

Teach-in Offers Alternatives to Military

Students continue counter-recruitment efforts despite lack of military presence at career fair

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World/National Editor

The debate over military recruitment is often pretty stark: either you're pro-military, or you're anti-military.

Monday, Apr. 23, the day before the job fair that military recruiters were initially slated to attend, organizers chose

to educate, rather than protest, through a teach-in on military recruiters held at College Nine.

Helen Shapiro, College Nine/Ten provost and one of the organizers for the event, explained that much of the debate over military recruiters stemmed from the controversial Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy.

In the 1970s, she explained, many schools

took the initiative to ban headhunters from campus if the headhunters displayed discriminatory material the school did not agree with. Don't Ask, Don't Tell discriminates against homosexuals, she said, so this ban extended to the military as well.

Since the Solomon Amendment, which allowed the Department of Defense to cut funding to any school that denied access to military recruiters, UC Santa Cruz has faced a tough decision to allow recruiters, or to ban them and risk losing money.

Because of Santa Cruz's anti-military recruitment history, Shapiro said, "UCSC has been under watch."

The purpose of the teach-in was not to discourage military involvement, but to offer alternative solutions to the common reasons why people join the army, particularly the need for money for college and job skills.

Mario Hardy, senior editor for AWOL Magazine and co-founder of GIRights.org and the GI Rights hotline, explained that many of the benefits the military uses to attract potential soldiers are exaggerated by recruiters, and that most people could

find the resources they seek elsewhere.

"You have people who want to go to college, who want job training ... it makes the military an easy sell," Hardy said. "Military training is for military jobs. If you went somewhere else in the civilian sector, you'd get the same experience. Basically, what the military has gotten really good at is to identify various areas of need in communities, and then position themselves as a viable remedy to these needs."


The GI Rights hotline is a resource Hardy co-founded, dedicated to providing a number soldiers can call if they are interested in leaving the army or seeking information on an issue, without risking the stigmas and possible consequences of seeking the same information from the military administration.

Robert Zebala, a former Kresge student who served in the Marine Corps before petitioning for conscientious objector status, explained that many in the military were quick to judge and accuse, and that the term "gay" was thrown around with impunity.


"You join because you want to be a part of this brotherhood," Zebala said. He said a lot of the recruitment rhetoric cultivated a machismo attitude among Marines. A common line he heard during recruitment was, "You're a man now, but if you want to be a better man, join the Marine Corps."

Anyone who displayed "motivation problems," as Zebala described them, was instantly labeled as "gay" and ostracized by the soldiers. In addition, anyone who looked into leaving the army for conscientious objection, or for other reasons, were also looked down upon.

Critical discussions questioning the administration, or the military's treatment of homosexuals were virtually nonexistent, he said. When he asked a fellow soldier his opinion on a political matter, the soldier simply replied, "We're going to be Marines. We don't have opinions."



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
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Oh, yeah.

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