

RECLAIM THE NIGHT

The student organiser's toolkit

Contents

Introduction	2
Pre-Planning	3
Building a RTN Team.....	5
The Route.....	7
Local authorities	8
Health and Safety	8
Budgeting and Funding.....	10
Promoting your event.....	11
Just before the night	14
After your event	14
... And thank you!	14

Introduction

Hello and welcome to the NUS women's campaign's guide to organising a Reclaim the Night in your students' union. Here at NUS, we recognise that lad culture on campuses is part of a larger picture; we understand the importance of women students having the tools to engage in actions to tackle rape culture in wider society.

Reclaim the Night marches emerged in the 1970s when feminists gathered in Rome, West Germany and North America to march together against violence against women, under the name 'Take Back the Night'. Inspired by this and in response to the appalling "Yorkshire Ripper" murders of women sex workers, November 12 1977 saw the first ever Reclaim the Night march in the UK. Women were mobilised and marched to highlight their right to walk the streets at night without fear of sexual violence and harassment. Decades on, in a society where 1 in 3 women experience sexual or physical violence, these demonstrations are still necessary and empower communities to challenge rape culture collectively.

With NUS research showing that 1 in 7 women students experience serious sexual assault during their time in education, it is clear that our campuses do not exist in a vacuum. As students we must recognise our role within the communities where we study and live, and call for safer streets, for the creation and protection of local support services for survivors of sexual abuse, and for the end of victim-blaming rhetoric. We hope that this guide will enable more women students from all intersectional identities to rise together in reclaiming our streets.

Susuana Antubam
NUS National Women's Officer

Pre-Planning

Community organising is a fundamental part of Reclaim the Night and engaging different types of voice enables more inclusive discussions and decision-making. Many women face multiple discriminations alongside sexism due to other factors such as race, disability, sexuality, class, religion, age, and employment which can impact their experiences of sexual harassment in different ways.

Therefore, it's important to create an accessible space where these issues can be shared and help shape your message as a community.

Get together!

- Organise a meeting and invite student clubs and societies, liberation forums, local institutions, charities, local organisations and services that could help you organise Reclaim the Night activities.
- Decide on a suitable time that most people can make and ensure the meeting is accessible. It's good to keep the meeting in a local space and ensure that it's well promoted so that those outside of your network can take part.
- When advertising the meeting, make it clear if it's open to self-defining women only or all genders. With something like Reclaim the Night people can sometimes be unsure about who certain activities are open to.

As well as introducing the idea and yourselves to each other, the aim of the initial meeting should be to lay some foundations. Then you can create working groups which will work on a certain element of the march. It's important to end the meeting with a collective idea of what you are doing, why you are doing it, who your event is aimed at, when it will be, and where it will take place. All of this can be tweaked and changed but it's good to have some initial ideas which you can refer to.

If you're a little stuck, here's some inspiration:

Why are we marching?

Before planning the details of your Reclaim the Night march it's important to identify as a group your aims and the messages. As well as bringing the community together to make a stand against sexual violence, Reclaim the Night marches generate energy and provide the opportunity to lobby local authorities to make effective changes to improve safety in your community. If you want to lobby, you need to identify what are the changes you want to see happen and work out how you will communicate this to the right people.

What will the event look like?

Some Reclaim the Night events just consist of the march itself, while others have additional events like rallies, after-parties, and panel discussions. Decide what you want to organise and how this is appropriate and relevant to your message.

Who can come?

You should decide quite early on who the march is open to. Some marches are women only (Nottingham RTN 2013 and London RTN), and some have self-defining women only sections (Bradford RTN 2014 and Manchester RTN 2014), and some are mixed entirely. There are multiple reasons for either of these options; for example some women for personal safety, cultural or religious reasons would prefer to be in a women's only space. Whatever you decide make sure you communicate your position and your reasons for this clearly. If you choose to have women only spaces, ensure these are for self-defining women and not trans exclusionary. Children are often present at RTN marches so bear this in mind when advertising and thinking about safety.

When will you hold it?

Some RTN marches occur on or near specific dates dedicated to combatting violence against women, while others are organised in reaction to local events. Whatever you decide on, ensure that you work together to develop a realistic timeframe which allows enough time for effective organising.

Days which RTN marches have been organised around in the past have included:

- International day for the elimination of violence against women (25th November)
- 16 days of activism against gender violence (25th November - 10th December)
- Human Rights Day (10th December)

Where will you hold it?

