



PHOTO ESSAY

'Take Back the Night' Takes Back the Park

This time, fighting for women's safety includes yoga, stargazing and hip hop.

By Vanessa Richmond and Nick Westover

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Gallery: ['Take Back the Night' - Gallery](#) »

On Friday night, when most people in the West End were out at restaurants, a few hundred women went out to Stanley Park instead.

Vancouver's "Take Back the Night" protesters used to march through busy downtown streets and attract hundreds and sometimes thousands of women, often carrying banners. But this was smaller and more intimate. More of a Friday evening night out than an "action."

Nevertheless, they were there to highlight, and defy, violence against women.

At 8:00, "activities planners" announced the locations of moonlight yoga, Wenlido, stargazing, night bike around the park, 4 kilometer run, and nature walk.

With the exception of one presenter who talked about "the patriarchy" and about "men who don't understand," the presenters matched the activities in unconventionality. After several speeches, there was hip hop and soulful singing to guitar.



The crowd was diverse in age and ethnic background, but many said they had similar reasons for being there. “I wanted to come here and see what it’s like being in a big crowd, just girls. So we can all have fun together,” said one ten year old girl.

Others said they were there because they wanted to experience being in the park after dark. And others, mainly the volunteers, said because they agreed that “feminist action stops rape.”

“It’s about fun,” says Suzanne Jay, one of the organizers from Vancouver Rape Relief. “But we wanted to take back a space off limits to women. We chose Stanley Park partly because of the attack on Ji Won Park” on May 27, 2002, which left her fighting paralysis. “There have been two other attacks since. And instead of telling women they should stay away in order to be safe, we wanted women to be here and be safe.”

The women, most of whom wore black clothes, talked about the unusual feeling of enjoying the park after dark. Ironically, many women drove to the event, saying that while they felt safe in the park when surrounded by hundreds of other women, they wouldn’t want to walk even a few blocks home on their own afterwards.

Nick Westover is a photo refugee returning to BC after a long hiatus in Toronto and Asia.

Vanessa Richmond is The Tyee’s culture editor. 🌿