

# Racism and anti-semitism on the increase

It was a questionable statement when University Pres. Paul Olum, in the formation of the task force on racial harassment, asserted that racist attitudes were on the upswing across this country. At the time there was only Olum's perception and not a large body of evidence to support his contention. The Emerald, while wholeheartedly endorsing the formation and motives of the racial harassment task force, was somewhat skeptical of a national resurgence of racism.

That was before an Associated Press article with the dateline Manchester, Mass. appeared in the newspapers. It more than confirmed Olum's statement that racist attitudes and hate groups were indeed on the rise in this country.

The article noted that the affluent

Massachusetts community had set up a committee to study the problems of racism at a Junior-Senior High. The committee's study is in response to the discovery of an 11-member club of eighth graders who practiced racism and anti-semitism.

The club's name, the "Nigger and Jew Haters of America," belies its inclinations. The club, according to school officials, has been effectively disbanded. That's disbanded until the next eruption of hatred occurs, perhaps not in that community in Massachusetts, but definitely somewhere in this country.

Schools officials have promised to investigate the origins of the club, not ruling out the possibility adults may have had a hand in its forming. That's not unlikely, ignorance and

intolerance know no age barrier.

The racist and anti-semitic temper of this club of 11 eighth-graders brings home the prevalence of anti-social attitudes. Olum, in a letter to the Emerald, comments on the frequency of jokes and threats, which are considered trivial to those not in the minority. In a previous editorial the Emerald mentioned that race-slurring graffiti was increasing. Something of a cursory survey revealed that more than "harmless" slurs, the lavatory stall graffiti, are becoming prone to more and more violent statements. It appears some can only deal with the racial and

ethnic texture of American society by vowing to kill those who are different.

It bears reminding that an act by the 1981 Legislature made intimidation of another by reason of race, color, religion, or national origin a crime. Here at this University the means to redress harassment is to notify the Office of Affirmative Action. But to deal with the understanding and elimination of minority harassment Olum has set-up the task force. It is hoped that through education and understanding a group such as the "Nigger and Jew Haters of America" will never come together on this campus.

## letters

### Olum on task force

Six or seven reports of intimidation and harassment of members of minority groups on this campus have come to the attention of the University administration. I view this matter with serious concern, as you will. This is not to suggest that the problem is worse here than in other places. The media inform us that racial harassment is on the rise throughout the country and in Oregon. The fact that this unacceptable behavior is on the increase puts a greater responsibility on us as a community to be even more sensitive and alert to its existence on the campus and to do everything we can to put a stop to such activity.

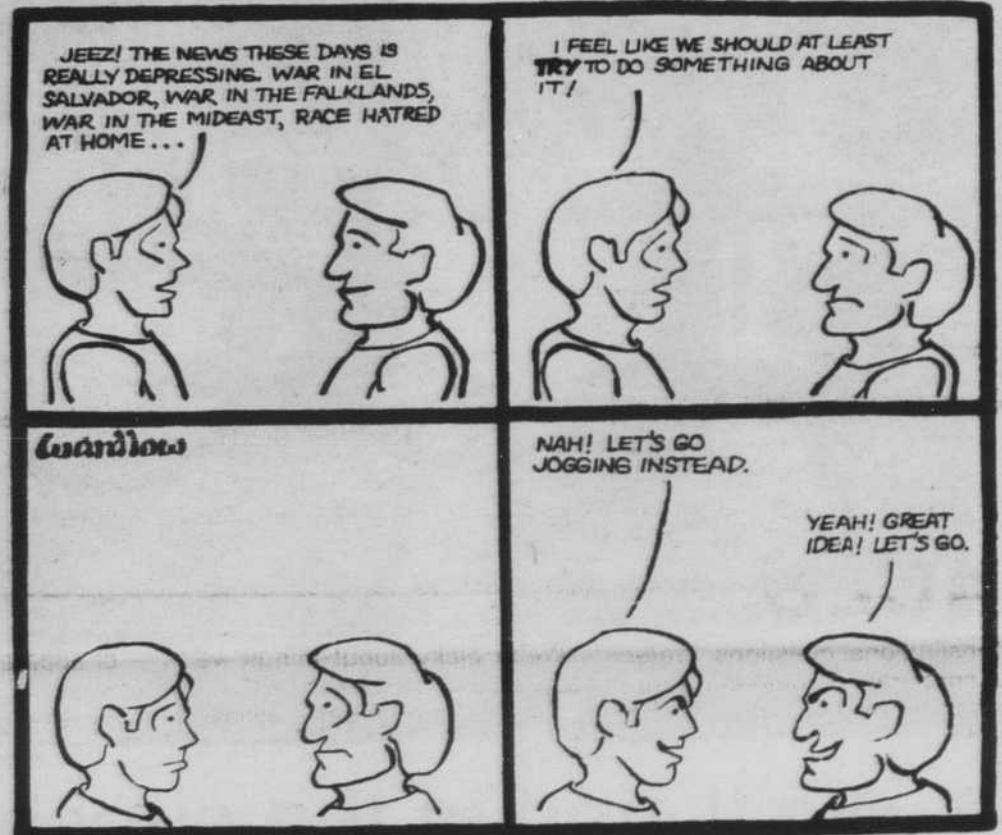
Intimidation and harassment of minorities are not limited solely to threats of potential harm but occur in more subtle ways as well. Racial jokes and graffiti, although perceived by some as innocuous and trivial, often cause considerable pain to those minorities who are the object of sick "humor." The intimidation and harassment of minorities, whether expressed in the form of jokes or threats, are neither trivial, nor casual, nor funny. Such actions are absolutely contrary to University policy; furthermore, by an act of the 1981 Legislature, intimidation of another individual by reason of race, color, religion, or national origin is a punishable crime and also can be redressed by civil action, including punitive damage.

