

# Medical marijuana activist visits UO

Author Ed Rosenthal detailed his felony convictions and ongoing activism against the government on Friday

**Peter Sur**  
Freelance Reporter

Almost one hundred people — including aging hippies, college students, nursing moms and bearded activists — congregated in Columbia Hall on Friday to listen to Ed Rosenthal, a prominent figure in the medical marijuana use movement.

Rosenthal, 58, a former columnist for High Times magazine and the author of more than a dozen books on marijuana, is considered one of the world's leading experts on the subject.

He spoke to the crowd of roughly 90 people about his unusual battle with the federal government to grow marijuana for medical purposes. Rosenthal's case, which has attracted nationwide attention, stands at the center of a debate about whether marijuana should be outlawed completely or whether it should be used to treat long-suffering patients.

"The marijuana laws are going to be changed," he said. "We're going to take this case and help move the marijuana laws with this case until those marijuana laws come down like the Berlin Wall."

In 1996, California voters approved Proposition 215, also known as the Compassionate Use Act, which allowed seriously ill patients suffering from cancer, anorexia, AIDS, glaucoma and other illnesses to use marijuana as recommended by a physician.

Rosenthal said the city of Oakland, Calif., authorized him to

grow marijuana plants for medical patients. Believing he was immune from prosecution, he set up a warehouse in Oakland, where he grew hundreds of young marijuana plants. However, the federal government arrested him in February 2002 for cultivation of marijuana.

Speaking earlier at a press conference at the Federal Building, Rosenthal said District Judge Charles Breyer denied him a fair trial because he was prevented from telling the jury about his intent to use marijuana for medical purposes. He said he was an officer of the city and should not be prosecuted.

Rosenthal said he was convicted in January on three felony counts: conspiracy to manufacture marijuana, manufacturing marijuana and maintaining a place for manufacturing marijuana. The first two convictions each carry a maximum sentence of 40 years, and the third count has a maximum sentence of 20 years. Rosenthal will be sentenced June 4.

Four days after returning a verdict, five jurors convened a press conference to apologize to Rosenthal. Juror Marney Craig called the conviction "the most horrible mistake I have ever made."

Before his speech, Rosenthal showed a video of a "Dateline NBC" segment that ran on Feb. 21, which featured Rosenthal and eight jurors who supported him. When John Walters, director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy, appeared on the screen, audience members hissed and swore.

Rosenthal said he was arrested because the federal government was "looking for a trophy conviction, and (the government was) looking



Danielle Hickey Emerald

Author and medical marijuana activist Ed Rosenthal spoke in Columbia 150 on Friday to a crowd of nearly 100 people about his battle with the federal government to grow marijuana for medical purposes.

to intimidate the marijuana dispensaries in the Bay Area."

He also lambasted U.S. District Attorney George Bevan, who prosecuted his case.

"Here's a fellow who doesn't care whether they get their medicine or not," he said. "In fact he doesn't want people to get their medicine. He doesn't care about their quality of life, he doesn't care about their health, he doesn't care whether people live or die. What do you call a person like that?"

Other speakers at the event in-

cluded Sharon Clay, a patient and 25-year marijuana advocate who read a list she called "The 10 most wrong things that happened to me because of the drug war."

"I am a victim of this war and I'm losing my passion to do other things, and I find that very unfair," Clay said.

Voter Power, a Portland-based medical marijuana advocacy group, organized Rosenthal's four-day tour of Oregon, which also included appearances in Ashland, Roseburg and Portland.

Voter Power director John Sajo defended the medical benefits of marijuana, saying it has been useful for relieving nausea and pain for some people and reducing the spasms caused by multiple sclerosis and similar diseases.

"We have almost 5,000 patients in Oregon that are using marijuana," he said. "There hasn't been a single case of an adverse health consequence to one of those patients."

Peter Sur is a freelance writer for the Emerald.

## What men can do to stop sexual assault

(adapted from *Men Can Stop Rape*)

### Be aware of your language

Words are powerful. Derogatory words send the message that the person is less than human. When we see women or anyone as inferior, it becomes easier to treat them without respect, disregard their rights and treat them as less than human.

### Support survivors of sexual assault

One in three women and one in six men will be sexually assaulted in their lifetime. When men learn how to support survivors of sexual assault, they can help all of us feel safer to speak out about being assaulted and let the world know how serious it is.

