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Michigan professor speaks at Women of Color Conference

Dr. Andrea Smith addressed violence against women of color during her speech Thursday

By Beth Naidis
Freelance Reporter

The ninth-annual Women of Color Conference ended on Thursday evening with a lecture from keynote speaker Dr. Andrea Smith in 182 Lillis. Smith is co-founder of the national grassroots organization INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, and she spoke to an audience of approximately 30 members about the violence and oppression that women of color face.

Smith, a professor of American culture and women's studies at the University of Michigan, began her lecture by examining the current law enforcement system and whether it is helpful for women of color.

"The current system is incapable of addressing issues of violence against women of color," she said, adding that the United States' current law enforcement system is rooted in white, capitalistic principles, which do not create healthy communities for people of color.

Smith has worked with American Indian issues, religious traditions and feminism, and advocates the creation of organizations by women of color for women of color. She said INCITE! is an example of a grassroots organization that provides resources to women of color that traditional government organizations do not.

In her speech, Smith described nations where women have little help in fighting sexual violence and oppression.

"(American women) have lost faith in our own collective power to bring change while other countries have more interesting ideas because they don't have the illusion that the state is going to do anything," Smith said.

Along with ways in which women of color create more progressive ways to deal with oppression, Smith focused on reproductive rights.

"Both the pro-life and pro-choice camps exclude women of color (because they are) united by their allegiance to white capitalism," she said.

To remedy the violence and the lack of reproductive rights facing women of color, Smith states that women of color must redefine their "politics of coalition (by) withdrawing from alliances that don't serve women of color best and recreate alliances."

Smith said co-founding INCITE! was a culmination of being "so frustrated that women of color were marginalized in the movement and that the movement was so professionalized." She said it is important for all men and women to organize against oppression and violence.

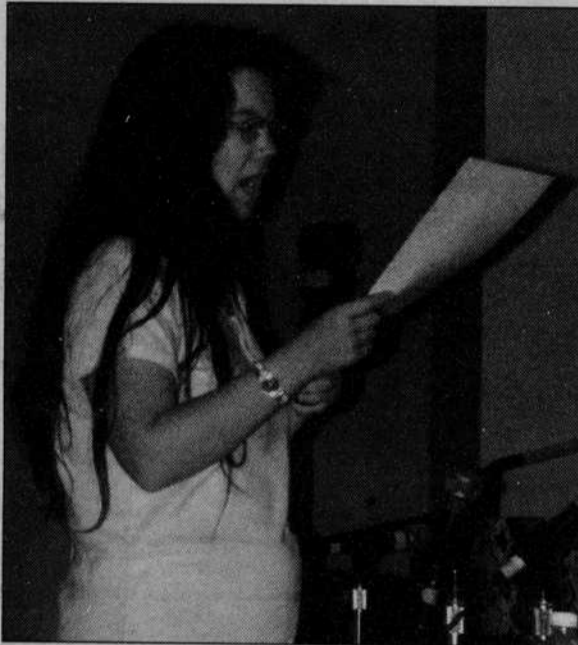
Audience member and University student Jasmin Thana agreed with Smith's messages.

"I think she's really amazing in the sense that she gives a voice to women of color and how their issues are different than, but not separate from, racial justice and gender issues," she said.

Eugene resident Jeane McKenzie shared similar sentiments.

"I like the way she united capitalism, racism, homophobia, ableism and the oppression of indigenous people," she said.


Beth Naidis is a freelance reporter for the Emerald.




Lauren Wimer Photographer

Dr. Andrea Smith, co-founder of the national grassroots organization INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, closed out the Women of Color Conference with her keynote speech Thursday evening.

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CONDUCT

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meets the best interests of the University community," Daley said. "We haven't made any changes to the conduct code looking forward to or because of riots. That's not our concern."

The revamped code will also feature clearer definitions of academic dishonesty and place greater emphasis on academically related punishments, such as mandating students write papers or attend a class related to their infractions, Harding said.

Loschiavo, who helped modify the University of Florida's student conduct code before joining the University of Oregon in 1999, said the student judicial affairs field nationwide is moving away from punitive measures and placing a greater emphasis

on educational processes.

"That's really what student judicial affairs is about," Loschiavo said.

The committee, which has examined other student judicial codes to guide its work, is trying to make the document less formal, both in its language and its procedures. Loschiavo pointed to the formal hearing process as one aspect that will undergo significant change.

"Our formal hearing process is way too legalistic," Loschiavo said, adding that the committee hopes to "just let people tell their stories" in hearings, instead of the current format, which involves lawyers, witnesses and the presentation of evidence.

The committee is also looking at expanding the code's section on gambling to include computer-use policies.

"We're not worried about NCAA bracket pools or stuff like that,"

Harding said. "We're worried about the large scale."

Harding said part of the purpose of the scandal that afflicted Arizona State University in 1993-94, when a point-shaving scheme involving Sun Devils basketball players drew national attention.

"We don't want the school to get in trouble with the NCAA," Harding said.

The committee plans to present the first round of changes to the University Senate for its approval in April. The committee will actively seek student comment on the proposed changes, with question and answer sessions tentatively planned for April 1, 7 and 13.

The committee is composed of four students and four faculty members. The students are appointed by the ASUO Executive, and faculty members are chosen by the University Senate Committee on Committees. University President Dave Frohnmayer is charged with final approval of all eight committee members.

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