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Disability conference attracts activist

■ **KEYNOTE:** The founder of Mobility International encourages disabled people to be proactive

By Sherry Rainey
Community Editor

An international role model for disabled people gave the keynote address at the 1996 Disability Conference on Saturday.

Susan Sygall, founder of Eugene's Mobility International, was a delegate at the International Women's Conference in China last summer. Sygall helped lead a protest when the disabled workshop she tried to attend was scheduled on the third floor of a building with no elevators.

The protest was broadcast on CNN, and the Chinese threatened to take away the only wheelchair-accessible bus provided for the conference. But after hours of negotiation, the bus was given back and the workshop was moved.

The biggest victory, Sygall said, was when Hillary Clinton mentioned the disabled women's protest in her speech at the women's conference.

During her keynote address, Sygall encouraged disabled people to be proactive. She said she believes that disabled people are just another minority and they deserve human rights.

"The disabled issue has always been a medical paradigm," she said. "Like disabled people are sick, they are the ones with the problem, so we must give them charity and Jerry Lewis.

"Now it's changing to a human rights paradigm," she said.

This human rights paradigm is evident in the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Sygall said.

"When people [from other countries] hear about the ADA, it is a beacon of light, of what is possible," she said. "We are not trying to export the ADA, but the idea of human rights-based legislation is important."

The Disability Conference consisted of four panels with discussion of disability rights in education, access and discrimination in housing, disability rights in the workplace and public accessibility.

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>
> — **Susan Sygall**
> Founder of Mobility International

The forum was free and open to the public. Also, attorneys registered for the forum earned five general CLE credits.

The following organizations sponsored the event: University of Oregon School of Law, University of Oregon Student Bar Association, Minority Law School Student Association, Lesbian and Gay Law Student Association, and Monitor: Students Advocating Human Rights.

Film focuses on human rights in East Timor

■ **ABUSE:** *Death of a Nation* documents Western involvement in human-rights violations ignored by the media

By Jennifer Carter
Student Activities Editor

The Committee for World Peace is trying to bring the horror of international human-rights violations home to the University.

Throughout the week, the student organization is showing *Death of a Nation*, a film that documents Western involvement in human-rights violations in East Timor.

East Timor, once a colony of Portugal, lies next to Indonesia and has been occupied by Indonesia since 1975.

Shin Yasui, program director for the Committee for World Peace, said the United States is responsible for minimal media coverage of an occupied East Timor. "After Indonesia invaded, coverage of East Timor dropped to virtually zero."

Yasui said that as a result of Indonesia's occupation, about one-third of East Timor's people have been killed. These deaths were partly caused by U.S. actions, he said.

"At the height of the killings ... the U.S. increased its arms trade with Indonesia," he said.

In 1991, about 250 people were killed in East Timor during a peaceful demonstration at a funeral procession. Because of media coverage of the massacre, the United States imposed sanctions on Indonesia, said Yasui.

"The U.S. imposed restraints on military training and small arms exportation to Indonesia," he said. "But we simply don't hear anything much about this in the news media."

Yasui attributed the lack of media coverage to corporate interests. "[Media coverage] is of no interest to the U.S. government and global corporations," Yasui said. "If something positive happens to East Timor, it would be counter-productive for corporations.

"It's kind of scary that some people at the top decide what people can see at home," Yasui said. "East Timorese themselves in bravery go out and protest the government. Their voices are not heard outside [East Timor], which means there's some kind of responsibility on our side."

Yasui said the film is being shown to educate people about East Timor in the hope that East Timor will someday be added to the public agenda. "Since people don't know much about East Timor, they need to get informed first," he said.

The film *Death of a Nation* is being shown Monday through Friday at 3:30 p.m. It is being shown in the Multicultural Center every day except Tuesday, when it can be seen in Cedar Room F. A discussion will follow each showing.

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by Timberlake Wertenbaker
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