

University

Women's celebration fights image

Group strives for ethnic diversity

By Alice Wheeler
Emerald Managing Editor

Plans for this year's Women's Spring Celebration on April 27-29 are well under way even as the group endeavors to shed its history of cancellations and boycotts due to charges of racism.

Members of the Women's Task Force, which sponsors the celebration (previously called the Women's Spring Symposium) every year, said they have endeavored to incorporate events for women of all backgrounds and nationalities.

"We are planning on using the celebration for a cultural exchange," said Janice Wright, WTF member. "We are trying to get a variety of women from a variety of cultures involved."

Wright said the idea is to expose people to new ideas and expose them to what other women are doing.

"It is a celebration by, for and about women," said Tessa Hanover, WTF member.

The symposium was created in 1977 by then ASUO President Jan Oliver, current director of the University's Office of Multicultural Affairs. Oliver said the original purpose of the event was to "Provide a forum for women to come together, discuss issues and celebrate women's lives."

Thirteen years later the Women's Spring Celebration is a weekend-long event celebrating the diverse roles women play in our society.

Current WTF coordinator Jasmine Prezeau got involved in the celebration last year after she stopped into a WTF meeting and saw that all the women involved were white.

"They weren't purposefully excluding groups," Prezeau said. But she explained that the "feminist movement in Eugene is a white women's movement."

Oliver agrees. "The majority of women are white, so most feminists are white," she said, countering. "Women of color

have played a critical role in feminist issues."

"It (the symposium) has had a great deal of controversy," Oliver said. Part of the problem is that white women have lacked strong role models and leadership in racism issues. Ol-

'If you are going to represent women you have to represent all women.'

— Jasmine Prezeau

iver said.

"If you are going to represent women you have to represent all women. All women are included in the title 'Women,'" Prezeau said. And that is what the WTF is attempting to do.

"We are making a concerted effort to include ethnic student groups on campus and get them involved. Not in a patronizing way, but asking for their support and their participation," Prezeau said.

"We have gotten a really positive response this year," she said.

Hanover said WTF sent out feedback forms to student groups, asking them what they want to see in the celebration.

Although the events have not all been finalized, the tentative schedule includes an interesting variety of events. There will be a spirituality panel discussion, with representatives from most major religions, and a women in politics discussion, which will include sessions on women in Central American politics.

The weekends events will start with a Take Back the Night Celebration in Amazon Park, an artwork dedication and a barbecue-potluck dinner.

Also scheduled are women's cultural movies, poetry readings, story telling, a Native American play and other discussions concerning women in society.

"So far the projected schedule is pretty inclusive," Prezeau said. "It's been a con-

scious effort to include women of color."

"We still need more speakers, and more volunteers would be great," Wright said. "You can get (academic) credit for working here."

Women's studies practicum credits are available to students working on the task force each

term.

"We are providing something for the community," Wright said. "I am learning things the University doesn't offer."

For more information about WTF or the Spring Celebration, call 346-4095 or stop by the Women's Center in EMU Suite 3.

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