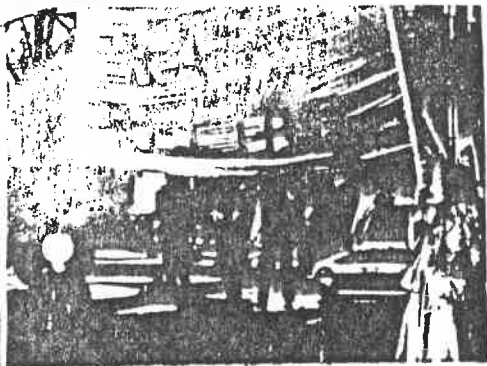


Relief Files

# Take Back the Night Vancouver Herstory



San Francisco, USA, 1978. The slogan "Take Back the Night" is first used as a theme for a national protest march down San Francisco's pornography strip. The march took place at night. Take Back the Night was a profound symbolic statement of our commitment to stopping the tide of violence against women in all arenas, and our demand that the perpetrators of such violence -- from rapists to pornographers to batterers -- be held responsible for their actions and made to change.

Five thousand women had gathered in San Francisco from November 17 - 19, 1978 to attend a conference organised by Women Against Violence in Pornography and Media entitled "Feminist Perspectives on Pornography." The TBTN protest happened on one of the evenings of the conference.

As night fell, 3,000 marchers gathered to hear Andrea Dworkin's "Exhortation to March." Then we wound our way toward Broadway, which was crowded with tourists and neon signs advertising live sex shows, adult bookstores and pornographic theatres.

Chanting slogans such as "No more profits off women's bodies", we filled the street entirely, blocking off traffic and completely occupying the Broadway strip for three blocks. For an hour, and for the first time ever, Broadway belonged not to the barkers, pimps or pornographers, but instead to the songs, voices, rage and vision of thousands of women.

(Source: TAKE BACK THE NIGHT, edited by Laura Lederer.)

\* \* \* \*

A woman from Vancouver Rape Relief was part of this historic event. She brought back her memories for future use. Since that time in San Francisco, women around the world have organised protests naming them TAKE BACK THE NIGHT or RECLAIM THE NIGHT. Vancouver's herstory of TBTN demonstrations is exciting and proud.

All have been "women only" protests to show that all men are responsible for the violence done to women, and to show we will walk the streets unafraid, alone, without a male escort. I use the term "women" to mean females from birth to death. If men want to be supportive, they are asked to help with childcare, to give a donation and/or encourage all the women they know to participate.

Throughout the years, organisers in Vancouver have refused to ask for a mandatory city permit to demonstrate. In fact, we see it as a contradiction in terms. Why would we ask male authorities for a permit to demonstrate when it is their behaviour we are protesting? Every TBTN is an illegal action. The marches include safety women, wearing some visible piece of clothing. Although all women are responsible for each others safety, these safety women have particular responsibility.

The police have invited themselves to every TBTN march in Vancouver, and almost every year have not been useful; have been, in fact, disruptive, a bother or increased the fear level of women participating (e.g. riding their motorbikes within inches of the demonstrators, trying to isolate a few women from the crowd, making demeaning comments). The safety women have been fabulous throughout the years at protecting the crowd from traffic, hecklers and the police, and encouraging all women to take responsibility for the safety of us all.

\* \* \* \*

Vancouver's first TBTN was organised in 1978 by an adhoc group calling themselves the "Fly-by-Night" Collective.



Women gathered in witch-like costumes and proceeded to demonstrate in the rain, through the streets of the West End. They carrying an anti-woman effigy, which they set afire on one of the beaches along the Pacific Ocean. At one point en route, the police attempted to divide women by isolating a few with their cars. Women's response was to call all women to the police car, surrounding it, and plaster it with stickers that demanded an end to violence against women, all the while chanting "take one, take all". A fine example of bravery and cleverness!

I do not know why there was no TBTN in 1979. Maybe it was the lull before the storm. Between 1980-85, thousands of Vancouver women have taken part in yearly actions. These were all organised by Vancouver Rape Relief, the first rape crisis centre in Canada. In 1983 another rape crisis centre started up in the city. By then Rape Relief had bought a house and had changed our name to Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter.