I urge all of you in the University community to do whatever you can to actively discourage mistreatment of minorities. Surely one important activity is educating people to understand the hurt and pain that can be inflicted by such harassment. There is another important action you can take. If you know of an incident of this kind which you feel needs to be reported, please call our Office of Affirmative Action, 686-3123. All such calls will be treated as confidential. If the problem does not fall within the domain of the Affirmative Action Officer, she will see to it that the incident is referred to the

proper authority.

We all should be committed to the understanding and elimination of expression and actions that form the basis of harassment. To deal with this issue and to advise on appropriate actions to be taken, I have appointed a task force chaired by William Randolph and including Ed Coleman, Alan Contreras, Susanne Endow, Barbara Nicholls, Myron Rothbart, and George Streisinger. Please feel free to call any task force member to obtain further information or to offer suggestions or counsel.

Paul Olum  
University president



## harry esteve editor's note

The Friday morning calculus class began with the professor ridiculing the Emerald for "not checking its facts" on a story we had printed about an emotional affirmative action discussion.

It was a smart way to begin a lecture — it woke the students up and got some of them laughing.

The professor must have figured he was in good form that morning because the jokes kept coming.

The class was studying problems of maximizing profits and minimizing losses, a humorless subject that math professors try to spice up with colorful "story problems."

This professor's story went like this:

Your aunt owns 40 acres of land and needs to decide whether to plant Christmas trees or a certain kind of weed. Trees take 40 hours work per week, weeds take 80 hours work per week.

Your aunt has cheap labor, the professor said. He paused. "That's because your aunt owns a couple of Mexicans," he said. He turned to face the

class, grinning, waiting for laughter.

There was none. There was some noise, however — students shifting uneasily in their chairs as they looked around the class to see whom he had insulted. The class consisted mostly of whites, some Orientals, a Malaysian.

You have 100 hours a week of labor available, the professor continued, and you want to make the best use of it. Otherwise, "you just have those Mexicans sittin' around picking their teeth," he said. He turned away from the blackboard, smiling again, only to face a silent classroom.

The professor's jokes weren't funny, but they were timely. They came exactly one day after Pres. Paul Olum sent a memo (printed on this page) to all members of the University community on the subject of minority harassment.

"Racial jokes . . . , although perceived by some as innocuous and trivial, often cause considerable pain to those minorities who are the object of sick 'humor,'" reads one part of the memo.

The professor's math problem supports Olum's concern that racism is a problem at the University. To those whose first reaction was, like mine, "What? Here?" the calculus professor has provided us the answer.

Halfway through Friday's class the professor mumbled something about jokes, Mexicans and Californians that was supposed to act as some sort of disclaimer. Nearly unintelligible from the fifth row of a large lecture room, it seemed to amount to: These jokes about Mexicans, they're just jokes.

Perhaps he had read his mail the day before and realized he was treading dangerous ground. Maybe he remembered racial harassment recently was declared illegal in Oregon.

Maybe he realized he simply wasn't being funny, because he finally stopped. After class, the Malaysian student said the jokes had angered him.

Other students, like myself, already had registered their disgust, with silence and embarrassment.

## staff

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