Violence prevention speaker calls for rape culture resistance

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“Rape culture is everywhere, but so is resistance.”

These were the words of author and activist, Daryl Fordman, who took the stage in TELUS Centre last Wednesday to give a presentation titled “Beyond Consent: How Reclaiming Sexuality Combats Sexual Violence.” The Alberta Public Interest Research Group (APIRG) and the Students’ Union hosted the event as part of their recent Gender Based Violence Prevention Project. Nearly 300 attendees showed up to listen and discuss what Fordman had to say on the topic of healthy sexuality.

Fordman, author of *Yes Means Yes: Victims of Sexual Female Power* and co-author of *World Without Rape* and *What You Really Want: The Smart Girl’s Shame-Free Guide to Sex & Safety*, began her two-hour presentation with her thoughts on the sexualization of women. This included the disconnects between sexuality and sexualization, describing the latter as when others — especially their significant others — use an agenda about sex based on someone’s body. That, Fordman asserted, leads to women being seen and treated as sexual objects, instead of being sexual subjects of their own control.

“Another way we can see sexualization is when a person is held to a standard that equates physical attractiveness, narrowly-defined, with being sexy,” she added.

“We get very sexualizing messages about the narrow ways that women can be valued in a culture for their bodies and attractiveness.”

This kind of thinking and treatment is what Fordman refers to as “social license to operate,” as opposed to rape culture. She believes this is what leads to sexual violence, and includes slut shaming and sexualizing victims of sexual violence as part of this culture.

Living in a sexualized culture creates stereotypes where women are characterized as innocent or slutty, according to Fordman, who encouraged the audience to broaden their perspectives on sexuality.

She then moved on to the idea of reexamining sexuality by participating with enthusiastic consent — meaning ensuring a sexual partner is consenting and okay with what’s happening the entire time, as opposed to treating consent as a light switch to do whatever one wants.

“We don’t want to live in that world that’s treating someone like an object — just so if you say yes to sex, that gives permission for the person you said yes to do whatever they want with your body right after that, because you said yes,” Fordman explained.

She noted men are often taught that they’re supposed to psychically know what their partners want. In light of this, Fordman encouraged communication and consenting sexual experimentation to create a more positive experience.

Furthermore, by making enthusiastic consent a community value, Fordman said people who don’t adhere to that value will become obvious — one step in singling out perpetrators of sexual violence.

She also wanted to combat what she calls the “Terrible Trio” of shame, blame and fear in regard to sexual experiences, and suggested women think about and outline their sexual values to allow them to identify between being safe and feeling safe by weighing those values against the behaviors of their partners. By following some of these ideas, Fordman said the idea of “bad sex” can be reclaimed as a learning experience.

However, Fordman added that every individual will take different sexual risks because each person is unique. Before opening the floor to questions and discussion, she concluded that the less people isolate each other, the easier it is to organ- ize sexual change.

One attendee, Denise Dagonoński, said she thought the talk was great.

“I love that there’s more conversation happening, in Bimini especially — on rape culture and target- ing perpetrators, and sexual assault conversations and holding people accountable,” she said.

“I’m really happy that the Students’ Union is supporting this project — the Gender Based Vio- lence Prevention Project. It’s really important.”

Leaky sperm, not ‘ick’ factor, intrigues scientists

Sperm • CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

Until now, the general assumption has been that barnacles are immobile creatures, their im- mense penis length allowing them to copulate with mates around them.

As another method of adapting to their mobility issues, most barnacles are hermaphrodites — allowing them to reproduce through self-fertilization.

However, they also have long legs allowing them to catch food such as plankton. Palmer believes these legs enable them to capture sperm released from other barnacles — the first observation of this phenomenon in any crustacean.

“The reason biologists have excluded about this is that it has nothing to do with the ‘ick’ factor or the big penises,” she said. “It has to do with the fact that is the first observation in any crustacean showing that sperm can be transferred through water as opposed to copulation,” Palmer explained.

Palmer and her research assistants noticed some barnacles outside pen- nus range with fertilized eggs. By using genetic markers developed by co-author Bessarion, the researchers were able to answer the ques- tion of whether barnacles could be self-fertilizing.

“If they self-fertilize, all the genes in the embryos should be from that parent. If they had genes from any that aren’t from the parent, the only way they could get there is from the water. And that’s what this study is all about — just using ge- netic markers to show that, in and behold, individuals that are too far away to copulate have genes from other individuals in the embryos,” Palmer said.

- “It has nothing to do with the ‘ick’ factor or the big penises, it has to do with the fact that this is the first observation in any crustacean showing that sperm can be transferred through water as opposed to copulation.”

“Unless there’s something we don’t know, where they can quadrup- le the size of their penis — cause there’s always that possibility — but it’s unlikely that there’s something we don’t know. The only simplest hypothesis is that they leak sperm.”

The discovery that barnacles spermcast is proving tremendously important for the scientific com- munity and the exposure of the U of A and the Banfield Marine Science- en Centre have received a boost for Canada’s status as a leader in scientific innovations.

“One of the cool things about an observation like this is it’s so differ- ent and surprising. It is the motiva- tion for a research program to see how widespread it is in other kinds of barnacles and in other crusta- ceans. People never thought to look in any other crustacean. If barnacles can do it, what about water final?” Palmer summed up his successful discovery by referencing a quote by French chemist and microbiologist, Louis Pasteur: “Chance favours the prepared mind.”

“The paper is a reminder to al- ways be observant and think about the things that you see. Because when you go all the way back to those first observations — if I just looked in the case and saw this little微型 stuff hanging off, and if I had been just a little bit puzzled by it, we probably wouldn’t have even done this,” he added.

“It’s a really valuable quote, because if you’re not thinking about the things that are happening all around you, you will not see stuff. A prepared mind is really a mind that will see more things.”