

The Middlebury Campus - April 27, 1990 - Editorial

Take Back the Night: In search of security and equality

According to the National Coalition Against Violence, acts of domestic violence in American homes occur every 15 seconds. Six million women are beaten each year by their husbands and boyfriends. The Vermont Crime Information Center reports that someone is raped every 2.9 days in Vermont. For every sexual assault on record, five others go unreported. Federal statistics show that one out of four women will be raped in her lifetime.

Take Back the Night is a protest against these all too common violations of basic human rights. Dozens of colleges and universities have sponsored such protests during the last two decades. The significance of the event, held for the first time in Middlebury on Wednesday night, lies in its symbolic unity of women and men against violence.

A number of posters advertising Middlebury's Take Back the Night march were defaced or removed. These actions are an unfortunate example of the unthinking hostility toward gender issues that is so deeply imbedded in our community.

In major cities, it is impossible to ignore the issue of personal safety. The papers and the evening news provide daily doses of alarm at the dangers of urban life. In contrast, Middlebury seems idyllic—isolated and safe. But our community is not immune to violence. Three attacks on women have been reported on campus this year. It is certain that other attacks and instances of sexual assault among students, faculty and staff have gone unreported.

In view of national statistics and the biological differences between men and women with regard to strength and size, a woman's concern for her personal safety can hardly be dismissed as paranoia, even at Middlebury. But violence against women at Middlebury and elsewhere goes beyond sexual assault. It is revealed through sexist jokes, pornography, and other forms of emotional or verbal abuse directed at women. In order to completely eliminate violence against women, every individual needs to become aware of these more subtle manifestations as well.

Attendance at Middlebury's Take Back the Night was impressive. More than two hundred students and townspeople, participated in this remarkable event.

Another Take Back the Night rally and march will be held Saturday, April 28. It will begin on the steps of the Burlington City Hall on Church Street at 6:00 p.m. If you missed the march on Wednesday, show your support for

putting an end to violence against women: attend the rally in Burlington.

As conscientious members of society, we have a mutual obligation to uphold the responsibility of ensuring safety, security and equality for everyone.