

< BSU meeting sparks 'domestic' debate

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According to national statistics, almost one third of women in the United States report that they have been abused by a spouse, boyfriend or lover.

At a meeting hosted by the Black Student Union (BSU), a large crowd of students openly discussed domestic abuse.

At the beginning of the meeting, sounds of outrage and disbelief echoed through the room as a clip of a "20/20" broadcast from abc.com portrayed an instance of actual abuse in which a mother was beaten in front of her children.

"The situation in the video was awful," said Cassandra Bowens, a junior social work major. "The fact that the man forced his 13-year-old son to video tape the beating was terrible."

Not only are women all over the United States being physically, psychologically, sexually and even religiously abused, according to BSU Presi-

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dent Ekua Mends-Aidoo, but there are women on campus that are abused as well.

"Domestic abuse is very prevalent on campus, and we need to be aware of this," Mends-Aidoo said.

A poll taken among those who attended the meeting proved Mends-Aidoo's point. Almost

one-fourth of all the attendees raised their hands when asked if they knew someone, or were someone, who was abused.

According to the broadcast, a woman is physically abused every 15 seconds.

Debates regarding the reason why women are abused were intense throughout the two-hour meeting.

Someone in attendance claimed women asked for attention even though they were not single by dressing provocatively. This in turn, they suggested, made the women susceptible to abusive men. Several women in the room immediately took the defense and heated discussion broke out.

Ricardo Lopez, BSU activities coordinator, presented another idea.

"Fear might be a factor," Lopez said. "If a woman threatens a man in such a way, it's as though she's threatening his masculinity. This will cause fear and, in return, he'll abuse her so that now she's the one who's afraid."

Another highly debated point involved the inability of the woman in the video clip to leave her husband. According to Mends-Aidoo, it normally takes a woman seven tries to leave her abuser.

Some attendees believed that it takes so long for a woman to leave her abuser because the women are constantly conditioned to believe what their husbands tell them and believe that they are at fault. Even after splitting up from their abusive spouse, women still express fear

of their ex.

Despite the movie and the heated discussion, the belief that domestic abuse is not that common was still held among several attendees.

Lopez, who is also a junior communication major, believes that abuse is becoming less common.

"Women are progressing," said Lopez. "Abuse is happening on a lesser scale."

However, Mends-Aidoo strongly cautioned against such ideas.

"Abuse is prevalent and that's why we decided on this topic for the meeting," he said. "People need to know."

Many who participated in the debates suggested that the volume of abused women is not advertised because women are normally too afraid of their dangerous boyfriend or spouse to do anything about the situation.

Mends-Aidoo suggested that anyone who is a victim of or a witness to a case of abuse should contact the Wellness Education Services at 114 Student Union.

Abuse may be hard to prove, considering that the suppressed women will lie for their significant other. That is all the more reason to contact the authorities if there is any suspicion of abuse, according to members of the BSU.

"You never know who might be involved in abuse," Mends-Aidoo said. "If you see signs, don't ignore them and take precautions. Contact someone. You might save someone's life."

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