

Women's services warranted

By Susan Lien

I think Paul Van Sickle said it best (*ODE*, May 18) when he responded to Michael Endicott's commentary (*ODE*, May 1). "Please don't bore us with the oppression of the white man," Van Sickle pleaded. There are, however, questions, comments and issues that have failed to receive exploration.

Troubled by the question, "Are all men potential rapists?" Endicott rants and raves about funds that support "very nearly nothing for men." That assertion itself is scandalous. Although the question bothered me as well, it is not merely the "level of feminist conditioning" that entertains this thought. Women cannot distinguish between rapists and others by how they act, dress, look or speak. Seventy to 80 percent of women who are raped are raped by someone they know. Everyday, women confront decisions about whether to go on a date, use a public restroom, go out at night, ride the subway, stay on an elevator when a man enters, wear headphones, or wear certain types of shoes to avoid dangerous situations. Women alter their lives to avoid danger. Is this what you call feminist conditioning, Michael?

Objectification begins with pornography, the media, television, and music videos. Outlets such as these convey a sense of approval or consent of violent acts against women. These ways of life — cat calls, jokes, unwanted attention, prostitution, and even beauty contests — encourage violence against women. At the very least, they assist and justify the beating, rape and murder of women.

I entered the University with high ambitions. I, too, did not know I would be entering a hostile and threatening environment. I never considered the hazards I could face if I jogged alone. I

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thought, "Hey, you and I, Michael, we're just the same. We're just people."

But I have to carry a whistle when I take a walk at night or arrange to have my friends accompany me. I have to educate myself on how I can prevent rape. I have to read warning signs inside women's facilities about rapists, signs warning me to watch my step because I could be next. I have to listen to messages tainted with sexual noises on my answering machine. I have to delete e-mail messages that contain explicit sexual and violent connotations. "I like you in that, like I like you to scream," appeared on my screen once. The invisible force, manifested but surreptitious, leaves me helpless, victimized and unsafe even in my own residence, because statistically, more assaults occur in the woman's home. Now tell me again: why you are so angry, Michael?

I would like to clarify misconceptions concerning the organization Saferide. I ask, have you ever felt fearful for your safety at any time while trying to get home? I believe most males have not felt this way "simply because they are male." After waiting and waiting, women finally came together and formed a transportation service solely for women. The purpose of a women-only service is this: If a woman feels she is in danger and needs to flee a situation, it would be contradictory if she were driven off — or in the same vehicle with — a man. Any man would

represent a part of the environment she had just attempted to elude. In order to maintain a comfortable atmosphere for both the driver and the passenger, neither are male. Males, however, may dispatch and work in the office. The Office of Public Safety is available to escort males who feel that their safety is in jeopardy. In addition, the Designated Driver Shuttle picks up intoxicated people from drinking establishments upon request, and the service is free for University students and faculty.

Perhaps what is most disconcerting is the level at which Endicott attacks these few benefits for women. It is in his power to form an ASUO men's group, but for what reason? As a refuge for certain men, fine, but as a disparagement or compensation for women's groups, no. He does not seem to understand the severity of violence and oppression against women. Although white males statistically bear the highest rate for successful suicides, women are far more likely to attempt it. Perhaps they feel worthless and repressed in relationships in which they have no economic, social or emotional power to leave. Perhaps a woman who attempts suicide is surviving a rape, molestation or sexual assault. Perhaps she is a lesbian living in an even more intolerant world that denies her adoptive, martial and living rights. Perhaps having been beaten all her life, she doesn't know the difference and can't live with herself any longer. Maybe one day women will be more successful.

With all the advantages bestowed on white males, it's a wonder why Endicott doesn't just accept them and be grateful, instead of "bitching and moaning" like women are said to do.

Susan Lien is a sophomore majoring in biology.

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