

# Common ground found on retreat

■ Camp Lutherwood uses group discussions in an attempt to broaden participants' mindsets

By Beata Mostafavi  
Oregon Daily Emerald

A blindfolded man is unmasked to find himself in the midst of at least 25 women lined up on either side of him.

As he walks down the center, they yell and call him "a piece of meat" to show him what they experience in their lives.

This was one of the scenes at last weekend's diversity development retreat, organized in collaboration with Oregon State University.

Participants traveled to Camp Lutherwood in Cheshire for group discussions and activities that focused on topics surrounding class, race and gender. These exercises aimed to expand individuals' viewpoints on the issues and give them a better understanding of their own cultural identities and how other groups in society feel.

Dominique Beaumonté, Rashree Parsad and Nicole Steiner, a few of the retreat's participants, agreed that the trip served its purpose and have come back with broadened perspectives to offer the University.

Parsad, a junior public relations and sociology major, said the retreat taught students how to communicate social issues such as gender and class to other students on campus, and to encourage activism around these subjects.

"We learned about how to address these issues in ways that are constructive instead of deconstructive," she said.

Some activities concentrated on the level of power and privilege among African American, Caucasian, Asian, Native American and Hispanic groups.

Beaumonté, who is the director of the Black Student Union and a facilitator at the retreat, said these activities gave him a better picture of himself in relation to other groups.

"So many times we focus on white people's privileges," he said. "But from this, I saw how I personally am privileged."

Parsad added that the exercises initiated discussions where groups could unite and share their ideas about diversity issues with one another. She mentioned that issues surrounding women of color are

different from women's issues. She said these discussions made people aware that every person has a unique perspective.

"The retreat was about finding out where each individual stood on these issues," she said.

Steiner, an undeclared freshman, said she learned about different cultures and ethnic groups and has become more aware about other people's beliefs. She added that she's now more motivated to stand for other peoples issues.

"I'm more conscious about what I'm wearing, doing and saying, and I think about who it's affecting around me," she said. "And I'll be more quick to ask questions about things I don't understand instead of ignoring it."

Parsad said that classrooms should also engage in the kind of discussions held at the retreat. She added that although diversity issues are talked about in classes such as sociology and ethnic studies, they are issues that are important for every person to understand. She wished the retreat was mandatory or could have fulfilled a multicultural requirement because of the awareness it raised.

"I go to school with everyone and everyone goes to school with me, but not everyone is on the same page," she said.

At the retreat, she said, "We could express our differences and views and find a common ground."

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