE BELIEVE:

1. Women have the right to be or not to be prostitutes.
2. Women who are prostitutes are stigmatized and singled out for punishment because they violate two basic taboos: Women must not control their sexuality; and Women must not make money.
3. Women who are prostitutes are singled out for punishment because they are visible targets for the hatred of all women.
4. Men who are prostitutes are abused because they are seen as women, and this is particularly true of transvestites.

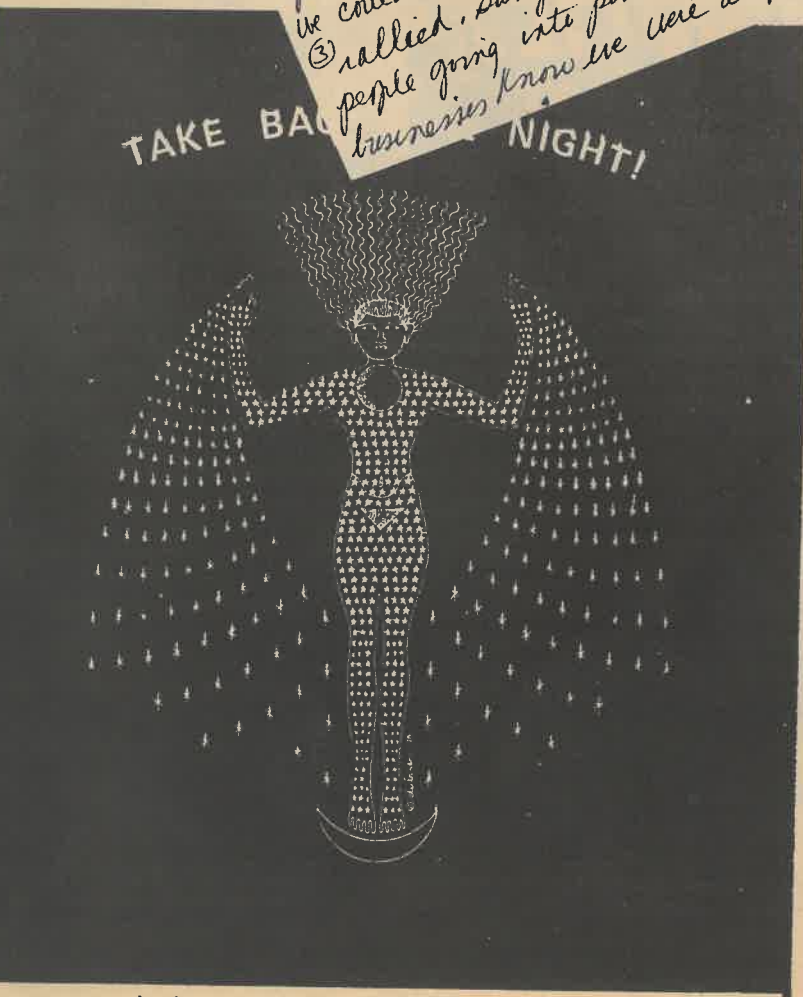
WE DEMAND:

1. That prostitution be decriminalized.
2. That prostitutes and women who work in pornography gain control over the work that they do, including not having to engage in harmful acts or acts they consider degrading.
3. That working conditions in massage parlors, live sex shows, peep shows and pornography businesses be improved.
4. That customers, pimps, pornographers, and others who sexually and/or physically abuse prostitutes be dealt with in the same way as other violent individuals.
5. That violence against prostitutes and women who work in pornography be recognized as violence and prevented.
6. That sex businesses provide security for the women working there.



WE INVITE WOMEN who work in the sex industry to join us in the TAKE BACK THE NIGHT MARCH, Saturday, September 26, 1981, at 7:30 p.m. Join the PROSTITUTES RIGHTS CONTINGENT under the COYOTE banner.

TAKE BACK THE NIGHT!



... and take back the day ...