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# Lane County Women Lawyers Co-sponsor Talk on Women and Sexism

By Jane M. Yates

Sexism is alive and well in America. While this should come as no surprise, what may be surprising is how women perpetuate this cultural phenomenon. On September 26, Isbel Ingham presented "What Women Do to Other Women: The How, Why and What We Can All Do About It" at the federal courthouse in Eugene. Attended by nearly 70 lawyers and law students, the lunchtime presentation was co-sponsored by Lane County Women Lawyers and the University of Oregon Women's Law Forum.

Discussing the statistical reality of sexism, Isbel, who has presented workshops on women's issues for almost 30 years, explained that the external pressures of sexism affect everyone in our society. In women, however, this pressure is internalized. Internalized oppression can result in confusion and self-hate or a dislike of others in the oppressed group. Often a woman projects her self-criticism onto other women. By directing negative opinions to other women, we help to perpetuate the system at large.

Isbel explained that to defuse the net effect of this paradigm, women must be

self-aware and proactive in their behavior. First, we must be aware of the way we respond to other women. Second, we must understand that the criticisms we have of other women are indicative of the way we criticize ourselves. Finally, we must come to understand that by enhancing another woman's success, we enhance our own.

Changing behavior is not simple. As a college professor, Isbel promised an A to students in her women's studies course if they could get through the hour without criticizing themselves or other women. Due to pervasive cultural conditioning, she was never able to present an A through this method.

We can create change, Isbel contended. Women can create opportunities to work together. We can learn from each other and share our experiences with one another. We can create a collective path to our individual successes. Instead of competing against each other, we can redirect our competition to a consensus model, which allows for a better end product without the loss associated with direct competition.



Presenter Isbel Ingham (left) and LCWL member Kate Weatherly

Women have made great advances since Virginia Woolf lamented the lack of opportunity for creative expression in *A Room of One's Own*. More work, however, remains to be done. Each of us has the power in our everyday lives to further neutralize the social construct of sexism. We cannot truly expect change until we look into ourselves and have the courage to be honest with ourselves and truly supportive of other women—and ultimately, to do the right thing.

*Jane Yates practices business law at Gleaves Swearingen Potter & Scott in Eugene and serves as OWLS' secretary.*

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# DragonFlies Enjoy Another Competitive Race Season

By Cashauna Hill

The OWLS dragon boat team, the DragonFlies, enjoyed a lively 2008 race season. The 'Flies first traveled to Tacoma, Washington, to race in the 2008 Rainier Dragon Boat Festival. After two strong morning heats, the 'Flies placed fourth in the women's final.

Back in Portland, the 'Flies made a spirited run to the semifinals in the Women's Competitive Division at the 20th annual Portland-Kaohsiung Sister City Association (PKSCA) Dragon Boat Races, part of Portland's Rose Festival. The 'Flies

have competed at the Rose Festival since 1999; they hoped to earn their fifth trip to the finals at the 2008 races.

On Saturday, June 7, after finishing first in the morning race (with the second-place team more than three seconds behind), the 'Flies took third in the afternoon, second-round race. The third-place finish was enough to place the 'Flies in the Women's Competitive Division.

On Sunday the weather was sunny, prompting visits by several OWLS members (and future OWLS members) and

former 'Flies. The 'Flies provided thrilling entertainment and finished second in Sunday's quarterfinal, less than a second behind the 2007 Rose Festival winners.

After a long break, the 'Flies hit the water again for the semifinal race. Despite great effort, the team finished third and was eliminated from competition.

The 'Flies raced again at the Salem World Beat Festival on June 29. Even battling the 100-degree heat and fatigue resulting from a race day that ran more

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## Study Examines Sex Differences

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changes in women's behavior," sex differences in career plans, firm entry, and early attrition out of private practice were large and significant in the early group of graduates and smaller and "sometimes insignificant" in the later group. The authors suggest that one of the reasons for these results is that "as women lawyers learn more about the economic rewards (i.e., becoming partner) of working in different legal settings, they will shift towards more lucrative settings such as private practice." The study also found that with the later group of graduates, part-time work became more available and acceptable in firms and became less of an obstacle to making partner. Also, lawyers who actually planned careers in private practice were significantly more likely to be partners.

