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Next workshops:
March 14th, 6-8:30 p.m.
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Conference to emphasize elimination of patriarchy

■ Speakers will address a variety of issues, including sexism, racism, self-defense, rape and 'gender liberation'

By Diane Huber
Oregon Daily Emerald

People from up and down the West Coast will be gathering in McKenzie Hall this weekend for the second Against Patriarchy conference.

The Student Insurgent as well as campus and community members organized the three-day event, which begins tonight, featuring as keynote speakers activist Leslie Feinberg and slam poet Alix Olson. The conference continues Saturday and Sunday, with more than 50 workshops scheduled.

The conference is part of "a movement towards the elimination of male privilege, domination and sexism" and the goal is "to create dialogue, educate ourselves and each other, and inspire action," according to the Against Patriarchy mission statement.

Insurgent staff member Oona Beall said the conference is aimed at addressing issues such as racism, sexism and the other "-isms" in "new and different ways."

Organizers expect more than 500 people, and organizer Lucas Spiegel said he has already re-

ceived more than 150 housing requests from people who will be attending from out of town.

Feinberg, a transgender activist and union organizer, will speak at 7 p.m. tonight in room 129/229 McKenzie. Tracy Scharn, a member of the Against Patriarchy collective, said the group invited Feinberg to address "gender liberation" in relation to the current global situation and militarism.

"One of the concerns (the Against Patriarchy collective) has during a wartime climate is that marginalized groups become more marginalized in a time when unity and conformity are emphasized," Scharn said.

Feinberg is a well-known speaker and author of several books including Stone Butch Blues. Scharn said Feinberg advocates ways to become involved in improving the world in a practical way.

Feinberg will be followed by Olson, who has been featured in several New York City venues including Harlem's Apollo Theatre, Symphony Space with Pete Seeger and Michael Moore, and the HERE Performing Arts Festival and has performed at colleges and universities around the country.

Workshops will begin Saturday morning at 9 a.m. in McKenzie Hall. They will cover a variety of topics, including self-defense, community response to domestic

violence and holistic healing for trauma. Another workshop will include a panel of advocates for women in prison.

Raven Koch of Sexual Assault Support Services will be facilitating two of the workshops. Participants in her self-defense workshop on Saturday morning will share stories and learn from each other, as well as learn a few self-defense techniques, she said.

She will also be leading a "rape culture" workshop, which will focus on mass media, religion and other institutions that "mimic power dynamics," she said.

"These are institutions that support the act of rape and mimic it within its power structure by supporting a hierarchy," she said.

Spiegel said conference organizers encourage men to attend and have made an effort to increase accessibility by providing translators, free childcare and free lodging in the homes of volunteers.

Beall emphasized that the event is "a conference for everyone — all genders, races and political backgrounds."

A complete schedule of events is available at www.fruitiondesign.com/against-patriarchy.

E-mail reporter Diane Huber at dianehuber@dailyemerald.com.

Congress investigates 401(k) plans

By Michael Tackett
Chicago Tribune

WASHINGTON — On Dec. 21, 1999, in Enron's chest-puffing days, the company churned out a press release to tout its status as one of Fortune magazine's "100 best companies to work for in America."

"Our corporate culture and our world-class employees make Enron a great place to work," said Kenneth Lay, the company's chairman and chief executive officer. "We are proud to receive recognition as a top workplace; it's a reflection of our commitment to our employees and their key role in our company's success."

Now Lay is gone, and Enron Corp.'s commitment to employees, especially its retirement savings plans, is under high-profile congressional scrutiny. And the story of how many Enron workers watched their 401(k) plans, the savings program designed to ensure a comfortable retirement, become nearly worthless is sparking

a broader debate on the potent political issue of retirement security.

"I've watched this go from a backwater technical issue no one paid attention to, to now being one of the core issues people think of," said Rep. Earl Pomeroy, D-N.D., a leading pension authority in Congress. "As a result, the politics behind it have grown hotly charged as well. This is a mixed blessing."

"The good news is Congress is now interested. The bad news is Congress is now interested. This is an area where ill-advised, well-intentioned legislation can do some serious damage."

Rep. Earl Pomeroy
D-N.D.

ers if other lower-ranking employees are restricted.

The federal government can only loosely regulate most employee benefits because companies provide them on a voluntary basis. And, as workers often come to find, companies almost universally reserve the right to change, amend or terminate any or all of those benefits.

Businesses are far more likely, however, to emphasize benefits as an inducement to sign on and stay with a company. Enron's employee handbook, for instance, lays out a rich buffet of benefits in addition to the 401(k) plan: a stock options plan that awarded up to 25 percent of salary in Enron stock options, subsidized membership at The Body Shop fitness center, complete with tai chi and Pilates classes, and an on-site doctor's office.

Like many companies, Enron also offered a 401(k) savings plan, listing its stock as the first option of many investment funds available. The company matched each \$1 an employee contributed with 50 cents worth of Enron stock.

Those who chose the Enron option were rewarded famously as the stock value soared. But as Enron's stock plummeted, they learned the crushing reality of the risk inherent in 401(k) plans. The plaintive stories of families whose retirement savings were wiped out will no doubt be told during the course of the hearings.

Congress is likely to respond in some fashion, and Pomeroy and others are concerned that lawmakers could actually set back the cause of retirement security. For instance, if Congress were to regulate 401(k) plans too heavily, companies might choose to not offer them, putting workers' retirement in even greater peril.

"The good news is Congress is now interested," Pomeroy said. "The bad news is Congress is now interested. This is an area where ill-advised, well-intentioned legislation can do some serious damage."

Even before the hearings started, several legislative proposals have been introduced. One, by Sens. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif., and Jon Corzine, D-N.J., would limit employee contributions in company stock to 20 percent of the total and employees could convert any matching company stock to another financial instrument within 90 days. To reduce the appeal of granting a match in stock, the legislation also would cut tax breaks for matching company stock in half.

Another proposal, offered by Rep. Charles Rangel, D-N.Y., calls for a federal tax penalty on sales of stock by company insid-

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