In 1980, the event took place in the Grandview-Woodlands neighbourhood. "Out of the kitchens and into the streets" was the rallying cry of the organisers. The publicity was distributed in English, as well as Italian, Punjabi and Chinese in an attempt to reach women more broadly in the city's multicultural community.

The next year, 1981, was a momentous one. Rape Relief was, and is, a member of the Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres (CASAC), an umbrella organisation with members across English Canada and Quebec. We asked ourselves why TBTN couldn't be organised across the country on the same night each year, and brought such a proposal to the next CASAC Convention, in the spring of 1981. This convention unanimously agreed, and a united Canada-wide TBTN was born, to be held on the 3rd Friday of September.

In September of 1981, 6000 women took part across the country. This was also a year of fear and grief for the people of B.C. Eleven children had disappeared in the lower mainland area and had later been found brutally raped and murdered. We held the demonstration in the city of New Westminster, the home of several of the missing children. We wanted to show support for KIDS (Kids in Distress), a support group formed by parents in response to the disappearances. We rallied in the rain to hear a brief speech by candlelight, and walked through the dark, residential streets alongside the grieving mothers, in protest. The infamous Clifford Olson was later charged, tried, and jailed as responsible for some of these child murders.

By 1982, pornography was becoming more visible and more widely distributed than before in Vancouver: corner stores, supermarkets and drugstores flaunted displays and Red Hot Video stores sprang up all over B.C. -- the first video store to sell mostly pornography. One store opened up only 3 blocks from our shelter. TBTN in 1982 was the first of what came to be

many public actions against Red Hot Video. The store in our neighbourhood was the first stop where angry marchers gathered to hear a speech about the effects of pornography on women's lives and the daily reality of fear and violence we live with.

The protest moved on to the steps of City Hall, where we heard a speech for the first time ever from the newly-formed Alliance for the Safety of Prostitutes (ASP). This group would have increasing prominence over the next few years, as city and provincial and federal governments directed the brunt of repressive "street cleaning" measures at the women being sold on the streets of Vancouver, and across the country.

The last stop of 1982 was near the home of Ivan Henry, a rapist exposed in the local papers that year as being responsible for several attacks in his own neighbourhood. This demonstration rang through the streets of Mount Pleasant with the now-familiar chants of "incest, rape, battered women -- we have had enough" and "Women unite, take back the night" and "What do we want? Freedom! When do we want it? Now!"

\* \* \* \*

After TBTN, many women's groups in Vancouver focused a multitude of protests at the Red Hot Video Chain. Several of the stores were firebombed by a group calling itself the "Wimmin's Fire Brigade" and this advanced the campaign greatly. Before long most of the country knew of Red Hot Video and the mounting opposition to its existence -- which intensified as a result of the bombings. Police and other authorities were alarmed, not only at the bombings, but the growing activism, and increased surveillance of any political activity was evident. Many more cops showed up at any demonstrations, and a number of activists from various groups had their homes broken into by police.

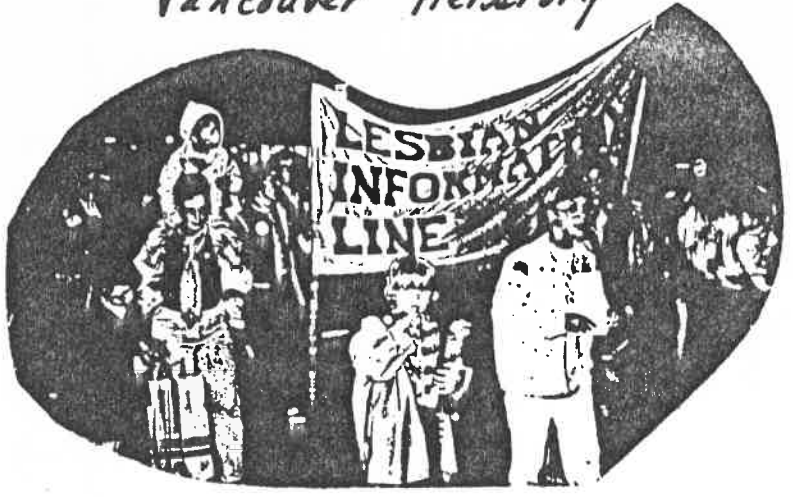
Although we wanted to continue uniting with this growing movement against Red Hot, Rape Relief was concerned that direct violence against women continue to get attention, and not just the depiction of it. We know violence against women takes place in our own homes, or the homes of the men who attack us. Throughout 1983 there were several attacks highlighted at bus stops as well. We wanted to mark some places where women had actually been attacked that year.

