

Unlearning racism — a continuing struggle

Racism is a disease that runs deep into the core of our society. It manifests itself in many ways. In its most overt forms it can be seen in the actions of such groups as the Ku Klux Klan. In its subtlest forms it shows itself as parts of our subconscious; the things we might say or do in a passing moment without really thinking about it. Whatever form racism takes, it is a danger to every aspect of society.

Racism in America didn't end with abolition in the 19th century and it didn't end with the civil rights movement of the 1960's. It is alive today and thriving in virtually all facets of American life. The only way to end racism, and the hatred and violence it brings, is first to learn how to identify it.

On Friday, the Emerald ran a cartoon on its editorial page that was interpreted by many people as being racist. The criticisms of this cartoon are valid. The cartoon depicted the figure of a white woman fleeing from the dark night and a large black hand reaching out to grasp her. Beneath this was another scene of two white women and a white man walking happily under a bright light along a campus walkway. The caption read, "Organize for a safe campus." The cartoon ran beside an editorial on the problem of rape at the University. It was an attempt by a freelance graphic artist to show the fear of rape on campus. Her idea was to show that students need to "take back the night" by organizing for better lighting on campus.

There are a number of reasons why this cartoon ended up going to print. It was late at night, we were in a rush to get the newspaper out for the next day, and staff members were tired and eager to go home. Without considering all the implications, the cartoon was carelessly allowed to go print.

None of the above reasons are justification for running the cartoon. There is no excuse for racism. The implication of the cartoon was that it is black men who are behind the problem of rape at the University. Unquestionable social damage has been done because of this. It has futhered the myth of blacks being the source of trouble in our society, and that black people should be feared. The Emerald editorial staff deeply regret the terrible mistake it made in letting this cartoon appear in the newspaper.

The matter, however, shouldn't simply be put to rest and forgotten. It should serve as an example of how deeply racism has entrenched itself in our society. It shows the kind of struggle we are up against in battling racism.

A person who thinks that they will not be racist simply by saying "I will not be a racist" has much to learn. While that is a start in the right direction, the struggle against racism in our individual lives means taking a careful look at who we are and how we act everyday.

Last February, on her 71st birthday, Rosa Parks told a crowd who had gathered to hear her speak in the EMU ballroom that she has spent most of her life trying to "unlearn racism." She spoke about how, growing up in American society, everyone is a victim of racism, and that only through personal struggle and love could this disease be eradicated.

The battle against racism is a long and hard one. It means constant self-evaluation in trying to "unlearn" what we have all been taught for so long. In some of our most basic cultural concepts we continue to find the roots of racism. For example, most people accept in a non-questioning manner the notion that darkness and "evil" are linked together, just as they accept the notion that white and "good" are linked together. On television, in the movies, in the books we read and in the stories we tell our children, we promote this belief of good and evil based upon color.

Steve Biko in South Africa and Malcolm X in the United States both spoke of the need to raise black consciousness in order to counter the lack of self-esteem that was rampant in black communities, due to years of racial discrimination and indoctrination. Many whites felt alienated by the black power movement that was influenced by these individuals. In response, Biko and X told whites that they needed to raise their own consciousness because they too were victims of racism.

Fighting racism is more than championing the cause for minority equality and freedom. It means raising our own consciousness to a level that transcends any form of racism. We at the Emerald learned an important lesson from the cartoon we ran on Friday. We hope others can also learn from our mistake, and continue the struggle against racism with renewed dedication.

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CRIPPT

TAKEN FOR A RIDE AGAIN

BUMP BUMP BUMP



THE COAT-TAILER.

letters

Worst place

It seems to me that the worst place for a marching band to practice is fifty feet from the library. I'm afraid if I hear the James Bond theme song one more time, I may destroy every tuba and percussion instrument on campus.

Patrick Sprenger
Eugene

Mundane topic

SHAVING. Now there's a topic mankind can relate to. It's "universal," too. Don't we all have problems with the embarrassing issue of nicks on our faces? And who hasn't had trouble finding the best, most technologically advanced razor? Ah... "the quest for the great shave."

I wanted to puke when I read your Oct. 31 article on shaving, which half the human race and half the population of this university couldn't relate to, even if they wanted to. How would you feel about giving equal space to the latest in curling irons or better yet, mascara brushes? Now, there's a mundane topic. You didn't even give women the lip service of discussing leg or armpit shaving — which women do in an effort to "please their men."

I have always admired the Emerald for its attention to and coverage of political events and other relevant topics concerning the university population. It is unlike any university newspaper I've ever read (this is my third school) and it usually

goes above the trivial bullshit other school papers concern themselves with. I'm afraid, however, that you've hit an all time low with this article and have compromised the reputation of the Emerald. The article is sexist, at best, as well as a waste of paper.

Kari Rothi
Senior

Nothing wasted

The election showed that the national pendulum is still at the crest of its rightward swing. But not one bit of the energy we contributed to the defeat of the arch-conservative was wasted. When we got out and supported Jesse Jackson, we forced the arch-conservative to move some blacks to the front. When we got out and supported Walter Mondale and Geraldine Ferrero, we forced the arch-conservative to move some women to the front. When we raged, we forced this Ronald Wilson Reagan to recall his CIA-assassination booklet. And when we supported the Nuclear Freeze, we forced this arch-conservative to meet with a Soviet diplomat.

The social revolution of the 60's went too fast for some people, and they just plain got scared. So they flock to their churches. So they try to knock liberalism and cut money from liberal-arts education. So they build more and more missiles. So they return to the pre-1960 macho-male/passive-female role models. They won't find any answers there. Those were the role models that caused the problems in the first place.

Those were the rigid beliefs and that was the mentality that didn't work the first time. And whether anybody likes it or not, those beliefs won't work this time either. And the pendulum will begin its leftward swing, further left this time than last time. So nothing we did was wasted. In fact, everything we do counts a lot.

Keith Bowen
Eugene

Bleeding hearts

This is an open letter to youthful Republicans everywhere who thoughtlessly categorize Leftists as "bleeding hearts." Have you ever asked yourselves why our hearts bleed so? In case you haven't, I will tell you precisely why: they bleed because we are ashamed of being Americans because our government has, for the last thirty-five years, subverted the economies and governments of countries such as Nicaragua, Chile, Cuba, and Guatemala, that are or once were struggling to build a better society for their miserable, oppressed inhabitants; they bleed for the deadly escalation of the arms race and the tremendous increase in Americans impoverished under the Reagan administration; they bleed for the pillaging of the earth, that ultimate rape; and finally, they bleed for the most oppressed class of all, our peers who have become so thoroughly deluded by the great lie of the American Dream.

Brian Maffly
English

oregon daily emerald

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