### Don't ever have sexual contact against anyone's will!

No matter what. If you don't hear a clear "yes," it's a "no." Be a man who values equality and whose strength is not used for hurting.

Alliance for Sexual Assault Prevention

(541) 346-1156



UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

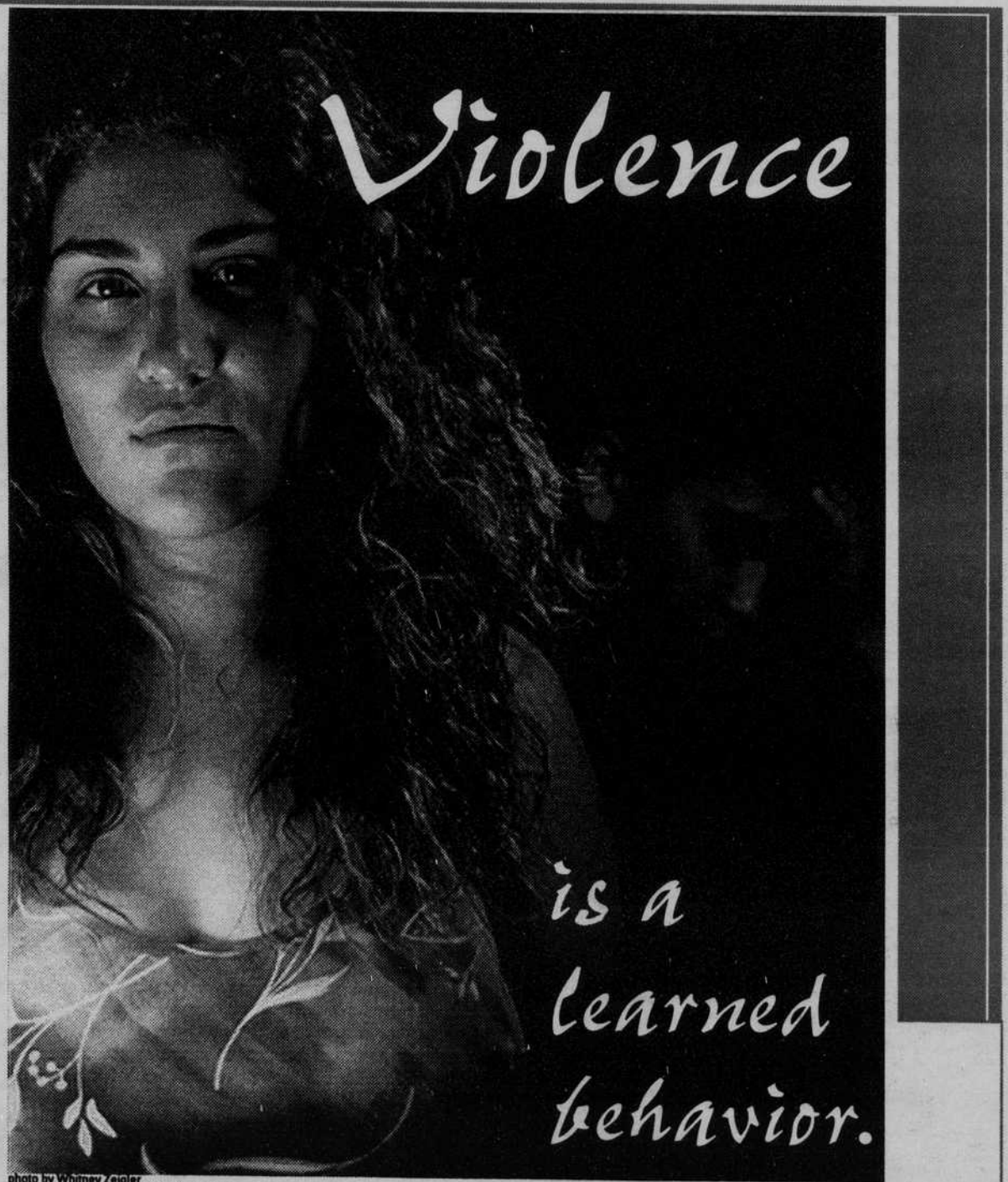


photo by Whitney Zeigler