When you host your event you want to attract as much attention as possible, and reclaim areas of your city or town that may be notoriously bad for verbal or sexual harassment. Marching through town centres or your university campus at night, past clubs and pubs, will have more of an impact than marching through a residential area.

When you end the march it's good to have a space where you can host closing speeches and a rally. This can be in your students' union, a local community centre, or in a park or town centre.

Building a RTN Team

Building a team of reliable and responsible volunteers makes a world of difference to organising an event. Here are some examples of roles and role descriptions.

Communications manager:

- Checks, writes and responds to emails and messages and passes on information to relevant organisers and teams.
- Makes sure that there is good clear communication between teams.
- Makes sure that information about meetings and from meetings is sent out to organisers and keeps copies of event paperwork.

Fundraiser:

- Organises fundraising activities for Reclaim the Night.
- Seeks funding from local organisations and funding bodies.
- Oversees grant applications.

Street team leader:

- Recruits street team members for promoting and assisting at the event.
- Facilitates street team communication, action plans and timetables.
- Arranges promotion materials to be distributed to the street team.

Community liaison manager:

- Creates and maintains partnerships with local groups, such as charities, trade union branches, and local businesses and organisations in order to engage and promote.
- Works with the street team leader to facilitate community outreach activities.

Students and college liaison manager:

- Creates and maintains partnerships with the student groups, including the students' union, sports clubs, societies and associations to engage students.
- Works with the street team leader to facilitate outreach activities on campus.

Treasurer

- Oversees financial activity including the budget, expenses, and costs.
- Makes sure that the budget is correctly updated and that expenses don't exceed the allocated budget.
- Works with the fundraising manager to make sure that there is a good flow of income being generated to fund activities and equipment.

Media and advertising manager:

- Sorts out designs and content for promotion material.

- Looks after social media and works with the communications manager to get information out, such as press releases and general announcements.
- Works with the street team leader to make sure that street team members get promotional material on time and to the relevant areas.

Health and safety manager:

- In charge of risk assessment activities and paperwork.
- Makes sure procedures and equipment outlines in the risk assessment are in place.
- Works with the community liaison manager to ensure all activities run within local authority health and safety regulations.
- Works with the stewarding manager to train stewards.
- Create and arrange the distribution of health and safety, and self-care advice material for the march.

Stewarding manager:

- In charge of recruiting and training stewards for the march.
- Organises equipment, materials and clothing for stewards.
- Facilitates communication, action plans, events and timetables for the stewards.

Events manager

- Facilitates the organisation of non-march related events with other team leaders.
- Keeps a timetable of events and works with the street team leader and communications manager to make sure events are advertised widely.
- Manages venue and speaker bookings.
- Organises equipment and catering.

The Route

The route is one of the most important elements and it's important that you decide on a route which is accessible, secure and makes an impact.

Accessibility

Before deciding on a route, it is worth investigating the length of the route, the flatness and condition of the road in order to ensure that the route is as accessible as possible for wheelchair users and disabled people with mobility issues. It's also good to identify areas along the route that people can stop safely and have a rest if they require one.

Road closure

If you want to lead your march on the road then you will need to apply for a Temporary Traffic Regulation Order and the local council will charge you for this privilege. This can become quite costly and if you only have a small budget it might be worth thinking about a route through areas which aren't traffic-heavy, won't cause much disruption, and where there is sufficient pavement space for people to walk safely. Even if you don't want to make use of the roads on your march, it is still worth checking the route with the local council because it may still cause traffic disruption. Ultimately it is at the discretion of the council to approve the route you use; it may be worth asking for common routes that have previously been approved and checked for other demonstrations.

Meeting point

Make sure the place where you meet to start the march is accessible, safe to get to, in a well-lit area and clearly signposted. If possible, make sure that public transport links and parking is available.

Transport links

If you are leading a large march on the public highway and making use of road crossings (even if you decide not to make use of road closures), you should contact local transport links and inform that there may be delays to their services on the day. Make sure the route is accessible and that the end is near good travel links so that those who attend the march can get home safely. If it's a public space make sure you have permission to use the area with your local council and that there are no other events happening at the same time.

Local authorities

Police

Before a march you must inform the police. You might need to complete an event notification form and you must give them details of the date and time, the route you plan to use, and contact details for the main organisers.

Please note: you can be prosecuted if you hold a planned march without giving enough notice to the police and local authorities.

Local council

You will need to contact your local council and most likely speak to the Highway Management Team with the same details as you would need to give the police.

Public liability insurance

Public liability insurance should not normally be required for small-scale events. However it depends on local circumstances, including the capacity and safety of the site. If in doubt, organisers should consult the local authority and emergency services.

