

Black man's death raises controversy

The death of Lloyd D. Stevenson has brought the issue of racism to the surface of public discussion in Oregon and rightly so. Stevenson, a 31-year-old black man living in Portland, was killed by a police officer on April 20. He was the fourth black man killed by Portland police since 1975, and the first to die by strangulation (cutting-off the blood flow to the brain) when police used a special "choke hold" on him during a struggle in a convenience store parking lot.

Although witnesses have given conflicting accounts of what exactly happened on the night Stevenson was killed, as more people come forward, the story unfolding is clearly taking on racial overtones. It all started when Stevenson was walking from his home to a 7-11 food store. As he arrived at the store, he saw the manager, a white, struggling with a black man accused of stealing a bottle of wine.

Stevenson, who was a regular customer at the store, tried to hold back a crowd that had gathered from getting involved in the struggle between the store manager and the shoplifting suspect. According to several witnesses, Stevenson warned those blacks and whites who had gathered not to choose sides in the conflict. When police arrived, they arrested the shoplifting suspect, and then, seeing Stevenson arguing with a white man, went over to try and "calm him." One of the officers attempted to restrain Stevenson, a scuffle broke out and the police wrestled him to the ground. The choke hold was then applied and he went unconscious. Although police checked his pulse and then tried to resuscitate him, Stevenson died soon afterwards. The question remains whether or not Stevenson hit one of the officers before they jumped on him. The police say yes, several witnesses say no.

Whatever public sympathy there was for the officers involved in this case took a severe blow when, on the same day Stevenson was buried, two police officers set up a stand in the Portland East Precinct parking lot and began selling T-shirts with the message: "Don't Choke 'Em. Smoke 'Em." In police slang, "smoke" means shoot to death. According to Sergeant Jay Decker, the precinct's public information officer, between 20 and 30 T-shirts were sold, mostly to other officers. In the words of Ron Herndon, co-chairman of the Black United Front, "This is what you would expect from police hit squads in El Salvador." Both officers were suspended from duty.

The entire incident reveals the racial tensions that lie just below the surface of our society. More than anything else, it reveals how deeply entrenched racism is in our public institutions, including those that are designed to protect citizens and "keep the peace."

Although it is up to a jury to decide whether or not the officers involved are guilty of excessive force in applying the choke hold that led to Stevenson's death, one thing should be firm in all of our minds: Stevenson's death must not be in vain. We must question the foundations of this society, which permit racism to flourish in our individual lives and in our public institutions. What happened to Stevenson is not some kind of strange enigma. It is an example of the kind of violence that happens regularly in this country and which is built upon the subtle forms of racism that we tolerate every day.

The struggle for social justice in the world will never be attained as long as racial injustice is tolerated within our own society. It is time for Oregonians of all backgrounds to join together in the fight against racism in our schools, our offices, and our homes. In so doing, we will honor the tragic death of Lloyd Stevenson.



letters

The truth

I refer to Siti Mohd Nor's letter (ODE, April 24, 1985) relating her personal experience of "racial harmony" in Malaysia. How naive she is to think that there is no racial discrimination and tension in Malaysia. Does she need the Hague Tribunal to pronounce that there is a discernible pattern of discrimination against minorities in Malaysia before she will acknowledge the truth?

Siti, racial tension in Malaysia comes under the guise of religion, not by race per se. And it is not that the minorities are asking for religious freedom but that persecution comes about because of the combining of "church" (in this case mosque) and state. You, as one of the "moral majority," would not or choose not to understand this.

Last summer when I was back home, the New York Philharmonic Orchestra was "requested" not to play a piece written by a Jewish composer. The Jewish members in the orchestra were adamant that they be allowed to play that piece or not at all. The Malaysian authorities were reluctant and the NYPO did not play in Kuala Lumpur. I was sad this happened but rejoiced at the defiant stand that the NYPO took against bigotry. Bravo, New York Philharmonic Orchestra! Hope you all would encore your decision were you to face the choice between artistic freedom and bigotry again!

Harold Leong
Graduate, Industrial Relations

I've had it!

I have finally had it with Dan Goulet's prejudice toward the gay community. He has consistently used any excuse to justify his extreme homophobia as a rational, "normal" approach to gays. It is now my turn to ask him to "face reality." In his most recent editorial diatribe he advocates that the AIDS epidemic is almost the sole responsibility of the gay community. With statements such as "Very few non-homosexuals have an average of several dozen sex partners a year," and "their bodies become biological incubators for old and new forms of disease to spread," he merely keeps alive ugly myths used to strike out at those he unreasonably fears.

Look Dan, I've been gay a long time and I've never known anyone with "several dozen" sex partners a year (24, 36, ...144?). Nor have I met anyone who participates in "golden showers, fisting, etc." or who even found those ideas at all appealing. Dan Goulet is just focusing his hatred and (sexual?) frustration at gays once again. Let us not forget that this is one of the same individuals that tried to form "Students for Bestiality," claiming that it was at least as normal, if not more so, than homosexuality — and tried to get IFC funding along with GALA.