So, in 1983, our march again took to the streets of Mount Pleasant, and again had three stops. The first was a bus stop where we heard from a representative of India Mahilla Association how much more vulnerable to street attack we are at night. She spoke about race and poverty as factors which increase our vulnerability as well.

On a quiet, residential street a woman from Rape Relief spoke of the violence she had experienced in her own home and demanded an end to it for herself and all women. The final stop was at Red Hot

*Rape Relief Files*

# Take Back the Night Vancouver Herstory



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 - American Herstory
- \*\* TAKE BACK THE NIGHT - Traditions
- \*\* TAKE BACK THE NIGHT - March Checklist
- \*\* TAKE BACK THE NIGHT - Canadian Herstory
- \*\* TAKE BACK THE NIGHT - Agit-Prop
- \*\* WHO IS THIS MAN, PATTISON?
- \*\* WHY TAKE BACK THE NIGHT?
- \*\* SONGS OF RESISTANCE

And, for further information on the international movement and traditions of "Taking Back the Night" or "Reclaiming the Night" in other countries, you may want to find some of these books:

- RAPE: THE PRICE OF COERCIVE SEXUALITY, Lorene Clark & Debra Lewis (Canadian)
- FIGHT BACK! Feminist Resistance to Male Violence, ed. by Delacoste & Newman (U.S.)
- TAKE BACK THE NIGHT: Women on Pornography, ed. by Laura Lederer (U.S.)
- WOMEN, RACE & CLASS, Angela Y. Davis (U.S.)
- WOMEN & MALE VIOLENCE: The Visions and Struggles of the Battered Women's Movement, Susan Schechter (U.S.)
- WOMEN AT W.A.R., Women Against Rape (London, England)
- The Proceedings of the International Tribunal on CRIMES AGAINST WOMEN, compiled and edited by Russell & Van de Ven, (U.S.) \*\*Brussels, 1976\*\*
- NEWSLETTER of the Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres (CASAC); copies of issues or parts of past issues available through Vancouver Rape Relief & Women's Shelter, 77 E. 20th, Vancouver, B.C. V5V 1L7

Video, the focus of a year's worth of rage shared by the women united on this night.

A spokesperson from the Northshore Women's Centre expressed this rage on behalf of her own group, which had done a great deal of anti-porn work, and on behalf of all of us. The demonstration kept a lot of discipline that year -- some who wanted to raid the place chose not to act on what we all didn't agree to. We danced off this energy at the dance later that night.

\* \* \* \*

Early in 1984, the North Shore Women's Centre made public their research on Jim Pattison, a local multi-millionaire and born-again Christian. This man, who had his name in the paper every second day, was well-known for his rags-to-riches success in venture capitalism and for his contributions to society -- or at least his church and the well-being of the Social Credit party. The North Shore Women's Centre reported that one of his businesses, Mainland Magazine, was the major distributor of pornography in B.C. Pattison, and once again Red Hot Video, became the target of TBTN in 1984.

Along with our sisters across Canada, about 200 of us gathered, this time downtown, and marched and chanted through Vancouver. As we passed Red Hot there were no speeches, but we left our mark. At the start of the march every woman had been given a supply of bright yellow stickers which read STOP RAPE and WOMEN UNITE. Somehow, without planning, and without breaking the pace of the march, most of them ended up plastered over the windows of Red Hot Video. They seemed best put there.

Police managed to get in the way, as usual. They pretend they are protecting us and we all know they don't do that. This time they divided a truck with P.A. equipment off from the rest of the march, as we continued to the downtown main office of Pattison's corporate empire. There, we managed to make our speech despite their "help" -- focussing on the pornography profits Pattison made. The remainder of the stickers were plastered on the polished windows of his building. We returned for tea and coffee to the basement of Christ Church Cathedral, the site earlier in the year of an occupation in protest of harassment of prostitutes.