Health and Safety

In order to ensure the health and safety of the participants of your activities, it is important to make sure that procedures are in place and followed by everyone, and access needs are taken into consideration.

Risk assessment

A risk assessment is an exercise in evaluating potential outcomes from an event and in doing so assembling a plan in case of that outcome. It involves simple planning, such as imagining that if someone twisted their ankle, would you have a person trained in first aid on hand. At Reclaim the Night events there are additional considerations, including the potential for direct aggravation from men who may respond aggressively to women reclaiming their spaces. Risk assessments are essential for prior planning and it's likely you'll need to produce one for your local authority or university/college management.

Safer space policy

Reclaim the Night is clearly an event about fighting sexual harassment and misogyny, and creating safer spaces. So in order for all people to feel safe, this zero tolerance attitude should be extended to all types of oppressive behaviour. One way you can do this is by collectively developing a safer spaces policy and reporting procedure so that your march has a message against sexual harassment, and also types of discrimination such as LGBTphobia, racism, xenophobia, slut-shaming, ableism and classism.

Communication

You should advertise your chosen route on a map with the length of the march and the length of time it will take so that those with accessibility issues are fully

aware. It's best to have it available online prior to the event, but also produce physical copies for stewards and attendees on the night itself.

First aiders

You are required to have a proportional number of first aiders to the number of attendees at any march or demonstration. You should make sure that all the stewards are informed about who the first aiders are.

Stewards

Stewards are required to guide the march or demonstration and keep those attending safe and walking within the allocated route. For example if you don't have road closure, stewards should ensure that attendees do not block the road and cause traffic disruption.

You will need a proportional number of stewards to the number of people attending the march or demonstration, and the police and local council will advise you on numbers. Stewards will also need to be briefed on the route of the march and provided with high visibility clothing.

It is advisable that women steward your Reclaim the Night regardless of whether or not you allow men to march with you. It's important that those women who do attend feel safe and that if they did need help they could ask another woman stewarding the event. You could advertise for stewards at your students' union or at your local women's centre.

Budgeting and Funding

Putting together a list of necessary materials for the event will make it easier to identify the things that can be borrowed or are free, and things that you will have to raise funds for.

Budget making

Creating a budget will help you figure out how much fundraising you need to do to ensure your events go ahead smoothly. We advise you make a spreadsheet with the following list of items: food/drink, entertainment, printing, advertising, give away gifts, venue hire, and anything else you can think of. It will help to structure the spreadsheet with these headers:

- Items
- Description
- Budget amount
- Actual amount
- Deposit
- Notes
- (And a line at the bottom for the total)

Keep updating your spreadsheet so you know how much you are spending in relation to how much you have budgeted for. This will also help you adjust your budgets for other items. Add your deposit amounts in a different colour; you have to pay deposits for entertainment and venues. This is just a helpful way to indicate what you still have outstanding. Use your notes column to list quotations or dates that prices go up. Make sure you check your total to keep an eye on whether you're over or under budget.

Make sure that everyone involved in purchasing things for the event is aware of the budget. Remember to ask everyone to keep their receipts from expenditures on the event and hand it into one person so they can be reimbursed.

How to approach organisations for funding

Identify local charities, organisations and services that have similar ambitions to your Reclaim the Night events and make a list of contacts, what it is you require of them, and how they're support will benefit them. Don't rule anyone out, from local florists and photographers, to restaurants and spas. Try and go in and speak with managers and members of staff in person to explain what you're doing and how it can benefit them (positive advertising etc). Don't be put off when you receive a rejection, move on to the next on your list. Remember you're not just looking for money or one off donations; advice and long term commitment will be far more beneficial in the long run.

If you want to contact big national organisations, the odds of you getting to speak to their CEO isn't good, but start with contacting managers of stores and ask how you can get donations. Write handwritten letters from your team and those who are supporting the project to CEOs; they can then direct this to the

right person within their company and your request will have more weight if the CEO has read and approved your requests.

Social networks are a great way to keep in contact and also spread your message. Targeting company's pages and accounts with your requests makes them public and gives you more exposure when they do respond.

Fundraising ideas

Organising inventive events and activities can help raise money and highlight your cause. There's a huge range of things you could do, including:

- Auctions
- Raffles
- Fun runs
- Bake sales
- Dinners
- Pamper days
- Running a gig or themed night at your students' union or local bar with a percentage of ticket sales going towards RTN
- You can speak to a photographer to get them to take photos of your event and guests who attend and give you a percentage of their picture sales towards your RTN.

