

Racism in Oregon a problem of apathy

Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I have a dream" speech exemplifies the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. Unfortunately, for most people under 30 this is the only knowledge of civil rights they have. It has become a few paragraphs in a history text void of emotion or reality.

The basic freedoms and equalities King and his followers fought for are now taken for granted. Aside from a few incidents in the South, nobody expects racism to happen in the '80s — especially in Oregon. But it does occur.

The derogatory Noti pub signs and racism complaints to the Eugene School Board are two recent examples. The news of these strong racist feelings hitting so close to home has shocked most Oregonians. We never think it can happen here.

But it is important to realize that racism is occurring in Oregon and in the rest of the nation. And this new upswing of discrimination is hampering the progress made by the Civil Rights Movement.

State Labor Commissioner Mary Wendy Roberts has filed a complaint against John Masepohl, the owner of The Pub tavern in Noti. Roberts acted on information about signs forbidding "niggers" in the bar and signs supporting apartheid. Apparently, the signs and other racial paraphernalia have been in The Pub for several years. But until now nothing has been done, and no other complaints have been made.

Masepohl has no qualms about his racist views and has done nothing to try to hide them. But his statements go beyond his free speech rights. Under Oregon civil rights laws places of "public accommodation" cannot discriminate.

These laws, however, are civil — not criminal — and do not carry jail sentences or fines. Masepohl may be guilty, but until this loophole is closed, his only punishment will be economic.

Probably the most uncomfortable and shocking aspect of this case is that Masepohl had practiced this discrimination in The Pub for several years. Most in Noti knew about it, yet nobody did anything to stop it.

This reflects the apathy in the nation regarding civil rights and racism. The attitude that "This doesn't happen in the '80s" or "We have laws to prevent racism" only hurts the progress that has been made in the past 20 years. The laws mean nothing if they are not enforced.

This is the problem black parents are addressing in complaints to the Eugene School Board. Parents have informed the board about name-calling and racism directed at their children. According to the complaints, these incidents of discrimination among the children have been ignored by the teachers.

Black students have been injured and insulted because of the values other children learn at home; however, the schools have not tried to stop these incidents. In doing so, they promote the discrimination.

The school district's policy regarding racial harassment carries a punishment of expulsion for students not behaving in a "socially acceptable manner." But even though the policy is specific to the problem, it has not been enforced.

Living in the liberal atmosphere of the University, we tend to believe Oregon is exempt from the problems of racism. But these problems are occurring. They can only be solved when the public opens its eyes to the situation and decides to remedy it.



Letters

Questions

When one has been around student government as long as I have, one hears absurdities all the time.

For example, ASUO Student Senate chairman Randy MacDonald authored a letter entitled "Resignation." In it he concluded that the concerns that I and other students have raised regarding Students for a Progressive Agenda President Steve Nelson's handling of student concerns over the administration of the student insurance program were not a "serious problem."

I and other ASUO officials called for the resignation of Steve Nelson because Steve was more concerned about the program than the students and their legitimate concerns.

A student like Willy Bils should not have to take out ads in the Emerald requesting Steve to act for the students.

Why to this day does Steve deny that there is a problem? Why is the insurance commissioner stating that there is? What is Steve hiding from? Why didn't Steve act quickly on the students' concerns?

These are only a few of the questions Steve has not answered.

Because Steve would not answer these questions, we asked for Steve to resign.

In his letter, MacDonald claims he is not biased and is

only giving his conclusions after a "fair" investigation. But given Randy's close ties to SPA for two years, his "unbiased" conclusions have as much credibility as Richard Nixon testifying on honesty in government.

If Randy's head was not so far up the derriere of SPA, he could see that students have serious questions concerning ASUO's handling of the insurance scandal.

Ron E. Munion
ASUO Incidental Fee Committee

Tables turned

"A woman was arrested on assault charges Monday in the EMU courtyard after attacking one student and a University security officer who was attempting to detain her." (ODE, March 10).

I witnessed a bizarre scene on Monday, which I can find no reason or justification for. A man, reported by the Emerald staff to be David French, was taking photographs of a woman who was performing a ritual and minding her own business.

The woman asked the man to quit taking photos, several times, but the man ignored her requests and kept shooting. The woman tried to chase the man away, but he wouldn't leave, and he kept shooting.

Finally, the woman hit the man with some sticks, yelling obscenities at him. The man finally left... to get the police and to press charges for an assault that he provoked. The woman had suddenly become a threat to him.

Poor David's watch was smashed. Poor David's ego was smashed. Poor David.

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.

Now, the woman has been taken away. Locked up. She's no longer a threat. The questions remain though... who was the victim and who was the perpetrator? Why doesn't this woman have the right to not have her picture taken? Why didn't David respect her request?

Yes, the woman assaulted the man. This is clearly against the law. Yes, the woman's behavior was a little odd. This does not mean she is without feelings or that we can immediately excuse her feelings because we do not understand her actions. What do you have to say for your own actions, David?

Kari Rothi
Student

Qualification

In the Wednesday, March 11 edition of the Emerald it was indicated that I felt the 4-J School District had the training to help student teachers get the most from their experience.

School District 4-J is one of many school districts that provide proper guidance and training to student teachers.

I did not say that 4-J was the ONLY school district qualified to train student teachers. I'm sorry for any misinterpretation this may have caused.

Karen Stone
Elementary education

Bear trap

In reference to Ken Shindledecker and his animal trapping that the Register-Guard tried so hard to glorify, I have this to say:

You are part of a small minority of people whose grotesque coldness brings vile harm to everyone else.

If the rest of us should be so lucky, your next step, after setting the next trap, will be into a bear trap that you will be unable to escape from. Certainly not before an angry bear discovers you.

Tommy Walen
Eugene

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