

# Racism will stay until people see it's inside

By Barbara Turrill

Once, when I was living in Toledo, Ohio, I was sexually assaulted by a barber and I made the decision to report what had happened to the police.

After repeating my story several times to various officials, I was referred to a small room on

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the second floor. The sign on the office door said "Personal Assault — Walk Right In."

A week of watching and attending a symposium (which didn't happen) on racism (that did), as well as reading the *Catch It* Public Forum of the Feb. 18-24 issue, as well as noting the process behind the outside evaluation of the University's affirmative Action office, has left me feeling as if I have just walked through the above-mentioned door.

I am being continually asked

to believe that whites, both as individuals and in groups, are committed to working on the issue of racism, or trying to, in the face of curious and bitter events: extremely low attendance at many, if not all, of the symposium presentations, such as Dr. Cole's lecture, Dianna Kale's workshop, and the Native American Student Union panel on the Native American perspective.

A film sponsored by MEChA was canceled, but other than a group of seven people that had prearranged to attend, I saw only three, maybe four people waiting at the door, and they left after five minutes.

I saw flyers up about Angela Davis' talk, but only because I sat in the lobby of Lawrence Hall for 45 minutes waiting for the film.

My ethnic background is English, Welsh and French; white. What has become blatantly clear is that if my understanding of what racism is, is limited to lip service, attending

Unlearning Racism workshops or showing up every four years to hear Angela Davis, then I have no understanding at all.

When I asked Steve Hoyt, ASUO vice president — and one of the few members of the ASUO who attended NASU's panel discussion — how the racism symposium was organized, he responded defensively by asking, what did I expect the ASUO to do, contact all the student unions whenever they decided to have a symposium?

Why is that even a question? And isn't this the heart of the problem — not even to realize that anything is wrong with how a group is going about its daily business?

The second part of the problem then becomes, how do whites move off that very captivating square of guilt, defensiveness, fear, ignorance and helplessness, toward informed, responsible and active awareness?

This is not a problem that lies just with the ASUO, but with the Women's Center,

GALA, the Affirmative Action office, the office of the President, the Eugene City Council ... the list is almost endless.

I have watched children, lovers, friends, collectives and small businesses be literally torn apart by not understanding that racism is a problem that brutally reflects the pain and fear of those who assume they are "in control," and that then is unconsciously expressed out-

ward.

There are answers, and I would be very willing to talk with any individual or group to share what I've learned from my own experience of being personally active.

Please contact me by writing to P.O. Box 581, Eugene, Ore., 97440.

Barbara Turrill is a University student majoring in anthropology and ethnic studies.

# AIDS stops being 'us vs. them' with education, understanding

By Robin Schaefer

A few weeks ago I was informed that a friend of mine was in the hospital "dying of AIDS." I waited for more information, hoping it was a very bad rumor.

Two days later, the "rumor" was confirmed. My friend had contracted meningitis in late October of last year. When it would not go away, tests were taken. The reason the illness remained? AIDS.

After being told of the veracity of my friend's illness, I was very upset. I wanted to know more. How could I best help my friend, and also understand the ramifications, implications

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and pure pain that I felt? I needed to know facts, yet also to have someone understand the emotional, human feelings I was going through. That is why I called the Willamette AIDS Council. I was not disappointed.

The person I talked to spent over an hour on the phone with me. We discussed everything from the mental spirit of the AIDS victims, alternative therapy and outreach groups, to the beautiful, sunny day outside and living life to its fullest. I'd like to thank the Willamette AIDS Council for taking the time to not only inform, but also to care.

I cried a lot that day and the person I spoke with understood all the levels of interaction that I needed. I wrote a letter to my friend that night. I expressed my concern, my love, my support and my hopes for his mental strength. I mailed it the next morning.

My friend died two days later. My friend was 33 years old. My friend never received the letter.

So, my friend, now I sit here with a glass of champagne in my hand, trying to celebrate your life while mourning your

death. Here's to you:

Your life was shorter than many expected.

Than any expected.

And in the end it was difficult.

For that I am sorry.

But you filled your days with the joys life has to offer.

What more can any of us ask?

You touched my life and I am better for it.

Thank you.

I hope you learned the lessons that life had for you.

Carry them with you to the next.

May those you have left behind learn the lessons you have taught.

And live them through this life.

So, my friend, rest now. Recuperate and nurture your soul. Rejuvenate your spirit.

And when you are ready, may our paths cross again.

Until then, from me to you, I love you.

My message to the Willamette AIDS Council: Thank you. May you continue to inform and help people as you have me.

This is not an "us vs. them" problem, no matter who constitutes the "us and them." AIDS affects us all. Protect yourself. Protect those you care for enough to become involved with sexually. Recognize that the phrase "it can't happen to me" only means something when you act to ensure it won't.

Today, AIDS has such a social stigma that the people it affects seem to get lost in the controversy. But it is the people that make AIDS such a tragedy, people like my friend, my friend's parents and family, people like me and people like you. All of society is, or will be, affected by AIDS.

We all will face the pain of death because of AIDS. We, as a society, must set aside moralizing and condemnation. We must focus our attention on saving lives, on saving countless hearts from breaking. We

are talking about people, not numbers, not statistics. And it is for people, ourselves, that we must fight. Fight for our lives.

Robin Schaefer is a senior International Studies major. She is president of the University's Pre-Law Society and vice-president of the University chapter of Golden Key National Honor Society.

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P.O. Box 3159, Eugene, Oregon 97403

The Oregon Daily Emerald is published Monday through Friday except during exam week and vacations by the Oregon Daily Emerald Publishing Co., at the University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon.

The Emerald is operated independently of the University with offices on the third floor of the Erb Memorial Union and is a member of the Associated Press.

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