Well Dan, luckily most people aren't as fear-ridden and prejudiced as you are, as is evidenced by the landslide Pickney-Dreezen ticket. So in the future — if you can't control your hatred — at least stop trying to burden the rest of us with it. In conclusion — I'll say the same to you, Dan, as to anyone else with similar ideas of prejudice (i.e. the KKK, neo-nazis, etc.), take them and stuff them.

Bob Powell

A well-adjusted human being

Stabbed again

As reported in the Emerald (April 29), the IFC has again stabbed the student body in the back by allocating more money to the Athletic Department. In hard times, extravagances like athletics should be the last thing to be funded. This money supports a privileged few and has no benefit to over 90 percent

of the students. The money could be spent in much better ways; for instance, upgrading our library system which currently is understaffed, underbooked, and closed too much. Other parts of the University facilities which are in dire need that could benefit more students than the A.D. are the several existing computer facilities.

It's too bad that the IFC supports big-league athletics rather than big-league academics. I guess that reflects the attitudes of the students and the state. MIT we will never be.

Alan Bradon
Graduate, Geology

Not clear

The Gay and Lesbian Alliance would like to thank the Emerald for coverage of the new blood donor tests for AIDS. Some of us felt, however, that GALA's position on the tests was not clear in the article. GALA is opposed to the test, not because we think the blood supply shouldn't be protected. Rather, we are opposed to people in high risk categories using the test as a diagnostic tool.

This test is not a way for an individual to determine whether or not they have AIDS. The very presence of the test is misleading to individuals and the donor centers have refused to guarantee confidentiality. The test only relates to exposure to AIDS and has an extremely high error rate. GALA is advocating caution in the use of this test and urges individuals who need to know if they have AIDS to see a physician.

Lynn Pickney
Jim Shoemaker
GALA, Co-Directors

Letters Policy

The Emerald will attempt to print all letters containing fair comment on topics of interest to the University community.

Letters to the editor must be limited to 250 words, typed, signed and the identification of the writer must be verified when the letter is turned in. The Emerald reserves the right to edit any letter for length or style. Letters to the editor should be turned into the Emerald office, Suite 300 EMU.

oregon daily emerald

The Oregon Daily Emerald is published Monday through Friday except during exam week and vacations by the Oregon Daily Emerald Publishing Co., at the University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon, 97403.

The Emerald operates independently of the University with offices on the third floor of the Erb Memorial Union and is a member of the Associated Press.

General Staff

Advertising Director: Susan Thelen
Production Manager: Russell Steele
Classified Advertising: Vince Adams
Controller: Jean Ownbey

Advertising Sales: Laura Buckley, Tim Clevenger, Jennifer Fox, Michael Gray - Intern, Robin Joannides - Intern, Carlos Lamadrid - Intern, Marcia Leonard, Rick Martz, Nancy Nielsen, Brett Pickman, Tim Swillinger, Laura Willoughby - Intern, David Wood.

Production: Kelly Cornyn, Stormi Dykes, Manuel Flores, Kathy Gallagher, Dean Guernsey, Jackson Haring, Susan Hawkins, Kirk Hirota, Grant Keltner, Rob Kraft, Ross Martin, Karin McKecher, Lauri Neely, Kelly Neff, Kara Oberst, Curt Penrod, Michele Ross, Alyson Simmons, Peg Solonika, Karen Stallwood, Tim Swillinger, Colleen Tremaine, Hank Trotter, Mary VanCura.

Editor: Michele Matassa
Managing Editor: Mike Sims
News Editor: Michael Kulaga
Editorial Page Editor: Costas Christ, Dave Berns
Photo Editor: Brian Erb
Sports Editor: Brent De La Paz
Sidelines Editor: Sheila Landry
Friday Edition Editor: Kim Carlson
Entertainment Editor: Michael Duncan
Night Editor: Paul Ertelt

Associate Editors:
Administration: Jolayne Houtz
Higher Education: Scott McFetridge
Politics: Paul Ertelt
ASUO: Mary Lichtenwalner
Student Activities: Diana Elliott
Community: Cynthia Whitfield
Features: Lori Steinhauer

Reporters: Sean Axmaker, Kirsten Bolin, Michelle Brence, Robert Collias, Julie Freeman, Thomas Henderson, Robin Joannides, Allan Lazo, Adam Worcester.

Photographers: Dean Guernsey, Kirk Hirota, Jim Marks, Ross Martin, Karen Stallwood, Hank Trotter.

News and Editorial: 686-5511
Display Advertising and Business: 686-3712
Classified Advertising: 686-4343
Production: 686-4381
Circulation: 686-5511