



October, 2015

At the New Student Week Mandatory Session on Sexual Violence, a national speaker was hired to present to students from the program “Students Fight Back.” We, the staff, student advocates, and board members of Abby’s House, want to explicitly state that we do not support the primary message of the Student Fight Back program. We stand in solidarity with survivors of sexual and interpersonal violence and collectively disprove of any message that places blame on individuals for their own victimization. The premise of Students Fight Back reinforced dominant cultural beliefs that the majority of assaults happen by stranger assault and that by fighting back through self-defense tactics, students should be able to prevent assaults from happening. This presentation largely ignored research that illustrates how current and former partners are perpetrators of the majority of sexual and interpersonal incidents of violence. We are deeply disturbed by the content of the presentation, the lack of inclusivity throughout the program, and the ways in which survivors were likely made to feel self-doubt and blame had they not had successful attempts to “fight back.”

We recognize that victim-blaming messages are larger socio-cultural problems directly related to sexism and heteropatriarchy. Our programming efforts are dedicated to dismantling these oppressive belief-systems, informing the WOU community of alternative approaches to addressing and preventing violence, and supporting individuals who need support. Because of our goals, it is necessary for us to speak out against injustice as a means to validate and engage others in our activism in hopes of living in a safer, more just world.

In solidarity,

Ashley Baxter  
*Advocate*

Samantha Hughes  
*Advocate*

Jen Bracy  
*Board Chair*

Gaudelupe Becerra  
*Advocate*

Mayra Mendoza  
*Advocate*

Cori Brownell,  
*Board Member*

Crystal De Leon  
*Advocate*

Kayla Robertson  
*Advocate*

Jeanne Deane,  
*Board Member*

Rachel Feldhaus  
*Advocate*

Amanda Stevens  
*Advocate*

Amy Hammermeister Jordan,  
*Board Member*

Elizabeth Fields  
*Advocate*

Hannah Towle  
*Advocate*

Christina Reagle,  
*Board Member*

Jessica Fontaine  
*Advocate*

Tania Villanueva  
*Advocate*

Jennifer Ruks,  
*Board Member*

Erika Gutierrez  
*Advocate*

Andrea Hugmeyer  
*Assistant Director, Abby’s House*

Emily Swart,  
*Board Member*

Ileen Huerta-Luna  
*Advocate*

Mary Ellen Dello Stritto  
*Director, Abby’s House*

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