The women's liberation movement in Canada had been the target of severe attacks from government from 1983 to 1985. Cutbacks in funding had forced many groups to fold and weakened others. Attempts were made to discredit the statistics on violence against women that feminists had uncovered -- and replace them with new theories by male criminologists and psychiatrists. Women who refused to testify against their abusers in court were imprisoned for contempt.

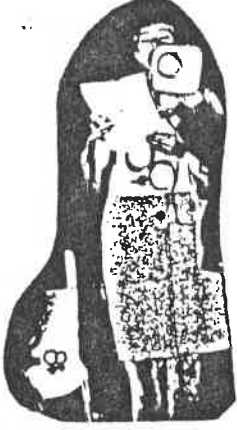
One of the ways Rape Relief rose in response to these attacks was to decide to make Take Back the Night a household word in 1985. We wanted many new women mobilised. We produced a film and discussion series, held once a month from May through September, where women came to view films, slides and videos and discuss the reality of violence against women. Each month more women turned up, or returned with a few of their friends, and by September we had distributed a flyer all over town advertising the film nights and the September march.

Following the initiative of a local Vancouver artist, we also conducted workshops throughout the summer to create placards, visuals and 6 - 10ft. female figures to add to the political content and visual impact of the event. Both the film nights and the workshops were opportunities for many more women to help build the march ahead of time than had ever done so before.

And the results? Over 500 women took to the streets last September in the largest women-only demonstration that Vancouver has ever seen! With drums beating, face painters at work, placards waving, and the fabulous huge dolls looming over the crowd, it was the most spirited and lively Take Back the Night ever.

1986 -- Here We Come!

*Joan*



In 1980, Vancouver Rape Relief decided to make Take Back the Night an Annual Event and invited other members of the Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres to organize an annual protest against violence against women on the 3rd Friday of every September.

Over the last 6 years Take Back the Night protests have been organized in: Halifax, Fredricton, Hill Montreal, Quebec City, Sherbrooke, Chateaugay, Trois Rivieres, Thunder Bay, Hamilton, Oshawa, Toronto, Kingston, Ottawa, Windsor, Thompson, Brandon, Winnipeg, Edmonton, Calgary, Saskatoon, Regina, Terrace, Queen Charlottes, Prince George, Chetwynd, Kelowna, Powell River, Nanaimo, Duncan, Vancouver, Victoria.

Here's who to contact across Canada, a rape crisis center, or women's group that either has had a Take Back the Night event, or may have one this year.

**BRITISH COLUMBIA**

- Vancouver Rape Relief & Women's Shelter  
77 E. 20th Ave., Vancouver, B.C.  
(604) 872-8212
- Mid-Island Sexual Assault Centre  
105-285 Fribourg, Nanaimo, B.C.  
(604) 751-0022(crisis), 753-1021(office)
- Chetwynd Women's Resource Centre  
c/o Linda Carlson  
P.O. Box 826, Chetwynd, B.C.
- Prince George Women's Resource Centre  
1306 7th Ave., Prince George, B.C.  
c/o Doreen Glasco
- Quesnel Women's Resource Centre  
466 Reid St., Quesnel, B.C. c/o Jennifer Davey
- Okanagan Women's Coalition  
c/o Catherine Connell  
P.O. Box 144, Vernon, B.C.
- Squamish Women's Centre  
Box 2032, Squamish, B.C.  
c/o Shirley Wilby
- Fort St. John Women's Centre  
10257-100th Ave.,  
Fort St. John, B.C.  
c/o Celia Kimsinski
- Kamloops Women's Resource Centre  
1125 Wainston, Kamloops, B.C.  
c/o Doreen Linstwood
- Golden Women's Resource Centre  
P.O. Box 2499, Golden, B.C.  
c/o Joe Frissen
- Island Women's Society  
Box 264, Pt. Clements,  
Queen Charlotte Islands

