

Students March to Light the Night

October 28, 2009 12:15 PM Mary Cross
newwave@tulane.edu

As a young woman growing up in New Orleans, I've been advised repeatedly to never walk alone at night in fear of what might be waiting for me under the cover of darkness. However, on the night of Oct. 27, what I found in the dark was the support of the local community, as I banished my fears with hundreds of fellow Tulane and Loyola students at the 18th Annual Take Back the Night March.



Tulane and Loyola students gather in a candlelit march to Take Back the Night.
(Photos by Lauren Cross)

Tulane and Loyola universities produce the event to raise community awareness about sexual assault and domestic violence.

"We're shining a light on an issue of grave importance," said Cordelia Heaney, director of [Newcomb Student Programs](#).

Standing side by side, survivors of sexual violence along with students, friends and family members, and members of the community gathered at the Loyola horseshoe to listen to the event's opening ceremony.

Several survivors shared their experiences with the crowd through poetry and speech, demonstrating that silence for them is no longer an option.

In perseverance, they stepped forward to urge the audience to connect with their community in order to give a voice to those who have been silenced in their pain by shame or by the fear of being misunderstood.

As their words permeated the quiet crowd, a triangle chimed every 15 seconds, representing how often a woman is violently attacked in the United States.



The 18th annual rally is held to raise community awareness about sexual assault and domestic violence.

Following the opening ceremony, the crowd formed a single unified body striding down St. Charles Avenue to Rogers Chapel on the Tulane uptown campus, where an open-mic speak-out concluded the march.

Clutching candles and chanting empowering phrases, such as "No more fear, no more silence, hear our voices, no more violence," members of the march became a glowing symbol of the united Tulane and Loyola community, not willing to tolerate gender-based violence or sexual assault.

Mary Cross is a senior majoring in communication at Tulane.