

WALKING IN SOLIDARITY

"No More Silence about Domestic Violence". This was the clear message sent out by over 200 people who were part of the Solidarity March and Rally against Domestic Violence organised on Sunday, 7th December 2008, by We Can Campaign - Tamil Nadu and The Prajnya Trust as part of The Prajnya 16 Days Campaign Against Gender Violence.

There was a lot of enthusiasm and excitement in the air as batches of students from Madras Christian College, Loyola, Stella, Ethiraj and Hindu College streamed in near the Triumph of Labour Statue on the Marina and got into their rally gear. They all joined in to put their efforts together and assert that "Equal relationships are violence-free."

The Solidarity March, which was flagged off from Netaji Statue on the Marina Beach and culminated with a pledge, saw participation from a cross-section of society - College students, teachers, NGO representatives and members of the general public, of all ages and sizes.

The 200-odd marchers vowed to raise their voices in protest and act against gender violence henceforth, aptly in front of Gandhi Statue, Though it was a steady, silent march without the usual slogan-shouting, the well-organised contingent in black T-shirts, carrying thought-provoking banners and placards, attracted a lot of attention from the Sunday evening crowds at the beach and created a definite buzz among the onlookers. The hallmark of the rally was that there was equally zealous participation by men and women, with one man carrying a poster that read, "REAL men don't hit their wives".

While it is often easy to wash one's hands off these issues or even refuse to acknowledge their existence, it takes a certain amount of courage and conviction to go out on to the streets and take a public stance. This is exactly what the marchers at the Marina demonstrated by taking their message across to others and choosing to end their weekend meaningfully.



The Solidarity March and Rally against domestic violence on the Marina
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Jayashree, all of 5 years, carrying a powerful message against gender violence at the rally



Rallyists taking the pledge to end gender violence at Gandhi statue, Marina Beach