

# Men's issues still misunderstood

By Michael E. Endicott

Guest Columnist

In response to Susan Lien's commentary (ODE, July 11): In my commentary (ODE, May 1) I said nothing about rape or objectification by the media, and I made no judgments about women's services. I stated the facts as they exist and made very pointed comments about the mentality required to ask the question "Are all men potential rapists?" I also pointed out the inequality inherent in spending hundreds of thousands of dollars on women-specific programs and support structures while making no real effort on behalf of the men on this campus. In fact, I implied that the combination of over zealous rape-awareness tactics that impugn the character of all men solely based on their gender, the University's support of male-exclusionary programs and the lack of University-sponsored support systems for men constituted a hostile environment for men. This has been translated into the angry, white male syndrome by people such as Susan Lien, and is the shallow reaction of ideologues who cannot see that the gender world is at least two-dimensional. Susan must have missed my commentary (ODE, May 24) in which I wrote, "I do not advocate for a reduction of financial and ideological support for women and their issues."

Susan's commentary is a study in one-dimensional, sexist thinking. She restates the dogma of victimization in the areas of rape and objectification while dutifully attacking me because she thinks I disagree.

She presents a list of risk-

## OPINION

management strategies she says are specific to women and sums up with, "Women alter their lives to avoid danger." Who does not do this? What she does not say is that men are twice as likely to be victims of violent crime, and three times as likely to be murdered. Every risk-management decision women have to make, men have to make as well, and still we are beaten, mutilated, robbed and murdered significantly more often than women. These are the things that her conditioning does not allow her to see or accept.

She says the media "convey a sense of approval or consent of violent acts against women." I agree with her on this point, but most of what she says about the subject is uncritically-accepted sexist dogma. What she does not say is that 95 percent of all people killed on television and in film are men! Our children grow up learning that men are nothing more than disposable objects, especially if a woman is in danger.

What does growing up as a disposable object mean for men? It means that as we grow older, our suicide rate increases dramatically. College-age men commit suicide at a rate six times higher than women in the same age group. As boys begin to feel the pressures of the male role and begin to express their sexuality, suicide rates explode. Women attempt suicide to get help; men attempt suicide to die because we think no help is available.

We can see plenty of examples of men as disposable objects in our society. Men account for 74 percent of the

U.S. homeless population, 95 percent of the prison population, and 94 percent of all occupational deaths. Men die of the 15 leading causes of death on average almost 2.5 times more than women. Men are far more likely to be alcoholics and drug abusers.

The last example of one-dimensional sexist thinking proffered by Susan is Saferide. Although men are twice as likely to be a victim of violent crime, if you are a male, Saferide is not for you. In fact, Saferide is because of you. You are the threat; you are guilty by gender alone. The state has an obligation to protect all of its citizens, not just women. Open Saferide. There is a way to do it that is equitable for all and meets the needs of our campus community.

This university needs some balance in how it deals with gender issues. The current situation merely reinforces the all-too-destructive stereotypes of male as perpetrator and female as victim. These stereotypes are politically expedient for people such as Susan, but they marginalize the spectrum of the male experience.

The Men's Center attempts to address some of these inequities in a male-focused, socially responsible way that addresses the fact that gender issues are multidimensional. If you are interested in becoming a member of the Men's Center or would like more information about us you may contact us at mee@gladstone or at P.O. Box 3392, Eugene, OR 97403.

Michael E. Endicott is the director of the newly forming Men's Center at the University.

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