

## OPINION

# Tyson case reinforced stereotypes



## THE FINE PRINT

BY CARRIE DENNETT

Having already suffered through the William Kennedy Smith rape trial, I wasn't planning on actively following the Mike Tyson trial, other than picking up bits of information from the nightly news.

However, as the trial began to wrap up, I got sucked in by the disturbing messages that the media kept playing over and over.

One of the worst was the Tyson camp's argument — part of its "creep" defense — that Tyson was such a lewd, crude kind of guy that "she should have known what he wanted."

Excuse me? Even if the survivor had been privy to some of his come-ons (a fact that was both alleged and disputed by varying witnesses), so what? Maybe it isn't the smartest thing in the world to go out with a guy who has hurled crude suggestions your way, but since when does naivety (or even stupidity) justify the violent act of rape?

The answer is simple. It doesn't. No means no. Any questions?

Descriptions of the rape survivor also said a lot. I believe "sweet" was used about every other word.

Yes indeed, she was the "perfect victim," according to a Feb. 10 *Newsweek* article, in contrast with Smith's accuser, Patricia Bowman.

This "perfect victim" is a scholarship student at a Roman Catholic college and the "all-American girl."

Patricia Bowman, in contrast, was (gasp!) a single mother who (gasp!) went to bars sometimes and (heavens!) had a few drinks.

Excuse me again, but I thought rape was a crime of

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violence. So what's with the perfect victim hype?

I hate to delve into reality, but most women aren't "sweet," young Catholic college students. Every woman is different, and the statistics show that one out of three of these diverse women will be raped at least once in her lifetime, and most of these violent acts will be committed by husbands, boyfriends, dates or acquaintances.

One newspaper article said of Tyson's conviction, "It didn't matter that the woman was in his hotel room at 2 a.m. or whether he was sexually explicit with her and other contestants at the Miss Black America pageant."

Yes it did. Or it would have, if his victim hadn't been so "pure."

A recent piece by *Los Angeles Times* columnist Jim Murray asked how Tyson could have been so out of touch with reality as to rape an "18-year-old beauty queen with impeccable academic credentials."

"This was no bimbo from the pages of the supermarket tabloids — no groupie," Murray goes on to write. "This was a girl of such spotless record even the defense lawyers couldn't find witnesses to mar it."

This sentiment spells out all too well the beliefs of all too many people: Sexually experi-

enced women can't be raped.

When prosecutor Greg Garrison was asked what his most effective evidence was, he said, "That beautiful 18-year-old kid with a pure heart. She's a young person with a lot of courage."

That was his best evidence? So what happens to the rape survivor who is older, maybe has been around the block a few times, and is not so pure?

This scenario is more common than one might think, especially because 80 percent of women aged 20 to 29 have had sex. And almost 90 percent of college women have had sex.

To top that off, there are many single mothers, many women who enjoy going to a bar now and again, many women who enjoy flirting and many women who have had a few too many drinks on occasion. These women are not "asking for it." Rape hurts these women, emotionally and physically, just as much as the so-called "perfect victim."

So, what happens to these women? Will they all go the way of Patricia Bowman? Will the juries believe they "asked for it"? Or will they even bother to face a courtroom at all?

I don't know whether the society, the courts, the media or all three are responsible for these absurdities. As a member of the media myself, I cringe at media-bashing, but I call it when I see it.

I was appalled by what I saw on *Nightline* a few Fridays ago when they referred to the Tyson trial as "another in a long line of misfortunes for the boxer."

A misfortune? I'm sorry, but being hit by a car is a misfortune. Suffering the death of a loved one is a misfortune. Being hauled off to court for raping a woman is getting what you deserve.

Carrie Dennett is an associate editor for the *Emerald*.

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The Oregon Daily Emerald is published by a non-profit corporation which operates independently of the University. The primary purpose of the ODE is to provide education and training for students in all aspects of newspaper operation by serving a campus audience with news, editorial and advertising content.

The Editor of the ODE, who reports to a ten-person volunteer Board of Directors, has responsibility for all editorial operations and all editorial content of the newspaper. Term of office is June 9, 1992, to June 7, 1993, and is preceded by an orientation period from April 15 to June 8. This is a paid position.

Interested parties should pick up an application packet, which includes a job description, at the ODE front desk in Suite 300 EMU or call 346-5511 for more information.

Completed applications must be returned to the ODE Board of Directors by 5:00 p.m., Monday, March 2, 1992. An individual will be selected by the Board by April 14, 1992.

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## LETTERS

### OCA twist

The charges of name-calling and changing of meaning have been flying between the OCA and the "liberals" since the beginning of the OCA's petition-signing campaign to stop the influence of homosexuality as morally OK and socially OK in all branches of the state government.

It isn't uncommon in politics that two sides call each other names or distort meaning, but the OCA's twisting of words and vagueness of its real intent is sickening. To deprive someone of his freedom in this country to choose a way of life and how he lives it is denying everyone's right to Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.

The biblical evidence of Christianity to prove homosexuality is morally wrong is unempirically based and has infringed on our right to freedom of religion and not to be prosecuted for religious or atheist beliefs.

The OCA has begun a crusade to prosecute those people who choose to live a way of life that is within their right and to prosecute those with different religious views.

This can only be viewed as

forcing a religious ideology onto others and it is unconstitutional. As an American, I have a right to choose my religious beliefs, but not to force them upon others.

Let's open our eyes to this flagrant violation of the Constitution and the OCA's objectives to deprive us of our rights to choose.

Jon J. Eggers  
Student

### Gratitude

Thank you Andy Harris (*ODE*, Feb. 11)! You wrote exactly what we've been arguing all along. The University is facing a huge funding crisis and it looks like the situation will only get worse, with no thanks to students like Henry Oberson.

Congress is currently finalizing the bill to reauthorize the Higher Education Act of 1965. This happens only once every five years. What Oberson doesn't seem to realize is that Oregon needs to have students lobbying Congress in Washington, D.C., March 5-8 for USSA's Legislative Conference.

"Re-authorization" includes issues such as: financial aid funding — grants vs. loans, di-

rect student-lending legislation (Simon-Durenberger Bill), higher-education funding, Pell Grant entitlements, minority-scholarship programs, etc.

USSA works actively and effectively on these issues. Oregon's congressmen need to hear from Oregon's students; it is only once a year that we make those personal lobby visits. Oberson, Briggs and the Constitution Court have made it very difficult for Oregon's student leaders to get this word to D.C.

This is a critical time in Oregon's history; our state will soon face another round of budget cuts. As the chair of the Northwest Region of USSA, and as a person who has spent all of her student-vacation time the past two years (in nylons) working for University students, to keep their education accessible, it saddens me to think all of my education on these issues is going to waste because of a "one-word semantical problem." Which was fixed (in the form of a resolution) during my "famed" trip to L.A.

Sheila Stickle  
Student

**THE FAR SIDE** By GARY LARSON

Theater of the Gods