**PRAINES**

- Thompson Crisis Centre  
1-55 Selkirk Ave., Thompson, Manitoba  
(204) 778-7273(crisis), 677-9468(office)
- Calgary Sexual Assault Centre  
1725-21th St., S.W., Calgary, Alberta  
(403) 244-1353
- Regina Sexual Assault Line  
213-1808 Smith St., Regina, Saskatchewan  
(306) 352-0434(crisis), 312-2777(office)

**ALBERTA**

- Edmonton Sexual Assault Crisis Program  
545 Broadway Ave., Winnipeg, Manitoba  
(204) 774-4715

**SASKATCHEWAN**

- Winnipeg Sexual Assault Centre  
18-214 Red River Road, Winnipeg, Manitoba  
(204) 344-4502(crisis), 345-3897(office)

**MANITOBA**

- Kingston Sexual Assault Centre  
P.O. Box 141, Kingston, Ontario  
(613) 544-6433

**ONTARIO**

- Windsor Sexual Assault Crisis Centre  
14 Hanna St., East  
Windsor, Ontario  
(319) 250-3100 (office) - 253-9667 (crisis)
- Sudbury Rape Crisis Centre  
18 Broad Street East, Sudbury, Ontario  
(705) 673-1122 (office) - 673-1916 (office)
- Algonquin District Sexual Assault Centre  
P.O. Box 445, Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario  
(705) 489-3200
- Thunder Bay Physical & Sexual Assault  
Crisis Centre  
18-214 Red River Road, Thunder Bay, Ontario  
(807) 344-4502(crisis), 345-3897(office)
- Peterborough Rape Crisis Centre  
P.O. Box 197, Peterborough, Ontario  
(705) 748-3111(crisis), 876-5901
- Timmins Rape Crisis Centre  
P.O. Box 381, Timmins, Ontario  
(705) 251-0800
- Hamilton Rape Crisis Centre  
24 Queen St. North, Hamilton,  
Ontario, (416) 525-4571
- Women's Place,  
P.O. Box 447, Kenora, Ontario  
(807) 468-7033 or 468-9095
- Kingog & District Sexual Abuse  
Rape Crisis Centre  
208 Main Street, Kenora, Ontario  
(807) 468-7033 (office)  
579-8006 (crisis)
- Oshawa-Durham Rape Crisis Centre  
P.O. Box 727, Oshawa, Ontario  
(416) 735-7211
- Niagara Region Sexual Assault Centre  
5017 Victoria Ave., Niagara Falls,  
Ontario, (416) 356-9662
- Toronto Rape Crisis Centre  
P.O. Box 6397, Stn. A,  
Toronto, Ontario  
(416) 964-7477(office)  
964-4080(crisis)

**ATLANTIC**

- Fredricton Rape Crisis Center  
P.O. Box 174  
Fredricton, New Brunswick  
(506) 454-0437
- Happy Valley Rape Crisis Committe  
P.O. Box 783, Station B,  
Labrador, Canada  
(709) 896-8683
- Rape Information Centre  
C/O Newfoundland Status of Women  
P.O. Box 6072  
St. John's, Newfoundland  
(709) 726-1411

**QUEBEC**

- Centre d'Aide et de Lutte Contre  
les Agressions Sexuelles-  
Sexuelles  
C.P. 1472, Succ. B,  
Sul., Quebec,  
(819) 771-6233
- Violence  
C.P. 105, Haute-ville  
Quebec, Quebec  
(418) 692-1252
- Centre d'Aide et de Prevention  
d'Agresions Sexuelles de Chateaugay  
C.P. 284, Chateaugay, Quebec  
(416) 691-6238
- Centre d'Aide aux Victimes d'Agre-  
sion Sexuelle  
C.P. 376, Trois Rivieres, Quebec  
(819) 373-1332
- Centre d'Aide et de Lutte Contre  
l'Agresion & Caractere Sexual  
C.P. 1594, Sherbrooke, Quebec  
(819) 563-9899



**TAKE BACK THE NIGHT—FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 1986**

WOMEN ARE TAKING TO THE STREETS AT NIGHT IN TENS, HUNDREDS, & THOUSANDS TO SECURE OUR RIGHTS.

