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Women inhabit a real environment of rape violence

By VERED A. FRANK

This year's Take Back the Night event is planned for Saturday, April 1. Students will gather to march across campus and through Riverside Park, as a symbol of women's strength and feeling of safety. Speakers will tell horrifying stories of rape, incest, and sexual assault. Organizers and participants are conveying a message—women should feel safe at any time and in any situation.

I could not agree more. But just as most people, male or female, would not feel safe walking through Riverside Park at night, the ever increasing problems that exist in human relationships have complicated the clear-cut accounts of rape (who can forget the Kennedy Trial). Although Take Back the Night is used to prove that women should feel safe, it should, at the same time, address more viable ways in which they can do so.

In over 90 percent of rape cases the victims are female. The point is not who the person is, but what the person does. Rape is one of the most violent crimes that can be inflicted on a female. She's not only physically violated but the emotional trauma often results in scarring.

There is no excuse for a man to force himself on a woman. Not so long ago, husbands were legally

allowed to rape their wives. Only recently have women felt more secure in coming forward with their stories of abuse. Female activists deserve all the credit for altering the primitive beliefs.

Personally, I believe that men convicted of rape should be castrated. I don't believe that such a statement makes me cruel and inhuman. But before I am labeled as a radical or even psychotic feminist, I think that it is important to note that most men agree that rape is a violent crime and would not perform such an act. At least I hope so. However, legality and human behavior come face to face in the hazy area between a stranger raping a woman and the various aspects of sexual activities.

In an ideal world, when someone says 'no,' it means that the other person should stop what he or she is doing. According to former Surgeon General Dr. Joycelyn Elders in a lecture last week, "even if you are drunk and come back from a party and you are in bed, naked, 'no' means no!" Of course, in a perfect world where standard rules and regulations are set in stone, such would be the case. But as most realists know, the world we live in does not quite fit that mold. In fact, college life is by far one of the most atypical 'worlds' that exist.

Unfortunately, I don't share the same optimistic view towards hu-

man nature as Dr. Elders holds. The truth is that if two people are drunk and naked, in bed together, 'no' is just not going to hold much strength. The more complex the situation gets, the harder it is to judge what is right and what is wrong.

The solution: Stay clear of such situations. Just like abstinence is the safest way to prevent getting AIDS, these dilemmas can be avoided by making wise decisions. Don't go home with a guy who you can't really trust. Don't leave your drunk friend alone at a party or bar. Don't go jogging or biking in Central Park when it is dark. There are hundreds of other scenarios I can list, but you probably know them all yourselves. No, you are not asking to be raped if you put yourself in such a position, but you do risk getting involved in an uncomfortable, or worse, dangerous situation.

Last year, women who marched, organized, and spoke at Take Back the Night all stressed the point that "no means no." In lieu of such an idealistic society in which two letters hold as much power as brute force, Saturday should serve as a forum to discuss preventive measures that can be taken so that women do not need to put all their trust in a single word. 'No means no' but at the same time, action speaks louder than words. In this case, it screams.

"These dilemmas can be avoided by making wise decisions."

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