

The night is half the day.

by Mamie Carter
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for Canadian University Press

A man is sitting at his desk at work when, suddenly, a crowd of people surround him. A woman steps out of the crowd and screams, "That's the guy who raped me."

In Santa Cruz, California, a group called California Women Against Rape has, like a growing number of women, been taking some direct power over men who attack them. For five years, they've confronted rapists in their workplaces, neighbourhoods, and homes. At the time of the verbal confrontation the rapist is given anti-rape literature and a few weeks later he receives a letter warning, "we're still watching you. You'd better change the way you treat women." Sometimes men from Santa Cruz Men Against Rape pay the man a visit as well.

Every time a confrontation happens Santa Cruz papers are filled with letters, pro and con, keeping the incident in the public eye for weeks.

Another strategy that is being used in several areas is newspapers listing the names of men who have raped, hassled or assaulted women, their names are published both as a warning to women and to raise awareness about rape. Sometimes these lists include addresses and descriptions of the men, as well as articles designed to increase community understanding of the reality of rape—"That it is an act of violence, not lust and a direct out-growth of sexism."

The best known group to use this tactic is the Kitty Genovese Project, in Dallas, named after a woman who was raped and stabbed to death in New York City in 1964 while many of her neighbours watched. During International Women's Day last year they distributed 22,000 copies of their paper and got widespread support. Their action made front page news in Dallas and was covered by hundreds of newspapers.

In compiling and distributing these lists, anti-rape organizers have sometimes had to weather criticism that they were exposing some innocent men, and that arrests and convictions often reflect existing class and race biases in society. Their response: our first concern is the safety of women in the community.

Similar lists have appeared in many cities in the past year or so. The lists provide a way for women to find out who some of the rapists in their community are, and the opportunity to make them publicly accountable for their actions. They give women information and, with it, strength.

STREET ACTION

Another tactic women are using to make rape a community issue is street marches. In Connecticut Neighbourhood Women Against Rape marched in demand of safe housing—since one third of all sexual assaults are in the home—stopping in front of known rapists' homes. In Britain women marched through the night demanding the right "to be on any street at any time, to walk alone or in groups without men protecting us from other men."

Neighbours Against Rape, a Portland, Oregon group, have organized block-by-block to protect women and discourage potential attackers. Each block has well designated "safe houses" with large visible signs. These houses provide women a place to run in a hurry and the signs provide a warning to rapists that a particular block is part of "a well organized vigilant campaign against rape." The people on the block are all encouraged to respond to screams, whistles or other prearranged signals.

Rape ... is an act of violence, not lust and a direct out-growth of sexism.

These women and many others in North America and Britain are tired of trying to deal with rapists and the issue of rape through the criminal justice system. They feel that the responsibility of dealing with violent sexist crimes should be in their own hands, and that neighbourhood solidarity is potentially the most effective means of protection against violence aimed at women.

In the last few years many groups of women have been established to explore alternative ways of dealing with rapists and other sexist harassment. An alternative, that is, to working with the police and prisons, and to the usual counselling and service work of more traditional rape crises centres. In their opinion there are no individual solutions to rape and it can only be dealt with by a direct-action movement rooted in the community.

