

Injustice of racism, history

Black leader says prison problems stem from past

By Leslie Knight
Of the Emerald

Before justice problems in the penal system can be solved, the history of crime and racism in this country must be examined, said Ron Herndon, keynote speaker for the campus conference on the future of justice.

Herndon, co-chair of the Portland Black United Front, said this country was born from the two worst crimes in history — mass killing of Indians and the African slave trade. "Remember that this country was built on crime, on the destruction of the Indian nation and on the backs of the black people."

Herndon said for centuries the penal system has focused on the poor. "The institutions were set up to protect the rich. The harshest penalties were reserved for the poor — leniency reserved for the rich," he said.

Because prison populations are predominantly black, Herndon said "person to person crime is thought to be endemic to black people, something inherited, but it is primarily the result of poverty."

Citing prison population studies, Herndon said black people are incarcerated 10 times as often as whites, get arrested twice as often, and receive longer sentences for the same crimes. Blacks make up 50 percent prison population, although they comprise only 15 percent of the population.

Given these figures, Herndon says racism must be addressed if a difference is to be made in the justice system.

"People are not concerned with justice, they're concerned with law and order. This confuses me —



Ron Herndon

what about justice? Everything Hitler did was legal, the slave trade was legal... you raise the question of justice and you throw everyone off track."

Herndon doesn't rule out that change can be accomplished, though. He cites China as an example. "When was the last time you heard it referred to as Red China?" Doors to trade were opened, they sent their ping-pong team over, and people's perception of them changed, Herndon says.

But there has never been a commitment to eradicate racism, he says.

"Until the country declares out and out warfare on racism nothing is going to change."

Wheels squeak over parking plan

By Michele Matassa
Of the Emerald

It's been nearly two weeks since the Eugene City Council requested more input on the proposed West University Neighborhood parking plan, and the wheels of communication are beginning to turn.

At its Oct. 10 public hearing, the Council asked the city parking administration to include community groups that were ignored during the planning stages of the project. As a result, parking staff members must work with University students, Sacred Heart Hospital employees and Bureau of Land Management employees.

At its Nov. 9 meeting, the Council will reconsider the plan, which,

if implemented, will limit on-street parking in the area west of the University to two hours for drivers without a special permit.

University students have apparently had to be aggressive in order to establish communication with the city.

Barbara McCarthy, director of University affairs for the ASUO, says she had to contact the city because its representatives hadn't contacted her.

She called Marshall Landman, a WUN member who is working with the city as a public information director for the plan, and set up a meeting Monday night with city officials and student representatives.

Now that communication lines

are open, McCarthy is more optimistic about future city cooperation.

"I don't think they'll do a similar thing in this fashion again. The city staff was embarrassed at the City Council meeting and they don't want to go through that again."

"They want to present the best, well-prepared plan that they can. Nobody wants to show shoddy work," McCarthy says.

In preparation for their meeting with the city staff, McCarthy, Patrick Smith of the student advocacy office and an Incidental Fee Committee member are meeting today with University planner David Rowe and City


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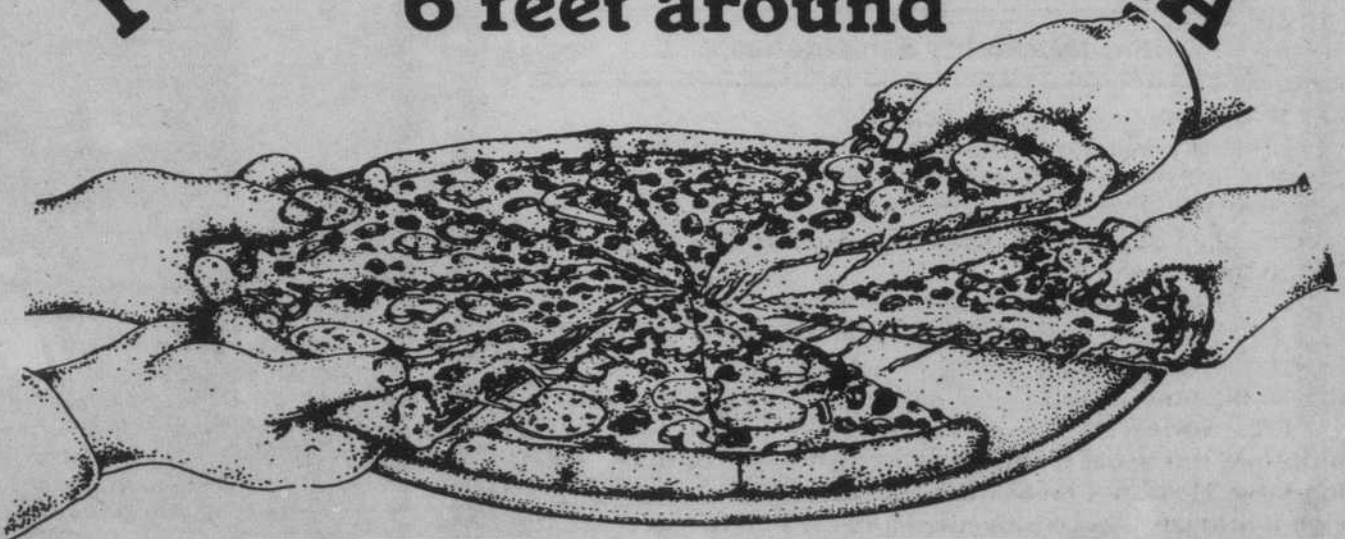
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