

Two women take back the night, marching to different drummers...

I feel like a traitor at the Take Back the Night march. I've come to protest violence against women, but also to satisfy my own curiosity. I can't imagine what good this will do...

We begin at City Hall, with an inspirational speech about what has led up to this march. "Until beauty is not a job requirement; until rape is no longer the victim's fault; until child care is more important than roads; until birth control is safe, effective and shared; until abortion is safe, fully funded and available to all women; until work in the home is shared and given value; until the history books tell herstory too; until lesbian is no longer a dirty word; until it is safe at home, safe at school, safe at work, safe to date and safe on the streets; until women share equally in the rights and responsibilities of society, I too will be a part of the Women's Movement."

This is not why I came. I am not here to protest the superficiality of society, or the availability of birth control. I am not here to support child care, because I don't believe that it is in the child's best interest to be dumped while both parents work; I know that there are times when the parents have no choice, but I don't think two working parents should have children without being willing to sacrifice. I am definitely not here to support abortion being fully funded. I am not here to support petty political correctness such as changing history to herstory. I am here to protest violence against women, and I feel betrayed that the march was portrayed as such when it seems to be extending so far beyond it. So, I refrain from cheering and clapping, and hide behind my notepad so the few men we pass on the street don't think I'm one of the fanatical women shouting. "No more patriarchy, no more shit!"

"It is a march against violence against women," Lorraine Whalley of the Fredericton Sexual Assault Crisis Centre told me. "We believe that the roots of that are in the patriarchal society, a society that doesn't question its ideology about domination of women."

I'm not convinced. I'd argue that men who insist on their superiority are more likely to be violent: correlation, not causation.

"The power of women in action!" reads one placard. We're walking down the middle of the street, accompanied by several police cars, driven by men. Whalley said they'd asked the city not to provide police cars, and it's ironic that the women in action don't have enough power to stop traffic for half an hour on their own.

Besides, when did we ever own the night that we could take it back? Who owns it that we want it back from? "Men just don't feel the fear that women do about going outside," Whalley said, explaining why men aren't allowed on the march. "It's more about women marching than about men not marching."

It's frustrating that we can't walk alone without fear but protesting it isn't the solution. During the open-mike session, one woman stood up and told a joke, the essence of which was that if a man wants his IQ quadrupled, he has to become a woman. This is not encouraging equality or cooperation. This is the kind of segregation that leads to resentment and, no doubt, to violence.

"Yes means yes, no means no, however we dress, wherever we go."

It's a nice dream, but I'm afraid that some women will let this right overpower their common sense. As one high school student said, "I would like to see the day when I don't need my next door neighbour, who's a seventeen year old guy, to walk me home from down the road." So would I, but until it comes I won't be protesting in the streets, alone or otherwise.

Cynthia Kirby is a reporter for The Brunswickan.

womynsay

One week ago today I was marching through the streets of downtown Fredericton, yelling at the top of my lungs, chants of protest against the violence in my community. It was an exhilarating experience: I finally felt like I was fighting against that "1 in 4" statistic that every student has heard at least once, if not a hundred times. It took years for that figure to register in my brain - it was always easier to ignore it.

Now, as I sit in the cafeteria, I count four girls at the table beside me and the blood chills in my veins as I remind myself that one of them will, or has been, sexually assaulted at some point in their university career.

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Back the Night" march is one way for women to take a stand against violently oppressive acts and attitudes. But most men and women on this campus still need to acknowledge the extent to which rape occurs, otherwise it remains a chilly atmosphere for victims. UNB is a mini-community, and as a member I feel a responsibility to attempt to break through the false realities and see the women who are trapped inside. I have finally realized that the horrible statistic will not just go away if I ignore it. In fact, it will probably only become more unbearable.

Even though it took me a long time to embrace that knowledge, I still felt unprepared for my first march, which turned out to be both liberating and empowering. I was finally admitting to the whole world: 'Yes, I am afraid to walk alone at night' (in fact, I carry my keys like a switchblade), and 'No, I'm not going to accept it any more.' With the strength of unity as our shield, I truly felt that we had a power stronger than that in the land of Patriarchy. The faces that appeared to me as strangers one minute were recognizable to me as those of my sisters a minute later. Some of them realized their duty to protest many years ago, while others did only that night. The one thing that was constant among us, however, was the need to reclaim from men the power to determine the fate of women; we were all there to "take back the night."

I hope to see you there next year.

Julianne Fraser is a member of the UNB Women's Collective, which will be collectively producing womynsay for Spectrum this year. Julianne would also like to thank the Fredericton Sexual Assault Crisis Centre, who organizes "Take Back the Night" every year, for creating such a forum for women to speak out.

It's open season on gays: Atlantic Canada's reaction to Bill C-41

A 1993 study in Nova Scotia reported cases of individuals being spat upon, beaten, verbally abused, mail being tampered with, property damaged and stalked. In Fredericton, a recent gay-bashing incident left both individuals in the hospital, while a number of the 1995 fires were found to have some basis in sexual orientation hate crimes. Moncton's community scene reported the beating of a heterosexual friend of a gay individual. A lesbian coordinator of Transgendered, Bisexual, Lesbian and Gay Alliance in Toronto was assaulted and managed to escape. Sadly, these and other incidences often go unreported.

On June 14, 1995, an important amendment to the Canadian Criminal Code was passed. Bill C-41 requires judges to consider whether a crime was motivated by hatred. This hatred can be based on religion, race and gender, just to name a few. Included in this amendment are hate crimes based on sexual orientation.

