

Women fight back against violence

Annual Take Back the Night march

By Jan Darby

"Don't go out alone at night." This age-old piece of advice is supposed to protect women from violence.

However, if women were to follow that advice, we'd be prisoners in our own homes. We'd be unable to go to work in the evening, attend night classes, jog after dark, or go to a movie, without an escort.

And this advice does little to protect us from violence committed against us in our own homes: wife battering, incest and acquaintance rape.

From sexual harassment, job discrimination, street remarks, medical abuse, battering, incest, lesbian bashing to rape and murder women have continual



abuses to cope with in today's society.

And on university campuses, women are subjected to misogynist

graffiti, fraternity gang rape, and, at the University of Montreal, even the horror of mass execution.

Women are as much at risk in our classrooms, our homes and our workplace as we are on a deserted street at night. We can't protect ourselves by hiding in our homes, but we can work together for change.

Each September, women in communities all over the country gather for the annual Take Back the Night march. We come together to protest violence against women, to mourn the women who have lost their lives to that violence, and to celebrate our ability to resist and survive.

This year, the Toronto Rape Crisis Centre is holding its 12th annual Take Back the Night demonstration. The theme, "Acts of Resistance", asserts women's

right to fight back against assault, without fear of legal prosecution.

This year's march will also be a protest against the Supreme Court's recent decision to strike down the "Rape Shield" law. The law prevented a woman's sexual history from being presented as 'evidence' in a sexual assault trial.

The lack of such a law means fewer women are likely to report incidents of rape, fearing a humiliating interrogation in court.

Take Back the Night events begin with a fair. Displays and information tables will be set up by numerous groups from the women's community, as well as local anti-poverty organizations.

In addition, The Aids Committee of Toronto and the Black

Coalition for Aids Prevention will be providing safe sex information and their ever-popular free condoms.

At 7:00 pm there will be a rally with music, speeches and poetry, including performances by singer Faith Nolan and the comedy theatre troupe Women's Auxillary.

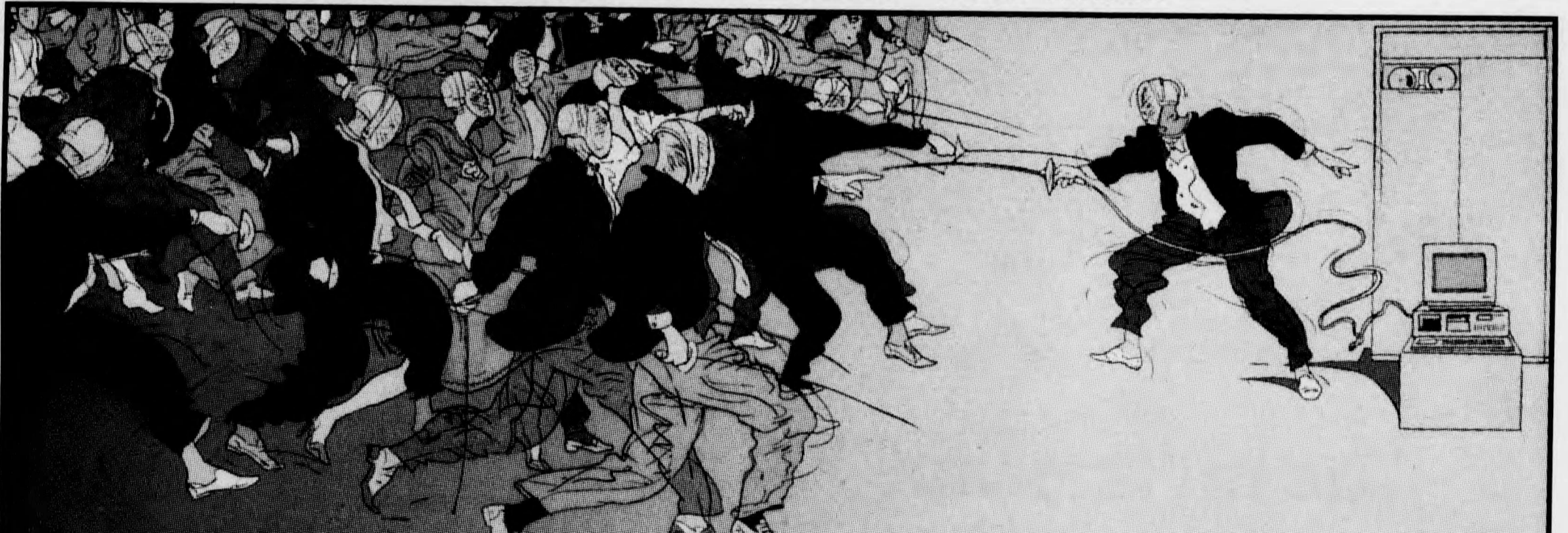
Immediately after the rally, at 8:15, a march for women and children only will make its way along a route of nearby city streets, winding up back at the community centre.

In this empowering night-time march, women assert our right to walk in safety at night without male escorts or police protection. Women are encouraged to bring signs, banners, and tambourines, and to join in the chanting, dancing and singing.

A contingent from York will be leaving from the Women's Centre, Room 328 in the Student Centre, between 5:30 and 6:00pm. All women are welcome.

The community centre and march route are wheelchair accessible, and sign language interpretation will be provided. Child care and attendant care are available by calling the Rape Crisis Centre in advance at 597-1171.

This year's Take Back the Night demonstration will be held Thursday, September 19th, at the Regent Park Community Centre, 203 Sackville Green, in the Parliament and Dundas area.



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