

Feminism is about humanity, not domination



OPINION
Nicole Kristal
Image of feminism suffers from a bad reputation, in part because of societal misconceptions

My first apartment was a complete dump. Bass boomed through thin walls. Every time someone ran upstairs, the entire building quivered. But the most unnerving part of my living environment was not the structure of the building itself. It was living above members of the Lane Community College baseball team. At first, I tried not to prejudge them as stereotypical "dumb jocks." They wouldn't fall into that category until at least four hours later.

The first night, I slept for one hour. The baseball players played rap loudly all night long. I could audibly hear one of them refer to his girlfriend as "bitch." The next morning, my roommate and I complained to the manager.

The following evening, a few drunken team members pounded on our apartment door, screaming: "Why'd you tell on us? Why won't you party with us?" With racing hearts, we sat silently. Passively. My roommate opened the door to see what they wanted. They yelled from the floor below, "Can we see your ass?"

Later that evening, we left to walk a friend home. The drunken boys approached and entered our personal space. "Hey, don't tell anybody, but we heard you guys were lesbians," they said. I was infuriated — not because someone thought I was a lesbian, but because these boys believed lesbians were inferior. I angrily turned and with a fairly idiotic comeback yelled, "Well, you heard wrong." Then their leader, king of the ignorant, yelled, "Oh, so you will give us head then." His friends chuckled, then spit at us.

Right then I should have called the police. My roommate restrained me, claiming it would ruin our relationship with our new neighbors. God forbid! But deep down, she feared being assaulted. I did, too. I never called the police. I still regret it. Those pigs not only considered homosexu-



CHRIS HUTCHINSON/Emerald

als inferior, but the entire female gender as well.

Most of you probably read the above passage and were outraged by the actions of the baseball players. But how many of you who felt their actions were wrong label yourselves as feminists?

A major discrepancy exists concerning the definition of feminism. The Oxford English Dictionary defines feminism as the "advocacy of women's rights and sexual equality." The entry does not read, "the art of male-bashing." All those who believe that feminism combats the existence of men need to educate themselves.

Likewise, the entry does not read, "the state of being feminine." Many men who label themselves pro-woman will not label themselves feminists in fear that the title implies that they are less masculine. Men often perceive feminism as a threat because they are unclear on the definition. (Feminism's main purpose is to achieve equality,

not domination.)

Possibly, the prospect of a number of organized women in power frightens them. Possibly, the reality of a number of organized men in power since the beginning of time frightens us.

If you assume that feminism equals male-bashing, you lazily accept a stereotype about a minority's cause without really examining the issue. Do you also lazily assume that if you are African-American, you're a great dancer? That if you're Asian, you're good at math? That if you're homosexual, you convert straight people? And that if you're a Jew, you're stingy? Generalizing about these minorities results in being viewed as ignorant — we hope. Yet men and women label a moody woman as "PMS-ing."

A sympathetic man who can remove himself from his personal biases and attempt to perceive the world through a female point of view can understand the reason why the fear and anger harbored by feminists exists: Improvements have arrived slowly, and women have a right to be concerned.

The millennium approaches, and 75 percent of working women earn less than \$20,000 per year. Yet over half of the humans on this planet are women. Feminism, like any other equal rights cause, is about humanity. Ideally, everyone should receive equal treatment.

I am aware that feminism has a bad reputation, mainly because of media, societal institutions and male-bashers fighting in the name of feminism. One equal rights cause does not carry more importance than another. However, if you assume that equality has been reached, you need to educate yourself.

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LETTERS

Back burden

On May 20, Oregonians will be asked to vote on Measure 50, the legislature's alternative to the ill-conceived Measure 47. While this rewrite may lessen some of the impact of Measure 47 and clarify some of its confusing language, it does nothing to address the shift in Oregon's tax system.

Over the last several years, the tax burden in Oregon has been steadily shifting from businesses — especially large corporations — to individual taxpayers.

Measure 5 and 47, coupled with a low 6.6 percent corporate income tax, has resulted in Oregon having the lowest business tax burden in the West. This has shifted the tax burden onto the backs of working people, imposing more taxes on family budgets

while cutting funding for public services that are essential to our communities.

If you are tired of seeing public services cut and are interested in restoring tax fairness to Oregon, you can attend The Tax Fairness Now! Conference on Wednesday, May 7 at 6:30 p.m. in the Eugene Hilton. This conference, sponsored by the Lane County Labor Council, will mark the starting point for all those interested in creating a fair tax system in Oregon.

Lee Lasse
Springfield

Get involved

Have you ever wanted to get down and get dirty? Well, Streamwalk is the safe and fun alternative to all your desires. We partake in a number of fun

activities ranging from tree-planting, conducting litter cleanups along water ways, removal of non-native plant species from recreational parks, water testing, salmon restoration... the list goes on and on.

It's a lot of fun and the weather is just right, so get involved! We have weekly meetings at 6 p.m. in the EMU, Suite 1. For more information, call the OSPIRG office at 346-4377.

Gil Koresh
Environmental Studies

Great difference

Thanks to all of the *Emerald* readers and University students who turned out to participate in the 13th Annual Hunger Cleanup on April 12! It was a huge success, thanks to everyone involved!

I would like to also express my

thanks to the coalitions, endorsers, donors and media who helped us reach out to the campus and community. The time, effort and donations are all appreciated. This work has indeed made a great difference in someone's life.

We are still accepting financial contributions, which will be donated to local, national and international hunger relief causes. We are also looking for students and groups interested in being a part of the committee for next year's cleanup to make it an even bigger success.

In addition, the Hunger and Homeless project will be performing community work throughout this term. Please stop by the OSPIRG office in Suite 1 of the EMU or call 346-4357 to get involved!

Laynah Tan
Business Administration

WINNERS



President Clinton
The President struck a major victory for bipartisan politics working out a 5-year balanced budget.

Cyndi Lauper
The girl who just wanted to have fun is expecting a child in 6 months and is also touring with Tina Turner.

AT&T Users
A federal plan to help subsidize local phone companies will allow AT&T to pass some of its \$1 billion in savings on to customers.

Patrick Stewart
The *Star Trek* captain will be back in action, starring in a new *Star Trek* movie due out in the fall of 1998.

LOSERS

Donald Trump
The 50-year-old billionaire announced his almost four-year marriage to beauty queen Marla Maples is coming to an end.

Bilingual Programs
California may soon be scrapping bilingual programs for immigrants in favor of English-only programs to boost non-English speakers' job prospects.

Garry Kasparov
The Russian chess champion was defeated by an IBM supercomputer, which evened their series at one game to one.

Marilyn Manson
The self-proclaimed Satan-worshipping rock star is involved in yet another law suit — this one with the Meadowlands in New Jersey for a canceled concert.