WE ARE NOT WILLING FOR MEN TO CLAIM THAT WOMEN OUT ALONE "ARE ASKING FOR IT". WE DEMAND MOBILITY FOR ALL WOMEN. WE DEMAND SAFETY FOR ALL WOMEN FROM MALE VIOLENCE.

WE DEMAND THIS HUMAN RIGHT FOR THE YOUNG AND SAUCY LEAVING DANCES AND BARS, FOR THE OLD AND INDIGENT SEEKING SHELTER, FOR THE YOUNG MOTHERS OUT FOR AIR AND THE SHIFT WORKERS HEADING HOME, FOR THE NATIVE WOMEN ON COUNTRY ROADS, FOR THE WOMEN IN PAIRS OF FRIENDS OR LOVERS AND FOR THE PROSTITUTES UNDER STREET LIGHTS.

**Vancouver Rape Reli  
& Women's Shelter**

77 E. 20th Avenue,  
Vancouver, B.C., V5V 1L7  
872-8212



Vancouver, 1985

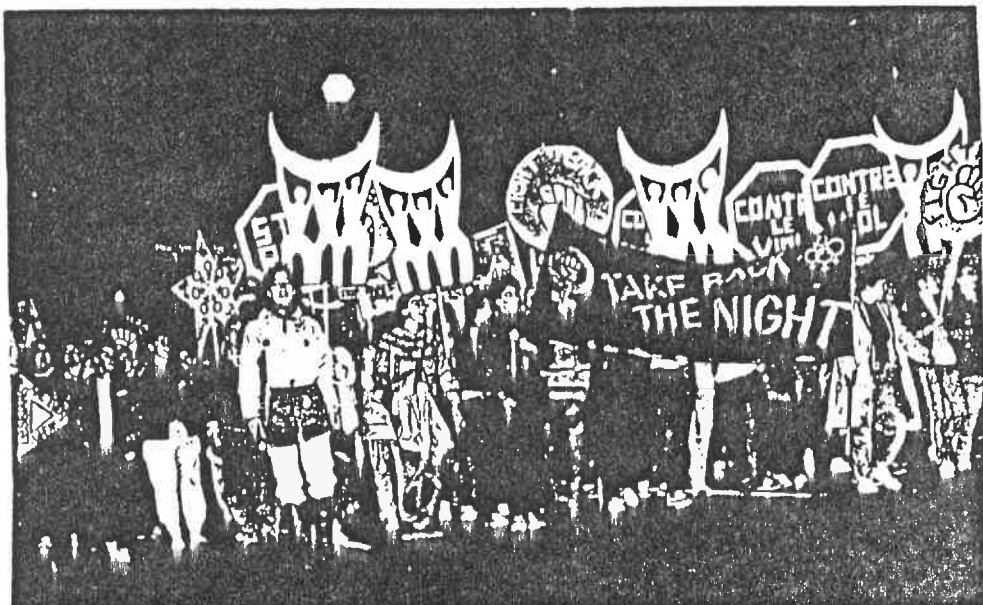
My name is Drena McCormack and I work at Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter. I want to welcome you all here tonight, joined with thousands of women in dozens of cities all across Canada. I'm here to Take Back the Night!

I'm here tonight for the right to walk through the streets of my city free from the fear of attack. I won't be locked inside.

When I was 9 I used to love running through the woods from my home to Burnaby Lake all year. It was a special treat when the lake froze solid two years in a row and we could go skating. Once, as I followed the path through the dense woods to join my friends I encountered an old man blocking it with his pants down. I managed to swerve past him unharmed and only a little frightened. Mostly, I was puzzled. I couldn't understand why anyone would behave like that -- especially in below freezing weather. But I knew enough of the significance of this event not to tell my mother. It would mean the end of what little freedom I had to explore the land in my neighbourhood.

My own daughter's freedom has been even more restricted -- by urban sprawl and my increased anxiety. She is forbidden to travel as far as Trout Lake, past the railroad tracks without an adult. She does it anyway a few times each summer, following the timeless lure of freedom and peers. Sometimes I ground her for breaking the rules, but sometimes I pretend I don't know she did. Mostly, I let her know that the rules she faces, far stricter than those set for her brother, are not fair and we need to fight for a world in which they are no longer necessary.

