

thINKingDANCE

Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation



Photo: University of North Texas

One Billion Rising: Can Dance Make a Difference?

by Lynnette Young Overby

Eve Ensler, the author of *the Vagina Monologues*, launched the *One Billion Rising* campaign to mark the 15th Anniversary of V Day – a global movement to stop violence against women and girls. The goal of V Day is to educate and change social attitudes and behaviors resulting in violence against women. The 2013 V Day event, *One Billion Rising*, used dance as the vehicle for enlightenment and social change. With one out of every three women affected by violence, the victims equal one billion plus. Representatives from every country, city, town and community in the world were encouraged to participate.

For this global event, Tena Clark composed the song *Break the Chain* and choreographer Debbie Allen created movements to be performed as a flash mob. Accessing both online, groups all over the world created their own versions (although some created their own dances from scratch). Dance, an art form needing only willing bodies, facilitated movement and, in this case, a song, easily served as a vehicle for expression of deeply meaningful social situations and issues.

From the Philippines, to Turkey, to Bangladesh, women in over two hundred countries took part. In Philadelphia, dancers performed in Love Park, at 18th and Spring Garden and other locations.

Dance and the Child International,* a nonprofit that promotes the growth and development of dance for children and youth internationally, contributed three dances in the US. A dance for peace was performed by Anne Green Gilbert's Kaleidoscope Dance; other dances were performed by Amy Margraf-Jacobson's group in Orem, Utah and Mary Lynn Babcock's group from Denton, Texas. Access the [YouTube link](#) to view these dances.

Watching the uploaded YouTube videos of dancers from around the world, I am struck by the dynamic power of danced expression. Dance as an art form is accessible and available to people of all ages, and abilities. The simple V Day dance, costumed in red and black, with raised arms, uplifting steps and forceful movements demonstrated that dance can be artistic, educational and empowering. The waves of empowerment permeate the space both in the dancer's communities and worldwide via the internet.

So, can dance make a difference? I am sure you will agree that dance can build awareness and educate the masses about important social issues. This soon-to-become- annual event, *One Billion Rising*, gives us hope.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2QCBNAW6kV0>

<http://onebillionrising.org/blog/entry/let-debbie-allen-teach-you-the-steps-to-the-break-the-chain-choreography>

<http://www.vday.org/about/more-about/eveensler>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KYS3NinY4Cc&feature=share>

<http://www.bizjournals.com/atlanta/news/2013/02/14/slideshow-one-billion-rising-in-atlanta.html>

<http://youtu.be/KKQYRNV11r8>

*The author is on the Board of Directors of this organization.

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