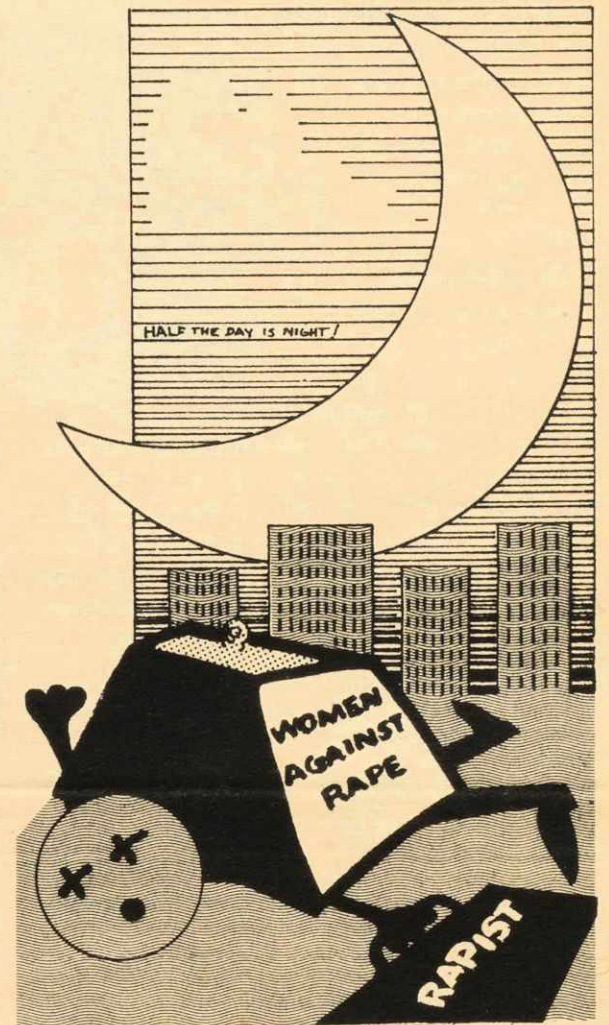
RAPITST AFRAID

The direct action anti-rape groups have various responses to the traditional rape centres and the emphasis many of them place on rehabilitating imprisoned rapists. The Kitty Genovese Project says, "We don't support the prison system but it's very

important that women are working within the prison system to change the incarceration of human beings into an education process." They point out that it is particularly difficult for prisoners to change their ideas about rape and women since they're in an environment that encourages violence, domination and humiliation.

Neighbours Against Rape have made a conscious decision not to associate with the criminal justice system. Neighbourhood Women Against Rape in Connecticut see their work as a necessary supplement to the on-going counselling and service work already in existence and "an important step forward in the movement."

When asked what the results of their actions were so far a Santa Cruz spokesperson said, "Not bad," adding, "The police want to kill us ... The rapists are afraid of us."



Women angry

Record album draws protest

reprinted from the McGill Daily

Shouting slogans like "let's boycott 2000+" Montreal feminist groups demonstrated yesterday for the second time in two weeks against a local record store's promotion of an album entitled "Battered Wives".

The cover of the album has been the subject of heavy criticism due to its portrayal of a young seductress picking up four men and then single-handedly assaulting them both physically and sexually.

The Mansfield St. record store has been promoting the album for over two weeks and according to manager Marc Demouy the added publicity surrounding the controversial album has boosted sales in the Montreal area.

Montreal feminist groups claim the punk rock album exploits women as being nothing but beautiful objects while neglecting the lives of terror that beaten and raped women lead.

A spokesperson at the demonstration who requested anonymity stated that "the album ridicules a sad reality ever present in modern day society."



Though 2000+ had received menacing phone calls threatening violent reprisals if the album was not removed, the demonstration proceeded peacefully.

Demouy defended his display explaining that he knew the record's producer and was sure that the album had not been conceived with ill thoughts in mind. He went on to say, "the woman's organization has never been willing to discuss the display with us and if they were willing to discuss their views more sensibly on a direct level we could be exchanging ideas." According to Demouy even the non-violent phone calls he received were baleful and demanding.

In a pamphlet issued to passers-by the women's group called the display "an example of the commercial exploitation of the oppression of women." They further denounced the violent nature of the display claiming it promoted the acceptance of wife-beating as a normal occurrence.

Manager Demouy concluded that his obligation was not "to be a censor but just a vendor of records."

WOMEN RECLAIM THE NIGHT

Downtown Halifax March

Date: Friday September 29
Pre-march rally 10 pm at
the Red Herring Bookstore

Childcare Provided

For more information call 4430148,
4227278, and 4257324