Crimes based on intolerance of a person's sexual orientation (or gay-bashing) can be verbal, emotional or physical in nature, and can sometimes lead to the death of the person being bashed. Such violent responses are based on homophobic attitudes that persist in our society; despite some positive factors (such as recognition of some same-sex benefits). Gay-bashing happens irrespective of the steady recognition of homosexuals and bisexuals as members of society. More often than not, gay-bashing takes the form of physical violence, and victims are usually targeted regardless of whether they are homosexual or not. Often just the mere rumour of a person's possible sexual orientation, or association with the lesbian/gay community, makes her/him a target.

Most gay-bashings take the form of a group of people (usually men) who target individuals when they are alone or with one other person. Some

encounters begin with minor verbal abuse and quickly escalate to greater verbal abuse and physical abuse. Typically there is alcohol involved in some cases of gay-bashing, and bashers either travel on foot or in a vehicle. Most bashings occur in the evenings and tend to target men, although women are often targeted as well. In Canada, 11 per cent of reported hate crimes were identified as against homosexuals/bisexuals.

Under-reporting of gay-bashing is based on many factors. For men, not reporting it may be due to the difficulty with people's response to the attack. For women, it can be difficult because the attack could have been based on gender, not sexual orientation.

Another reason why gay-bashing often goes unreported is that people may not want to reveal their sexual orientation. Their perception of an intolerant society with negative attitudes toward homosexuals and bisexuals forces them to "keep quiet." As well, the often-lenient sentences given to gay bashers does not promote confidence in our judicial system.

So what can be done? We as a social group can help by reporting incidences of gay-bashing. We can be supportive of victims of this particular hate crime and, in one sense, look out for one another. If you find yourself walking alone in the downtown area, be cautious of unusual behaviour. If you are cruising, be careful of people who are inviting you to do one thing, but are not reciprocating. Or be wary of smalltalk and conversationally "feel" the person's intentions. More likely than not, something said may trigger warning bells telling you to leave.

Finally, through education and overcoming negative perceptions of homosexuality and bisexuality, we can be aware of your surroundings and overcome obstacles.

Pride is a weekly column by J.

Forest Breeze

A valuable lesson can be learned from the forest industry of the far away southern country of Costa Rica. I spent two months this summer working on community-based environmental projects with other Canadians and Ticos (local residents of Costa Rica). This experience led to many discussions about the conservation and environmental movements in both Canada and the host country. Costa Rica has a very strong environmental movement, roughly 25% of the total land area has already been protected through wildlife reserves, national parks, protected areas, and so forth. These parks protect the diversity of this small country, approximately one-third the size of the island portion of Newfoundland. Costa Rica has a rich biodiversity, host to more bird species than all of North America. The rich biodiversity can be attributed to the land diversity and the country is bordered by two seas which can be seen on a clear day from Costa Rica's highest peak, 4000m high. Therefore, any type of natural resource development must be regulated to

obtain maximum utilization. This is what occurs in the Costa Rican forestry industry. Policy has been formed to restrict the export of raw material from this country. In other words, all secondary production of logs occurs in Costa Rica. This creates jobs and increases the value of timber. What if, say, Newfoundland maintained all of their fish to be processed in that province instead of selling the fish to Highliner and buying it back at a higher price?

This same theory can be applied to the Canadian Forest industry, which sells a portion of its logs without secondary production. Think of the jobs lost if there were no paper mills in Canada, and how fresh our air would be. If the Canadian forests are going to be harvested, we should obtain maximum benefits. Foresters are striving for sustainability but will we ever reach that level? Like some great person once said: "We should make the forest fit our economics and not our economics fit the forest."

Jason Northcott

UNB's role in cultural diversity is integral to social change

Although there is still room for improvement, our university community as a cultural grouping stands a very good chance of establishing itself as the cornerstone of future cultural development in the whole of Atlantic Canada. To achieve this, the spirit of cultural community must be rooted in the minds of the students who are, invariably, the most important beneficiary of cultural development activities.

Since social and cultural change is itself a by-product of effective culture, the important role cultural diversity plays in the development calculus of any human society stares us in the face, and diversity can not be discussed in isolation of social or cultural change. By emphasizing the functional aspects of cultural diversity to UNB students, a more definite and functional sense of commitment to cooperation can be fostered. Cultural diversity is, after all, about people, not institutions and structures.

The central goal of effective culture is to influence people to act in a particular way favourable to a cause. Great potential of cultures abounds on our university campus and can be effectively harnessed, utilizing vital instruments to unite people and reach the hearts and minds of students of our university as well as the greater Fredericton community, at the same time helping to develop a highly

sustainable positive image for the University of New Brunswick.

It is a known fact that the strength of any one university can be determined by its educational standards but I would like to believe that our university has advanced beyond that phase. At the diversity centre, we tend to measure UNB's strength by its cultural interactions. Furthermore, we know that the beauty of our university shines forth only as its students and members undertake the responsibilities of love, service and leadership in such a manner as to evoke the practice of kindness and fellowships between diverse groups.

We seem to live in a world where respect for power leads to greater results than awareness of and reverence for the human person. We at the diversity centre strive at a time when expediency eclipses humanity, when the practical considerations can obscure the human tenderness of spirit. The existence of basic, unbearable misery still constitutes a challenge and the university community must respond in a more genuine, personal and pragmatic manner. It must respond because it is more enlightened and more advanced today than it was ten years ago.

T. Mack Peters is Director/Coordinator of the UNB Cultural Diversity Centre.

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