



Women march to protest fear

By Marian Green
Of the Emerald

More than 300 women took back the night Saturday, protesting the sexual and violent crimes that keep women from walking free from fear after dark.

All day Saturday, women and men attended workshops on rape prevention, pornography, domestic violence, sexual harassment, feminist erotica and a men's panel on sexual violence.

At a rally before the march, members of Amazon Kung Fu, a women's martial arts collective, demonstrated self-defense techniques for women and children. Rally participants also sang songs and read poems.

"Tonight the streets belong to us — to our songs, our voices, our rage and passion and to our visions," said Lisa Jeanchild, reading from an essay she had written for the march.

"Together tonight, with every step, we commit ourselves to

going the distance, to transforming this earth, to take back the night — not only tonight but every night of our lives — and to reclaim the day as well for ourselves and for every woman who has ever lived."

A group of women read statements from female victims of assaults, beatings, rapes, and incest.

"I was raped at gunpoint when I was 15, and I didn't tell anyone for four years," one woman read.

"I was attacked by a man in downtown Portland. There were people all around, but no one stopped to help," read another.

After each statement, the protesters loudly chanted "I am a woman—I'll fight back."

The participants prepared for the march, singing a song about taking back the night and passing signs from hand to hand. Some marchers wore banners reading "I have survived rape" and "I have survived incest."

Jerry Rust, a Lane County Commissioner and Democratic gubernatorial candidate, tried to march with the crowd of women, but was not allowed to join. The women asked that men show their support from the streetcorners.

"They just told me I couldn't go," Rust said. But after reflecting a moment, he said "I have a daughter and a wife and many other loved ones. I can understand it, and I'll support it in my heart."

Carrying lighted candles, the vocal crowd shouted chants, such as "Our bodies, our lives, our right to decide" and "Stop rape, organize, we will not restrict our lives."

The protesters marched through the streets of Eugene, winding their way through the downtown, residential and University areas in an hour-long show of solidarity.

Spectators— mostly men— watched from the streetcorners and sidewalks or peered through upstairs windows.

Some held banners or burned candles to show support for the women's cause.

"I'm a very, very strong supporter of feminist causes," said David Colton, who trailed the women for the duration of the march. "I wanted to march with them, but I understood what they were saying."

Lana Dowell, a Register-Guard composing room employee who viewed the march, said taking back the night was a "good idea." She said she feared venturing out alone at night. "That's why I'm with these two gentlemen," she said, referring to her companions.

Marcher Madeleine Smith, a writer and self-proclaimed feminist, said taking back the night is just a start. "You have to take back everything," she said.

"It's terrific they're out here at all," she added.

Scott Wilkinson, a recent University graduate, said the march hit home because his wife works late at night, and he worries about her.

Journalism major Laura Watson and German major Elizabeth Rak watched the marchers file past on Alder Street and agreed that Eugene isn't the safest city for women.

"I've felt safer in cities of 700,000 than here," Watson said.

"It's ridiculous," Rak said about fearing going out at night alone. "Sometimes, you just can't get around it, but you definitely keep looking over your shoulder."

Bob McFarland, a security guard at a 13th Avenue parking garage, said not only women, but also old men and children fear violence at night.

"I know I don't let anyone in my family out alone at night," he said. "It's not like the good old days."

In the '30s, "you could walk home from the movies at 11 o'clock at night without any fear at all."

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Teenage girl flees rapist

A man wearing blue jeans and a denim jacket attempted to rape a 17-year-old girl Thursday night while she waited on campus for a bus, according to Sgt. Rick Allison of the Eugene Police Department.

The girl, a Eugene high school student, was attacked between Fenton Hall and Deady Hall about 11 p.m., Allison said. The girl fled after the incident, and called Oregon State Police after she had got to 30th Avenue and Franklin Boulevard, near Lane Community College, he said.

There are no suspects at the moment, he said.

The man is described as in his early 20s, of medium build, 5-foot-9 to 5 feet 11 inches tall with a stubby beard and wearing white cotton gloves.

The incident was the first attempted rape on campus in several months, Allison said.

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