Promoting your event

Building a strong promotion strategy and team will help get as many people to your event as possible. When it comes to promotion, you should get creative and make sure your message is clear and accessible.

Promotion material

- Leaflets and posters
- Banners
- Promotional video
- T shirts
- Banners

Student media

Most student newspapers or magazines are at least partially dependent on submissions from students and officers and will have dedicated space that you can use. Comment tend to have the largest space allowances, but you need to ensure that you book your space with the section editor or you risk writing an article they don't have space to print.

If you don't have the details of the section editor that would accept your piece, speak directly to the Editor-In-Chief. They'll be able to give you an idea of how

much space you can have and when you'd need to submit your article by, as well as providing the contact details for the person that you need.

Try and ensure your piece will also be published online so you can link to it via social media, which makes it easier to share. Also ensure that you contact the Head of News (or equivalent) of all student media outlets on your campus (such as radio or TV stations) and give them the details of the campaign and any launch events you have planned.

Where possible, suggest a few people involved with your work as potential interviewees for radio or television and for quotes for written pieces so journalists have a variety of things to include in their articles.

Local news outlets

Local newspapers and radio stations are also useful to publicise your campaign and will be happy to cover the story in their news or comment spots. If you don't know who to contact, ask your student media teams if they know of anyone you can speak to as they typically have established contacts already. Local papers also list all of their section editors' contact details on the inside front cover.

Community radio stations are typically required under the terms of their licence to cover local news and may be happy to give you air time. A list of community stations in your area, and their websites and contact details, are available on the Ofcom website.

Social media

When you are at the stage where you have strong visual and written promotion material, you should then look at how you can creatively utilise multiple social networking sites to reach more people. There are many ways you can do this, including:

- Using sites such as Facebook to create "like" and/or event pages.
- Producing made-to-fit profile pictures and banners for multiple social networking sites and then provide a link where people can download them.
- Creating a twitter profile and hashtags
- Organising an online thunder clap

Street team

Organising a street team of student volunteers to go out and talk to people about Reclaim the Night and distribute promotional material is great way to actively engage with the community. Face to face interactions enable more opportunities to ignite discussions about what people want to see changed in the area in order to make it a safer place.

When you have an idea of who your team is, you can sort out a timetable for activity. Make sure you have a list of everyone's contact details, hold regular meet-ups and set up some sort of online forum. You can organise promotion packages full of advertising materials and allocate certain areas of campus and the local area for the street team to target.

If your institution or students' union has a volunteering team of staff or students, you could ask them about advertising this opportunity for students to get involved.

Activities and events

Hosting joint activities and events for students and members of the community can be a positive way of engaging more people and creating spaces that enable diverse and productive discussions.

Examples of events you could host:

- Banner and placard making sessions
- Joint events with local refuges and Rape Crisis centres
- Intersectional panel discussions
- Workshops on the history of Reclaim the Night and women-lead direct action

It's important that these activities happen in accessible locations/venues and at reasonable times of the day and week, especially so that people with access needs, caring responsibilities or religious activities are more able to attend.

One way this can be done is by hosting events more than once at different times and also making sure that people are made aware of whether or not children are able to attend and creating a welcoming environment for them.

Just before the night

You should create a checklist of things that you need to double check before the march with all your organisers. Here are a few suggestions:

- Do a round to make sure that the main organisers needed for the march are still attending
- Make sure the stewards have been briefed
- Check the weather!
- Take a walk around the route and double check with local authorities that everything is good to go
- If you've hired any venues or equipment, check that everything is prepared
- Remember self-care: eat some filling food and get rest before the big day!

After your event

Feedback

If you're planning to hold another Reclaim the Night or similar demonstration in the future it's important to try not to forget feedback. Write down what people thought went well and what didn't in order to evaluate your event(s), so you can improve aspects for next year. Things you could ask attendees/volunteers about include:

- The route
- Accessibility
- Atmosphere
- Advertising

Saying thank you

Remember to always follow up with the investors of your event and keep in contact with them after. This can be as small as a thank you tweet or letter, or you can tag them in images of all the work you succeeded in doing with their help and advice. It will make them feel appreciated, give them good advertisement and the next time you throw a Reclaim the Night event you already have solid contacts who will be more than happy to help.

Continuing the message

Reclaim the Night marches are important, but effective change in communities is only going to happen by maintaining the pressure and demand for change. This can be achieved by using the groups that you now have partnerships with to build an action group. Together you can lobby for change to improve safety on campuses and the wider community.

... And thank you!

I'd like to say thank you to the following people for contributing to this toolkit.

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