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## Community

### Naomi Wolf: Gender equality is within reach

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Although her home is in New York City, author and activist Naomi Wolf said visiting her brother, Professor Aaron Wolf, in Corvallis, gives her a sense of belonging. Maybe it's the Birkenstocks she sees at Nearly Normal's which take her back to her Haight-Ashbury roots, she said with a laugh.

Wolf spoke about women's psychological aversion to power and the need for women and men to become ethical leaders in her presentation Wednesday night at the LaSells Stewart Center at Oregon State University. Wolf spoke about "The Changemakers: Ethical Leadership and Real Power," as part of the university's Convocations and Lectures series.

It's not Wolf's first trip to Corvallis, as she often spends time here visiting her brother and his family.

"I'm much smarter than he is and mom and dad like me better," she joked. "But as Aaron has said, I really do owe everything to him, because everything I know about oppression, he taught me."

Wolf said she believed that history was at an important crossroads for women's consciousness.

"The power to bring about gender equality for once and for all is within our grasp," she said.

Although the roots of feminism and gender equality are more than a century old, Wolf said it wasn't until the early 1990s that women's political power began to truly manifest, spurred by the sexual harassment accusations of Anita Hill against Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas.

Through the efforts of women, Hill was eventually granted testimony in Senate hearings. Although Thomas was named to the court, Wolf believes that women started to realize the power they had yet to utilize. Shortly after the hearings, donations to Emily's List, a political organization for women, tripled, and in the next election, the number of women in office had also jumped drastically.

"Seventy years after women got the vote, they finally used it," she said.

While women are the majority of the population, and are gaining more

political control, Wolf said she believes there is one important factor that holds women back from truly exercising their political clout.

"What stands in our way is psychology," she said, "the fear of power. If tomorrow, the feminist fairy godmother would descend from on high and wave her magic speculum and bestow upon us everything in our feminist wish list ... I believe we wouldn't be free and happy if she left out positive female psychology about power."

Power feels scary, and is something women are not taught to seek or exercise. Women are taught to feel

criticism as physical pain, and are told to be nice at all costs. Feminism is also getting a lot of bad press, she said, making young women fearful of identifying with groups that seek female equality.

"There's a sense you have to live in a commune in Vermont with a barter system if you're gonna be a 'right-on' sister," she joked, rather than viewing feminists as people desiring equal pay and equal opportunities for women.

One way to encourage women to reach for power is to emphasize a different kind of power construction than is demonstrated by current political and business leaders. As part of her work with the Woodhull Institute for Ethical Leadership, she has identified seven universal ethical precepts which all major religions share.

Those precepts are: Kindness; justice; honesty; peacemaking; all people are equal in dignity; generosity; and karma, the idea that what you give comes back to you.

Wolf said all ethical leaders follow these precepts, and while it appears in the short term that sticking to those precepts might make one vulnerable against unethical opponents in politics or business, in the long term, those precepts will more likely garner success.

Plus, Wolf said, they come with an important, if unquantifiable, perk.

"You can sleep at night," she said.

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