

## Are women nothing more than victims?

Readers raised concerns in recent letters to the editor about a campus presentation dealing with date rape, which included methods female students could use to keep themselves safe. The readers were angry that this particular presentation seemed to focus on the victim status of women, while no mention was made of the men who need to be stopped from raping. Instead, the writers said, stopping rape was presented as something that only women can do.

The Emerald editorial board discussed this issue at length, in a sometimes heated conversation about the way rape prevention is handled in our culture and, specifically, on our campus. We, too, feel that many times too much attention is paid to women — if they were only more careful, or didn't get drunk, or didn't walk alone at night, or knew better self-defense techniques, they wouldn't get raped. The message that needs to accompany this, aimed at men — that all sexual violence must stop — gets lost in the shuffle.

Our argument became heated because there was some concern that indoctrinating a whole generation (at least) of women with the message that they could do more to stop themselves from being raped is only serving to perpetuate America's rape culture.

Women *should* be free to walk alone at night. Women *should* be able to get drunk at a party with friends, both male and female. The female members of the editorial board thought this suggestion unrealistic, and perhaps that confirms the point. Women have been trained to think that because of rapists, they have fewer rights in the world, and that's OK because it's just the way the world is. The problem is, if women continue to be taught this, our culture will never change. Women then become complicit in the idea that, well, rape just happens — and nothing can stop it.

On the other hand, dispensing common sense ideas about protecting oneself in an imperfect world (yes, in a utopia no one would rape — or steal, or murder or be greedy) should be perfectly acceptable and normal. It seems perfectly logical to tell young women that they might want to be careful of the circumstances under which they drink alcohol. It should be acceptable to teach women self-defense techniques. And in the real world, these messages somehow seem incredibly necessary. How could that be perpetuating the rape culture?

Perhaps if these messages toward women, which seem so dominant in our culture, are balanced with an equal number (or more, perhaps) of messages designed for young

men, it wouldn't feel as if women are being indoctrinated as victims. Instead of a presentation that only mentions the steps women can take to protect themselves, every one of those presentations should include some fairly complex thoughts about reciprocity, and about what happens to consensuality when a crude joke includes a line such as "Get in the truck, bitch!" If speakers and workshops only focus on self-defense and prevention, that does continue the sense of victimhood.

At the same time, it is important that the messages sent to young men are not simplistic. "Just say no" didn't work for drugs, and it can't work for rape. There is a complicated set of cultural assumptions and social norms that build the fabric of that "rape culture." Even the term itself is bandied about with such frequency that it loses its urgency and makes the topic simplistic and almost useless. Discussion of nonconsensual sex is a long conversation, and it requires both breadth and depth.

With that said, we do have to point out that our campus is trying. The Interfraternity Council and Panhellenic Council have a group, Greeks Against Rape, which organizes presentations and forums to raise aware-

ness on campus. Most of these programs are aimed at women, but the IFC does try to arrange content just for men.

The IFC works together with the ASUO Women's Center on "Take Back the Night," the annual event focusing energy and effort on reducing sexual violence. And the Women's Center, while they work extensively on "Take Back the Night," has a programming committee that is trying to find or develop programming specifically for men, in order to reduce the victim mentality that some efforts aimed at women seem to sustain.

Lori Brown with the Women's Center said that while she understands the need to focus rape awareness on men, it can be difficult to get men to attend events. Men talk to other men a lot more easily about the subject, Brown said, and the Women's Center is working on developing a peer educator intern program, where male students could do peer-to-peer awareness programs that might be more effective.

