

1 Billion Rising - The Flash Mob That Shook the Capital

Francesca Di Folco (March 01, 2013)



From Trinità dei Monti to the Colosseum, passing through Piazza di Spagna, Piazza del Popolo and Piazza Santa Maria Liberatrice, up to the Mazzini bridge: Rome joins the thousands of "tsunami rosa" for the collective dance organized by New York playwright Eve Ensler, featuring the choreography of "Break the Chain" which brings billions of people, from almost 200 countries, into the streets to celebrate the rebellion, courage and power of thousands of women in the world that are victimized, harassed or raped, in order to break the chain of violence.

Dancing to launch a strong signal against the grasp of violence.

Twirling to free oneself from the chains of false loves.

Striking the air with delicate, yet determined movements to serenely enjoy one's own existence.

Passion, strength, red ribbons and hands held high, signs, drums...

It is in this way that over a billion men and women in every corner of the earth spent their



Valentine's Day, giving life to ["One Billion Rising."](#) [2] the worldwide flash mob, in order to put a stop to violence, physical abuse, genital mutilation, incest and sexual slavery.

These "tsunami rosa" have inundated the piazzas around the world on February 14th, V-Day, where V stands not only for Valentine, but also Victory and Vagina, the planetary movement founded by [Eve Ensler](#) [3], author of [The Vagina Monologues](#) [4], in which the female body is used and branded by women themselves in order to say "enough."

Ensler is a renowned playwright, poet, screenwriter and director from New York. Jewish-born, she had a difficult childhood, marked by physical abuses perpetrated by her father and the silence of her mother, which drove her to run away from home countless times and embrace the feminist cause in the environment of the struggle against abuse.

The Monologues, a work written in 1996 and awarded the Obie Award in 1997, were translated in 35 languages and performed on the Broadway stage by high-caliber actresses including Susan Sarandon, Glenn Close, Melanie Griffith and Winona Ryder, as well as Kate Winslet and Cate Blanchett in London.

This theatrical work gives life to: V-Day against women's violence.

With 189 countries around the world, over 70 cities in Italy and 13 thousand women's organizations involved, there are millions of women and men that have endorsed this event, from the Dalai Lama to the pacifist Vandana Shiva, from Yoko Ono to Robert Redford, from Charlize Theron to Anne Hathaway, Jessica Alba to Italian politicians like Nichi Vendola and Bersani.

The capital of the "Belpaese" has been spangled with pink skies, giving life to the earthquakes in which women have felt themselves generating a wave capable of winding from piazza Santa Maria Liberatrice, continuing to Piazza di Spagna, passing under the Arch of Costantine by the Colosseum, reaching the Mazzini bridge, to finish at the [International House of Women](#) [5].

i-Italy participated in the excitement of the feminists in Piazza di Spagna.

The energy is so high, you can feel in the air and breathe in their desire to say "stop to abuse."

"I am not a victim but when a woman undergoes violence, it is always a personal issue," says Ilde, "and it's as if it had happened to me..."

"We are here to bring out strength, we are free and determined," shouts Renata.

Hands high, well in sight, palms open in want of touching the world, index-fingers up to show charisma and the power to block the flood of violence... It starts with a flash mob!

Francesca, Alessandra, Lorena, Serena all dance to the rhythm of "Break the Chain," they are many and unrestrained...

Real-life testimonies of problematic lives.

Longing to win the battle against indifference.

Powered by the desire to be heard...

The same steps, the same charge, they march in unison...

"It took a lifetime to learn the choreography," says Patrizia, "but what's important is being here, for what this flash mob means, for the value of freedom it brings along with it."

The ambience is pure adrenaline...

The Roman feminists move to the rhythm of drums, rattles, baby carriages with phrases like "a little woman against violence"...

We catch a glimpse of a small dog, Flash, with an enormous red ribbon around its neck, and its owner Giulia reveals she had spruced it up because, "like her, from today on we can say 'I no longer



dance alone."

"We are here to instill courage and battle against the violations of human rights," notes Maria Grazia, "it suffices to put your head down, it's enough to react and the word to start with is - awareness - of one's own riches and potential"...

For some, violence has crawled under their skin. Such is the case of Eugenia, 61 years old, 23 of those years having been beaten by her ex-husband: "I've experienced both physical and psychological abuse but I have made it, and I am here to say to all women that they can make it too."

Thousands stand at the height of the Trinità dei Monti and the flash mob repeats over and over under the legendary Spanish steps...

To symbolize the acquisition of a new dignity of women, the triumph of the rebellion, the certainty of demolishing the reign of violence...
It's a never-ending celebration ...

Brunella from the International House of Women, first in line in front of la Barcaccia, the Fountain of the Old Boat, holds a banner, "One billion rising, strike, I dance, I rise," and shouts the slogan continuously...

"A billion women raped is an atrocity. A billion women dancing is a revolution," Silvia greets us with Eve Ensler's phrase.

These days, the news' crime columns extend daily over the international and national planes...

The 14th of February, on the dot, we saw violence perpetrated against women for the umpteenth time, when Oscar Pistorius, noted runner, was accused of his girlfriend's homicide. The model, Reeve Steenkamp, entered the olympian's villa to surprise him, but instead fell victim of man's blind jealousy...

The same date of Valentine's Day is also, in Italy, one that brings attention to the absurd death of Giuseppine di Fraia. First, she was run over by her husband, him claiming it happened "accidentally," an incident witnessed by a few, incredulous eyes. Later, as an excuse to bring her to the hospital, he set her on fire in a field...

Giuseppine is the 124th victim from 2012 to the present. The eight, only in 2013.

[Luciana Littizzetto](#) [6] expressed her personal notion of love at the San Remo Music Festival...

"In Italy, on average every 2 days, a man kills a woman, a partner, a wife, an ex, because he considers her his property, because he does not conceive of the fact that a woman belongs to herself, that she is free to live how she wishes, is free to fall in love with someone else, and we are often naive, we give up everything for love."

"Yet love with violence and beating isn't worth a damn thing, love with slaps and punches is like freedom within a prison..."

"A man that beats you, doesn't love you...let's get this through our heads, save it onto the hard drive..."

"We want to believe he loves us?...Okay, then he doesn't love us well...this isn't love..."

"A man that hits is always an asshole and we need to understand that right away, from the first slap because soon after will follow the second, the third, and the fourth..."

Love makes us happy and fills our hearts, it doesn't break our ribs, it doesn't leave our faces bruised...



We tend to think we have seven lives like cats, no, we only have one, let's not throw it away..."

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- [1] <http://www.iitaly.org/files/ilflashmobcontrolaviolenzasulledonnearom1362161591jpeg>
- [2] <http://onebillionrising.org/>
- [3] <http://www.eveensler.org/>
- [4] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Vagina_Monologues
- [5] <http://www.casainternazionaledelledonne.org/index.php/it/home>
- [6] <http://www.lucianalittizzetto.it/>