

Baseball makes a hit with black NL chief

In the fight against its own good ol' boy tradition, Baseball officialdom earns a congratulatory tip of the cap. With last week's hiring of Bill White as National League President, the durable ogre of white domination in upper-echelon baseball positions has balked.

The selection of White — who becomes the highest ranking black official in professional sports — moves proponents of equal hiring practices to a symbolic first base.

Arguably, the naming could be criticized as symbolic only. But while the presidency of the National League stands as little more than a figurehead position, symbols play a large and lasting role in the leadership of any great, just movement. After all, Jackie Robinson is less remembered for his baseball prowess than for his symbolic part in sports history as the game's first black.

Equally symbolic, the search committee that offered the job to White was headed by Los Angeles Dodger President Peter O'Malley — the man who fired Al Campanis nearly two years ago.

For those uninitiated, Campanis was the Dodgers' Vice President for Player Personnel who told Ted Koppel on Nightline that by nature blacks may be incapable of handling executive positions. As surely as the new National League President will stand as a symbol for the advancement of baseball's mentality out of the backwoods, circa 1950, Campanis (in spite of whatever good he may have done before he made his remark) will stand as a symbol of the type of remarkably ignorant thinking abhorrent to people of color.

Further, and subtly more important, baseball itself is the most symbolic of sports, representative of the colorful glory and grace of America at its best. Baseball truly is a sport that draws patriotic and nostalgic memories from a shared well-spring of American childhood. Blacks, as usual, have been excluded from this American dream by baseball's failure to open the door of upper-echelon opportunity. So the symbolism of the move to do so is decidedly important.

Best of all, regardless of color, White is the best man for the job. Had a less qualified man been named, critics and gladhanders alike naturally would have been labeled bigots on different sides of the entire issue. But White knows and loves the game of baseball, particularly the National League, as well as any man alive.

While great policy changes are unlikely during White's coming reign as National League chief, his hiring should lead the way for others frustrated by the kind of subtle but destructive attitudes predominant in sports.

We welcome the naming of the new National League President, but we would like to do so with a word of caution: Look for baseball officialdom to wave its new National League chief like a flag of indignant liberation, especially in the face of any criticism of future prejudices. Symbols, like everything else, can be misinterpreted and misused. The minority population demands equality, not tokenism. We hope the baseball hierarchy stands behind its claim to clean up our national pastime.

Black History Month aims to undermine oversights

As is the case with every other intellectual pursuit in the world, history demands objectivity. A good historian proceeds with an openminded hunt for the truth. However, American truth has proved somewhat elusive to compilers of history texts. American historians have done little for the health of the American mind.

Although Feb. 4 marks our entrance into National Black History Month, blacks cannot be considered the only group with a gripe. As English professor Ed Coleman points out, many Americans have been denied the blood shed by their ancestors. Chinese Americans, Japanese Americans, and of course, Native Americans have been overlooked by the predominately white-slanted productions of America's ivory tower of history propaganda.

Observance of Black History Month offers our country a forum through which public awareness and sensitivity might be raised. As whites currently represent the majority in this country, little attention has been given to oversights in history. But history, among other things, is the science of accountability. America must be held accountable for its traditions of flagrantly oppressing minorities. And we, the descendants of the oppressors and the oppressed, should suffer the opportunity of witnessing our heritage with crystal clarity.

History — accurate history — will introduce our descendants to an America with truth, not myth, as the cement of its foundation. Myth may serve moviemakers; accuracy serves historians.

SKELLY



Letters

Mob hysteria

Last night, Feb. 1, while goofing around in the snow near our dorms, some friends and I stopped to stare in amazement at a group of more than 100 students who were assaulting cars as they passed on Agate Street.

At first, this seemed amusing; but soon, we realized that it was not all in fun. After hearing people yell obscenities from every side, we noticed a truck had been stopped and the tail end was forced off of the road, into a pole. The driver stepped out, and the calls grew louder and even more filled with hatred.

"Beat him up; he's only one guy!"

"Fill the truck with snow!"

They called him every name and threatened him. Thankfully, he walked away for a few minutes (while he was gone, they attempted, unsuccessfully, to overturn the truck). He returned in the midst of continuing harassment and got into his truck. Many people did not want to let him loose because they weren't satisfied; but he did get away. As we made our way back home, we could still hear cries of malice from those who wanted more.

This night began with the excitement of the snow and of sharing it with friends. We did have lots of fun. But I'm sorry for the unfortunate ones who were caught in that mob's hysteria.

Annie Barron
Student

Insensitive

The article on Lyllye Parker in the Thursday, Feb. 2 Emerald was awful on two main counts. First, it was incoherent; it looked as if it had been chopped by an editor until the original focus was completely lost. The impulse to write the article must have been the award from the Northwest Association of Special Programs she won in December for setting an example of academic achievement and overcoming obstacles. You cannot tell that from the article.

Second, because the reason

for her being the subject of the article was lost, the article presents something dangerously near to a racist stereotype, as though older, black, poor, single mothers make news just by surviving at the University. Perhaps they should, but Lyllye is not alone in doing that, even at the University. Lyllye has done much more: She is the only person from Oregon to win the NASP Award this year, she has made the Dean's list, she won the Golda Parker Wickham scholarship last May, and these awards come as recognition for real accomplishments in the face of formidable obstacles. The article lost track of her accomplishments, and the result is at the least insensitive to those. It may also be insensitive to her race in leaving the impression that her race is what got her in the paper.

This may be the result of poor writing, poor copy editing, scrambling to meet deadlines, thoughtlessness at the news desk; the result was still, despite any excuses, incoherent and insensitive.

John W. Powell
Services coordinator
Educational Opportunities
Program

Euphemisms

According to Mosby's Medical dictionary, induced abortion is the intentional termination of the life of a fetus who could not survive outside of the womb. Unfortunately there is no physiological demarcation clarifying the length of incubation needed for a baby to survive if born. This steadily decreasing period of time is merely a reflection of our technological capability. At present, we are able to save premature babies born before the twenty-fourth week. In the generations to come, younger and younger premature babies will survive, thus further clouding the nebulous distinction between what society deems "murder" and

what it refers to as "abortion." It necessarily follows that the term "abortion" is only a present day euphemism for the killing of a nascent human life, and should be viewed as no less of an anathema than the killing of an equally defenseless infant.

Contrary to Tom Ribe's (ODE, Feb. 1) commentary supporting abortion, one need not be a member of the "religious right" to oppose abortion. One only needs to become educated.

Grant Searles
Senior, biology

Wind chilled

Concerning Dan Williams' decision not to close school Friday (Feb. 3) — Dan, what were you thinking? I braved the wind chill factor and snow in my Oregonian attire like many of my fellow students only to find that half of my classes had been canceled. Tell me, Mr. Williams, did you walk about a mile to campus to find that your office would be opened and closed periodically throughout the day and that 50 percent of your day would be spent waiting around for it to open?

This is comparable to the situation that faced all students who came to school on Friday. And what about the students who couldn't get to classes at all because it was too dangerous? Too bad for them, eh? They didn't want to risk their safety so they'll just have to be behind. Now there's a good administrative decision, punish those who live off-campus and don't happen to live near a bus stop. Maybe the next time we have Arctic weather passing through you'll stop and think if your decision is best for all students and faculty, or just a percentage.

Sarah Jean Snyder
Sophomore

Letters Policy

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