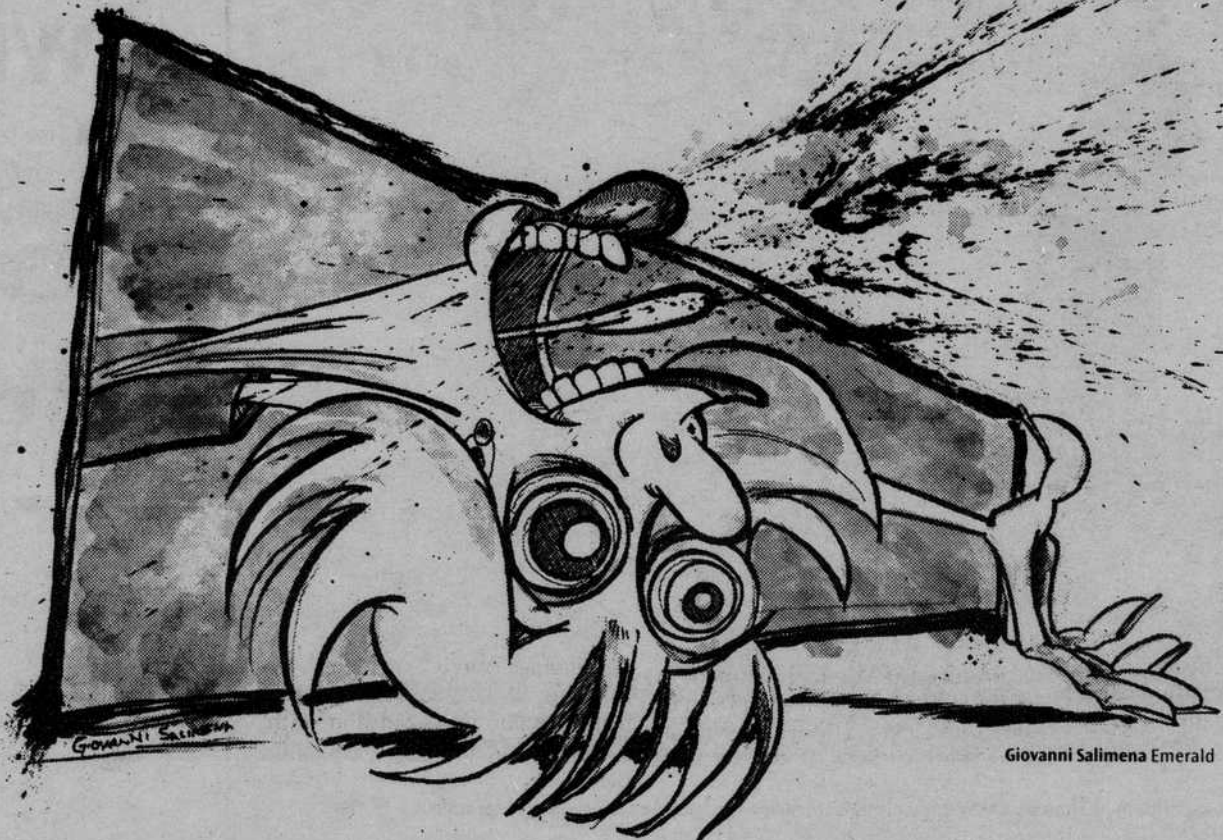
We think these programs are great. We applaud the effort to get men more involved in stopping sexual violence. After all, most of the time men are the perpetrators. There is much men can do culturally to reduce the social mentality that allows rape. It would be

much more efficient to get men to stop raping than to rely on women to be afraid and protect themselves at every moment.

But the University could step up to the plate a little more. Why not spend the money to make Saferide (or something similar to that service) more accessible to more students during more hours? When attacks are happening on or near campus, get information out to every student more often and more quickly. Design a seminar or a freshman class that deals with sexual violence and reciprocity that is required for students to graduate — the philosophy department's "Love and Sex" class might be a great place to start.

The community should keep in mind that sexual violence presentations done in conjunction with any University office must be two-sided. We should stop allowing *only* women to be preached at about rape. Because as long as speakers come to campus and do nothing but tell women they should be more careful if they don't want to be raped, our very prevention efforts are helping to perpetuate a culture of sexual violence. That's no road to a perfect world.

This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. Responses can be sent to ode@oregon.uoregon.edu.



Giovanni Salimena Emerald

### CLARIFICATION

University officials say that the law-firm report regarding the investigation into Jody Runge's job as women's basketball coach ("Public issues deserve public scrutiny," ODE, April 30) will be released at a later date. University lawyers are currently reviewing the report, there is no timetable for the report's release and portions may remain sealed because of privacy concerns.

The Emerald regrets the error.

### CORRECTION

In the Emerald article "Common Threads" (April 30), Sugie Hong should have been identified as the co-director of the Asian/Pacific American Student Union. Also, the article should have noted that clothing for the fashion show was also provided by Bon Marche.

The Emerald regrets the error.

### Letters to the editor

#### Let the hungry die!

Reading the April 28 Register-Guard article, "Official apologizes for Dumpster remark," I was appalled to hear that "Dumpster diving" would be suggested to people requesting assistance. Trash belongs in trash cans, period. The idea that hungry people should root through someone's refuse on the chance they might be able to feed themselves is absolutely repugnant, and said hungry people should be ashamed.

According to the USDA, Americans throw away at least 100 billion pounds of food each year. They waste it for a reason — they don't want it. Maybe the "Best By" date has passed, it might not look "sellable" or maybe the label is torn or scratched!

The USDA also said this food could feed all the hungry

people in America, but that doesn't make "Dumpster diving" any more defensible. Looking through garbage is an ugly habit, and it's illegal! That's right, these so-called "harmless Dumpster divers" are engaging in criminal activities by trespassing and stealing!

Luckily, some businesses that help waste 100 billion pounds of food have the common sense to lock their Dumpsters, ensuring that their waste gets wasted. Here's an obvious suggestion for lawmakers: Mandate that Dumpsters be locked to guarantee that wasted food never feeds anyone but ends up in landfills, where it belongs!

In the meantime, local businesses should follow the trend of pouring bleach on the food they waste. That way, caring Eugeneans can rest assured that any criminal tempted by free, edible food will pay with their lives.

Lucas Spiegel  
Eugene