I'm here tonight for those of us who were warned about strangers and then were attacked by men we know. I learned, like most of us, a Catch 22 about sexuality -- its pleasures and dangers -- as I entered my teens. I was taught to dress and behave to be as sexually attractive as I could. Then, if I got into trouble, it was my own fault for not "managing" the behaviour of the boys I dated. At age 16, I had to fight off the advances of a male relative -- a man 10 years older to than me and newly married. I was constantly confused whether I was being too sexual or not sexual enough in the world. I walked down the street with my head down, avoiding the glances and ignoring the whistles and jeers. I am no longer confused!



September 20, 1985. 500 noisy women take to the streets.

I'm here tonight to demand the right to enjoy my own sexuality, to dress the way I like and to say that does not give men the right to harass and attack me. I am here tonight for the women who want to walk down the street holding hands without being taunted by men who think we should be constantly available sexually for them and never for each other. I am here tonight for the right to say NO and be taken seriously. We must continue to exercise these rights when and where we can, and continue to fight for them until we win.

I'm here tonight for the 700 women who have called the crisis line this year, and the thousands who didn't call. I am here for the 1 woman who is raped every 17 minutes in Canada.

I'm here for the women working at the Vancouver Hotel who get off shift at midnight. I want them to have safe busses, safe parking lots. And if they don't, I want the hotel to pay their cab fares.

I'm here for the downtown office workers who called us in June for advice because of a series of attacks in underground parking lots. Some of them hoped we could give them a description of the man the media called the Yuppie Rapist. THERE IS NOT ONLY ONE YUPPIE RAPIST. We know a significant number of men rape, and it could be any man.

I'm here for the women organising for change. Many of the office workers began to organise safety in their workplaces, invited speakers from Rape Relief, took self-defense courses. Some are here tonight.

I'm here tonight for Linda Tatrai and for all the women whose bodies are bought and sold on the streets of our city. Linda had her throat slashed by a man last February and died in an underground parking lot in Mt. Pleasant. She was 18 years old and had worked as a prostitute since she was 15. She was under the "care" of the Ministry of Human Resources when she died. She had been named as a public nuisance by Attorney General Brian Smith in his infamous injunction which drove all prostitutes east of Granville Street and into Mount Pleasant.

That injunction was not intended to end the trade in our bodies, but rather to control it. It pushed prostitution into "convenient" neighbourhoods, making the women less visible to the rest of us, and just as available to the men who buy and sell. Women worked the west end without pimps; they could see and protect each other. Now they are in more danger than ever. We lost the fight against the injunction and we lost Linda. We continue to fight for the rest of us, and we won't stop until we are all safe.

I'm here tonight for Colleen Shook, who was raped and murdered recently blocks from her Burnaby home. I'm here for the women from Burnaby who have called us since, and who are here tonight, including friends of Colleen's. We grieve, but we are also very, very angry. We will not be shut inside! Men must stop harassing us, they must stop raping, they must stop beating us. Despite the media sensation, these deaths and others are not typical. But humiliation, harassment and physical attack are possibilities we face every day.

Daily, also, on the crisis line, the volunteers at Rape Relief hear women's stories. Stories of brilliant women surviving attack. Stories of brave women who have fought back. Stories of nery women who have gotten back and turned the tables on their abusers. Tonight we celebrate our brilliance, our courage, our outrageous nerve. We dare to demand freedom and we take it when we can!

Tonight I will be able to walk past the sex shops on Granville Street without my head down. I will not be silent. I will shout, laugh and sing. Because you are with me, tonight I am safe. I did not come to take back the night by myself.

Take Back the Night is one evening of every year. But it is an example of the most effective way we've learned to survive and to fight and to win freedom from men's violence. Together!

Tonight thousands of women march in cities all across the country. Tomorrow the rape crisis centres, transition houses and women's centres will continue to organise. When we come together to share our pain, to hone our anger and to transform them into action, we grow stronger.

Strong enough to demand an end to this violence and fear, strong enough to force men to change. I'm here tonight to join you in the streets. I call on you to join together and organise all year long. Together we are taking back the night -- and the day too!

*Drena*

