

# Panel discussion focuses on rape

Police find it difficult to prosecute date rape cases

By Polly Campbell  
Emerald Reporter

"Sex Crimes and the Judicial System" was the topic of a discussion by a panel of experts and interested audience members Wednesday afternoon in the EMU Forum Room.

"Most of the rape cases that happen are not stranger to stranger but instead they are people who know each other," said panel member Doug Harclerod, Lane County District Attorney.

Date rape is an increasing problem everywhere especially on a college campus, said Suzie Hunter, crime prevention officer of the Office of Public Safety.

Because of the unique living conditions of coed dorms and other situations, men and women are constantly in very close proximity to each other, Hunter said.

It is extremely difficult to try a date rape case, said detective Dennis Williams of the Eugene Police Department, and a panel member.

"Often times date rape cases are called in to the police department three or four days later by a victim who wasn't completely sure if she wanted to report the crime," Williams said.

The delay in reporting the rape makes it difficult to get the physical evidence needed to corroborate the victim's story, Williams said.

"It helps a lot if there is physical proof," Harclerod said. "If we have something besides the word of the woman and the suspect it's better."

Collecting the evidence can also be a traumatic experience for the victim, said panel member Karen Kerber, an emergency room nurse at Sacred Heart General Hospital.

Kerber is one of six nurses at Sacred Heart who is specially trained to conduct a medical exam after a rape has occurred.

"We try to make it as easy as possible for the woman," Kerber said. "It's not a very nice thing, but we do our best."

"It is particularly difficult to help the woman in a date rape case," said Marty Bullard, coordinator of the victim/witness volunteer service.

"Often the women are feeling guilty and confused," Bullard said. "Other people may blame her. The suspect may even try to talk her out of pressing charges."

After a date rape experience it may be very difficult for the woman to make decisions in the future or even commit to someone in a relationship, Bullard said.

Common myths about rape make it difficult to take steps to prevent it, said Bev Collins, community service specialist for the Eugene Police Department.

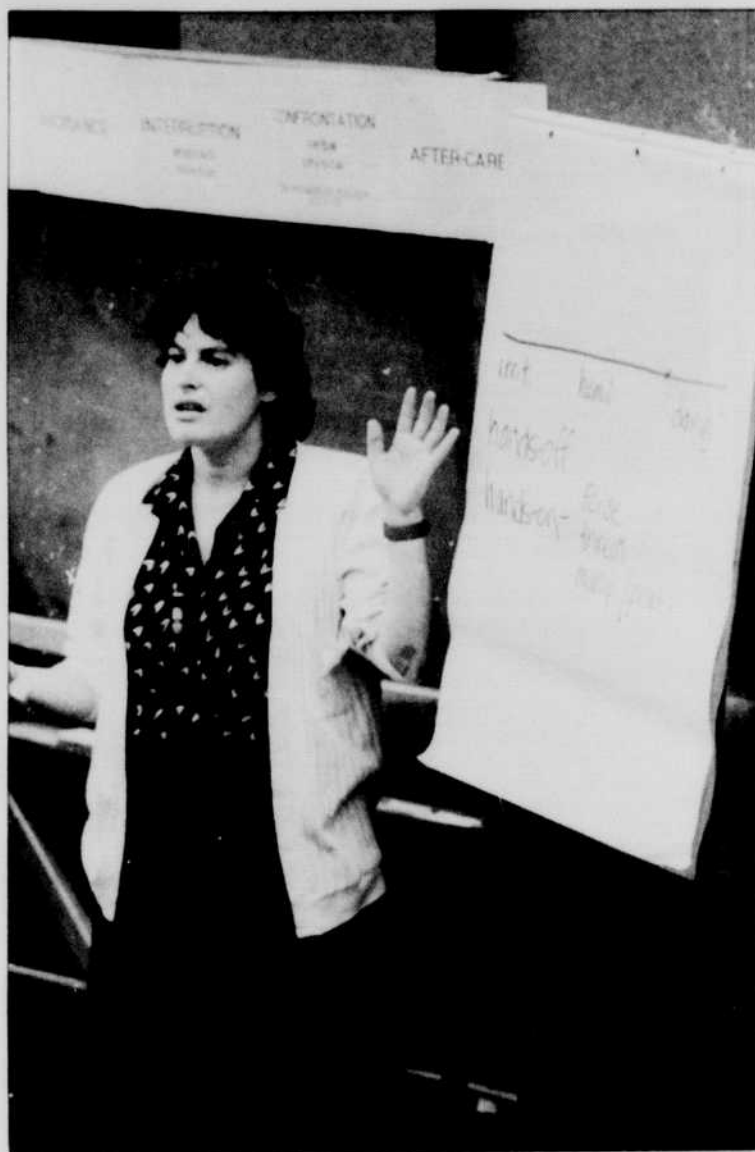


Photo by Steve Carl

Nadia Telsey addresses audience members during a panel discussion on rape Wednesday in the EMU Forum room.

"For prevention we have to get rid of the myths of what a rapist is going to look like, where the rape is going to happen, and what time of day it will happen in," Bullard said.

More and more women are following a restrictive path, Bullard said. Women travel between home and work and try to avoid going other places alone.

"We try to teach women to have their keys out, park in lighted areas, and have their house key ready at the door so that they don't have to fumble around in the dark," Bullard said.

Rape prevention education needs to be directed toward grade school children, Bullard said. Rape awareness needs to become a part of everyone's life, she said.

"Over the years what I have seen in cases that have come through the district attorney's office is that those people who have been under the influence of alcohol, illicit drugs, or prescription drugs and alcohol release their normal inhibitions and more violent crimes occur as well as sexual activity," Harclerod said.

"One place to make a significant impact for yourself is by

not being under the influence, because the first thing that you lose is your judgment and that can get you into trouble," Hunter said.

## Creating a Rape-free Environment Week Continues...Today...


### "Sexual Assault 101"

a presentation by voices of Eugene a workshop open to all  
noon, EMU Forum Room

and  
Dr. Andrea Parrot presents:

### "SEX AND POWER: the balancing act of the 90's"

A talk about  
sexual communication  
and relationships



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Dr. Parrot of Cornell is a well-known sexuality educator and expert in the field of acquaintance rape.



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### Correction

A photo caption appearing in Wednesday's Emerald mis-identified architecture GTF Haig Townsend and graduate student Raymond Todd. The Emerald regrets the error.

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