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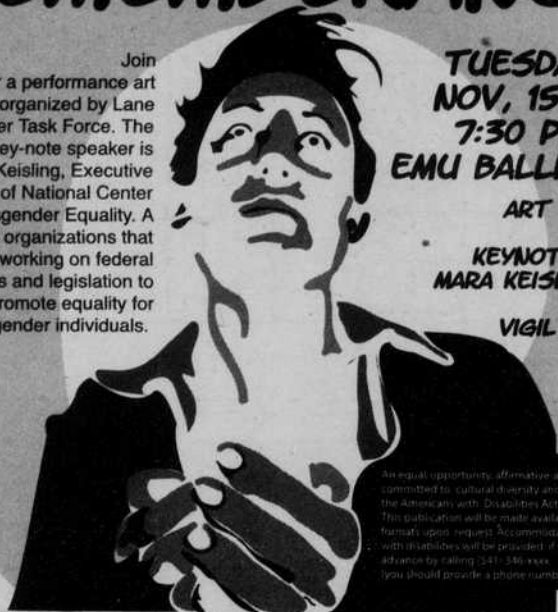
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ART

KEYNOTE:
MARA KEISLING

VIGIL

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Aikido club provides path to nonviolent self-defense

Aikido offers an effective, yet not physically draining form of self-defense for all people willing to learn

BY JACOB MAY
FREELANCE REPORTER

Unlike the aggressive forms of martial arts that focus on teaching attack skills, aikido's literal meaning can be translated to "way of harmony of the spirit" and teaches its students how to defend themselves from various methods of attack.

"It's more of a defensive art in the sense that it takes the attacker's energy and redirects it in a nonharmful direction" aikido practitioner and student Sasha Tavenner Kruger said.

The Aikido Club has practiced at the University since 1988 and hopes to teach students self-discipline, respect for others and a means of self-defense.

Aikido was created by O-Sensei Morihei Ueshiba as a way to practice martial arts without provoking violence and to maintain loving respect for all things. Students learn how to control their temperament in adverse situations and how to respond appropriately if violence is inflicted upon themselves or others.

Aikido provides a good workout, but is not as hard on the body as other martial arts. Beginners start out by learning how to fall properly. They train with other aikido members and learn how to avoid physical attack and direct any back at the attacker. When students advance their technique, their training becomes progressively harder as their movement speed increases.

In learning aikido individuals train with another member, and instead of sparring they practice together in a cooperative fashion as they "loan" their body to be practiced upon. The cooperation reinforces aikido's ideas of having concern for others because practitioners must be mindful not to hurt their partners while performing the various techniques.

Competition is seen as a negative because it is believed to foster feelings of resentment and jealousy. Some of the techniques practiced are considered too dangerous for people to be using them in an aggressive manner.

Part of the training also includes learning how to think in a spiritual manner in order to gain a sense of enlightenment and clear the mind of distracting thoughts. According to the club's Web site, O-Sensei Ueshiba's goal was to "fuse his martial art to a set of ethical, social, and dispositional ideals. Ueshiba hoped that by training in aikido, people would perfect themselves spiritually as well as physically."

The club does not have tournaments nor does it give out awards; instead it acknowledges a member's skill level by giving them a rank. Aikido members are able to increase their rank when they pass test through performing their skills.

Members also practice with three different wooden forms of weapons, a bokken (sword), a jo (quarter-staff) and a tanto (knife).

The club team is led by Sensei Janet Rumsey who possesses a third-degree black belt in martial arts.

The club is always willing to accept new members regardless of skill level. Practice is always free and is held inside the Student Recreation Center in Mat Room 2 on Monday and Wednesday from 7-9 p.m.

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