Realistic Poverty

War with Iraq has been the all-consuming topic of conversation around campus for the last few weeks. But we can’t face east forever. There are issues to be dealt with here at home.

On Tuesday the U.S. Census Bureau announced that 2001 brought with it an increase in poverty among the American public: 11.7 percent was the actual figure, up from 11.3 percent in 2000. We would be lucky to have such a low percent of the population living in poverty.

The poverty threshold that is used today is a relic based on a formula that was created in 1963. It has only been adjusted for inflation. The poverty threshold, established for 1963, of $1,380 for a family of four—a figure comparable to $16,895 in 1999. The formula assumes that families spend about one third of their income on food. Today a family in poverty that spent one third of its income on food would not have enough to cover housing, health care and transportation.

There are three percentage points that are equal to approximately seven million people.

No politician wants the nation to gain seven million poor people while they are in office. So we continue to humor ourselves and deny a great portion of our citizenry the services they technically deserve.

The Tuesday report brought to light the first consequences of President Bush’s heavily biased tax cut as well. The median household incomes above $150,000 were able to make gains. What does this mean? It means that economic inequality is continuing to increase in the U.S.

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The NAS formula would be updated annually and be based on consumer spending patterns for food, shelter and clothing for the three years prior to its calculation. Under the NAS formula the poverty line in 1999 would have been $22,527 instead of $16,895. In terms of per- centages, the NAS standard usually yields a figure about three points higher than the current standard. Those three percentage points are equal to approximately seven million people.

It is an extreme injustice to miscalculate the poverty measure year after year. According to a report by the National Academy of Science (NAS) in 1994, 27 government programs, including Head Start, food stamps and Medicaid, linked their applicants eligibility status to the poverty threshold created with the old formula.

The obvious alternative is to change the standards. The NAS developed an experimental formula for measuring poverty in 1995. The NAS formula would be based on consumer spending patterns for food, shelter and clothing for the three years prior to its calculation. Under the NAS formula the poverty line in 1999 would have been $22,527 instead of $16,895. In terms of percent- ages, the NAS standard usually yields a figure about three points higher than the current standard. Those three percentage points are equal to approximately seven million people.

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Overall, poverty is an issue we can’t forget and there is so much we can do to be active against a possible war. We can’t face east forever.

~k.d.d.

The Weather Vane

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The Weather Vane

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OPINION

Something to Get Excited About

By Amber Showalter

Contributing Writer

I’m sexually frustrated, in the sense that EMU isn’t sexy. JMU is sexy. The women at JMU, I’ve heard, were rated the sexiest college women in the nation some time recently. I can’t remember exactly when because my mind does this type of information, but it’s a good contrast to EMU. I’m not saying that we EMU women aren’t sexy, just that we’re not like them. And EMU men aren’t, you know, not like the JMU men. EMU is a turn off to the world.

Our campus life wouldn’t make a very good and trashy sitcom about college life. We don’t even have fraternities or sororities. All of my good friends are virgins, are looking for good, honest, God-fearing and respectful husbands, and don’t drink or smoke.

Our campus can get excited over making quilts to send to Afghanistan, or how expensive the chandelier in the president’s room must be, or a non-violent solution to war.

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I like hearing that there’s “nothing to do on weekends,” not because I think those girls are boring or aren’t well-attended, but that we’re happy to spend evenings playing full-contact Dutch battle on the turf field, eating breakfast at 11:00 p.m. or watching Top Gun for the 17th time. Then on Sunday mornings there are quite a few of us who wake our bashed bodies up to go to church.

To me, these activities signal that a lot of us have grown up in a loving family home and have developed a respectful self-identity. Drinking and going to parties is fine, if that’s what you like to do. But there’s something Messianic and comforting about the thought of making popcorn, playing cards and talking about religious issues all night long. These things make EMU special and uniquely worldly. My grandmother would like to hear me say that, which makes me feel good, too. (And she was afraid I’d become an atheist if I came here.)

So thanks for the sexual frustration. I’m honestly grateful that you’re uninteresting to the rest of the world, I think you’ve created a loving environment for young adults to grow spiritually and love each other, even on the weekends.

Rape: A Real Issue, End Here

By Roxann Allen

A woman is raped every two minutes. That means 720 women get raped every day. That is 5,040 women in one week.

One in four women are the victims of rape. So chances are, you know someone who’s been raped.

Many women who’ve been raped feel embarrassed by it or that it was their fault; that if they had worn a different outfit, or if they had used different words it wouldn’t have hap- pened to them. However, no matter what the circumstances, rape is never the victim’s fault.

One major reason rape occurs is because women’s rights and wishes aren’t respected. We live in a society which encour- ages men to be competitive and get what they want which can sometimes lead them to believe they have the “right to sex.”

Not many people realize the physical symptoms that come along with rape. Some victims get stomachaches, ulcers or headaches, others suffer from prob- lems, inability to sleep, or diminished appetite. These can affect them for years afterward.

Some women also develop Post- traumatic Stress Disorder. They feel distant from others or emotionally numb, experience flashbacks or nightmares. Rape often permanently changes the way the victim relates to others.

One of the most devastating aftereffects of rape is the fear, mistrust, and doubt triggered by the regular encounters and con- versations with men which are a part of everyday living. Some women have a hard time relating to their male family members. Rape is not something that only happens in alleys by a stranger. It can happen any- where, to anyone, by anyone. Just because you think someone is your friend doesn’t mean that they won’t take advantage of you or another girl. Seventy-five to 85 percent of rape victims know the person who raped them.

There are plenty of ways to be aware of rape so that a person can avoid it. However, no matter how much a person knows and avoids rape, it can still happen to them. The most impor- tant things are to be alert to unconscious messages that may be given through clothing, tone of voice, gestures, and eye contact. Also, trust your gut-level instincts. If you get a bad vibe from someone and don’t let yourself be alone with them.

There are also danger sig- nals that can be watched for. Men who don’t listen to others, or whose others will probably hear a “no” as “convince me.” Men who ignore personal boundaries, act excessively jealous or possessive, and who drink heavily are also people to be cautious around.

One problem with society is that many women who are raped are viewed as “sluts” while many men who are raped are viewed as “justifiable” rape.

Any rape is traumatic, but being raped by an acquaintance is particularly traumatic. Some women have to rape themselves on a daily basis. Many have to change jobs or schools because this is too traumatic. The woman is forced to make addi- tional efforts to protect herself, to protect the person who raped her, to protect her family. Once people realize this, it’s easier to understand why rape victims can become depressed and with- drawn. The rapist could still be threatening the victim, which may also scare them into chang- ing locations.

No one can understand what is like for a woman to be raped unless they have been them- selves. The best thing you can do for someone is to listen to them and let them know that you believe and support them in whatever they decide to do.

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