Nevertheless, even though the women associates in the late cohort had not segregated themselves or been steered into less lucrative practice areas, the authors found that these women still became partner at a lower rate than men. The study found that the sex gap in partnership rates among *all* graduates dropped by about one-third between the two groups studied, due to the increase of

women entering and staying in firms. In this sense, the authors believe that "women have made substantial progress in the attainment of partnership." In the late cohort, however, "men's probability of becoming partner is 13 percentage points higher than that of women's even when credentials, career plans, legal specializations, work activities and labor supply are controlled."

The study authors also found that marriage and children had "mostly positive, insignificant associations with partnership." However, interestingly, they also noted without comment that "satisfaction with work-family balance is negatively correlated with partnership." In addition, when considering potential sex differences in satisfaction with various aspects of private practice, the fifth-year men and women associates' rankings of satisfaction were the same with one exception: 31% of women, but only 19% of men, reported being very dissatisfied with their ability to bring about social change through their work.

The authors report that they could not directly observe or study the "sex discrimination" experienced by the women in the study, but they could nonetheless "examine women's reports about their experiences of discrimination." Incredibly, 90% of the women in each cohort reported having experienced anywhere from "a little" to "a lot" of sex discrimination from some source, five and 15 years after graduation. Among women partners, 86–92% reported experiencing discrimination from lawyers at their own firms, other lawyers, or clients. The authors therefore conclude that "sexual discrimination is a nearly universal experience among women lawyers."

The authors also state that the "playing field is not yet level," even though gains have been made in women making partner in firms. The study's "results suggest sex discrimination is alive and persists in law." The fact that the men and women in the study were all graduates of the same law school, and are thus likely similarly situated with regard to difficult-to-measure characteristics related to promotion, does not change the results. The authors found "large, persistent and unexplained sex gaps in partnership rates, as well as a disquieting number of women law graduates who report having experienced sex discrimination."

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## DragonFlies

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than two hours longer than scheduled, the 'Flies managed to stay focused and place third in the top women's division.

The 'Flies next traveled to Victoria, B.C., for the annual Victoria Dragon Boat Festival, on August 15–17. In their first races on August 16, the 'Flies finished third in both heats. In the semifinals, the 'Flies came back from fourth place to finish first in their heat.

The Victoria festival has traditionally not included a women's final, and the result is that women's teams race mixed teams. After defeating teams in the semifinals that included male paddlers, the 'Flies finished fourth in the mixed finals, in a race that was decided with less than one second between the first- and fourth-place times. In the first-ever women's final held at the Victoria venue, the 'Flies placed second out of five teams.

The 'Flies capped off the season at the Portland Dragon Boat Races on September 6–7. The team took first in both qualifying heats but placed third in Sunday's semifinal race and did not advance to the finals.

The DragonFlies were again coached by Paul Daley, with additional coaching from Beth Allen.

Women studying or working in law or law-related fields who are interested in joining the 'Flies should contact team co-captains Heather Brann, at [branns@earthlink.net](mailto:branns@earthlink.net), or Gwyn McAlpine, at [gmc Alpine@PerkinsCoie.com](mailto:gmc Alpine@PerkinsCoie.com). New paddlers are welcome.

As always, the DragonFlies thank their generous sponsors: PLATINUM SPONSORS: Landye Bennett Blumstein; Red Dog Home Inspections; Yates, Matthews & Eaton. GOLD MEDAL SPONSORS: Wiles Law Group; Cable Huston Benedict Haagensen & Lloyd; Farleigh Wada Witt; Geffen Mesher & Company; Markowitz, Herbold, Glade & Mehlhaf; Perkins Coie. SILVER MEDAL SPONSORS: Lewis & Clark Law School; Next Adventure; Weber Gunn. BRONZE MEDAL SPONSORS: Allen<sup>2</sup> Law; Kairis Court Reporting; Paradigm Legal Nurse Consulting; Rizzo Mattingly Bosworth; Staffing Solutions.

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