

Wounds reopened by court's decision

At a time when the ugliness of racism is again resurfacing in our society, it is disheartening to hear of the U.S. Supreme Court's recent slate of decisions which greatly limit means and programs designed to combat prejudice.

Last Friday, the court held in a 5-4 decision that a Civil War-era civil rights act prohibiting the use of race as a factor in making private contracts could not be used in racial harassment suits brought against employers.

This decision was one of five civil rights decisions handed down by a new conservative majority in the court. These decisions indicate the court is not likely to protect the concept of affirmative action.

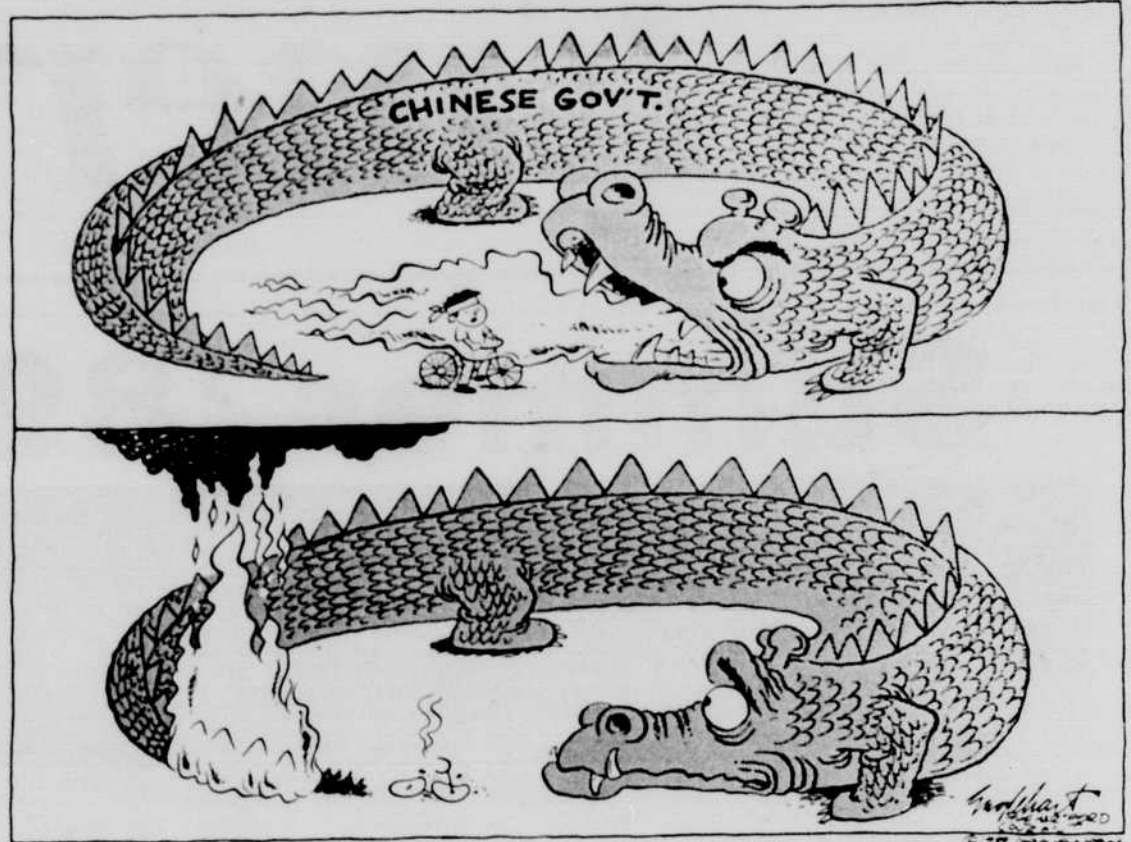
So far this year, the court has ruled that cities may not set aside a fixed percentage of public contracts for minorities, that civil rights plaintiffs may not use statistics on job segregation to prove illegal discrimination, that white males may file reverse discrimination suits against court-approved affirmative action programs, and that minorities or women may not challenge an unfair seniority policy after it has been in force for 300 days.

The latest decision centers around an 1866 civil rights statute that the court had allowed to be used in job discrimination. Because the old statute is more lucrative in permitting punitive damages than legislation passed in the 1960s, this law was frequently cited in civil rights cases.

In its decision Friday, the court decided to narrowly interpret the law's clause about "making contracts" and allow plaintiffs to use the law when suing for racial discrimination in hiring practices, but not for on-the-job harassment claims by hired workers.

There was at least encouraging, vigorous dissent in the 5-4 decision. Justice William Brennan said the court's interpretation was "needlessly cramped" and untenable. "What the court declines to snatch away with one hand, it takes with the other," Brennan said.

Lawmakers have also promised a speedy reply to the court's reopening old wounds. After many civil rights issues had been thought to be settled by judicial decrees, the new court wants to send it all back to the legislatures. They are ready; numerous legislators have called for new bills to reinstate civil rights to what it was before Reagan. Such reforms would, on the whole, be better than the patchwork quilt of rights legislation introduced hastily in the turbulent 1960s, but until those reforms are in place, there are dark days ahead.



Strong responses needed to China's move

Events in China continue to disintegrate at an alarming rate. The latest tactic in Beijing's arsenal of crackdowns shows that the government is not coddling the pro-democracy dissenters: Students and protestors are being sentenced to death for resistance.

Saturday, eight people were sentenced for allegedly beating soldiers and burning vehicles when troops took over Tiananmen Square at the start of the crackdown on the pro-democracy movement, the Associated Press reported.

Three men were similarly marked for execution in Shanghai Thursday after a court said they incited protests and set fire to a train.

Visiting Chinese students here in the United States have not had to face execution orders, but their safety seems to be imperiled also. In cities such as New York and San Francisco, there have been reports that diplomats from Chinese consulates are photographing protests by visiting students and recording names for punishment when the students return home. In response, President Bush has extended the visas of visiting Chinese in the country.

At the University, Chinese students have continued to protest their government's actions, but so far, we've seen that their moves have been met with only muted support from the community. As long as these students are willing to risk their own lives and the safety of their families for an important cause, we in the community owe it to them to speak out and show our repugnance at China's actions. How much longer will these students continue their crusade to deaf ears?

Also, stronger measures must still be demanded of the Bush administration. Although a recent Los Angeles Times poll claims that a majority of Americans supports the president's handling of the China crisis, we can't understand what Bush has done that anyone *could* support.

It seems likely that the President's current high marks in foreign affairs reflect the accomplishments of the NATO summit in Europe, where Bush also had to be pushed to accomplish something. The NATO summit was a very commendable achievement, but if Bush waits too long with this still-fluid situation, it may be too late.

Letters

Goodbye

Even though I'm a junior, after a year of studying at the University I am leaving to finish my degree elsewhere. This is a very sad place.

There is a painful need for this college to teach its students the most important, basic rules of life — rules like don't litter, don't hit people, grades aren't everything, money isn't everything, love yourself and just because the crowd is doing it does not make it OK.

This school should take responsibility for really educating its students instead of merely grabbing for their cash. Look at the trash on 13th Avenue, fraternity behavior, the ASUO elections, last winter's "snowball fight," racism, homophobia and epidemic self-destructive behavior like alcoholism.

For many of these students, this will be the last chance to learn the basics. If you're not teaching them this, what are you teaching them, University?

Last fall I was eager to be a University student. Now I am

embarrassed. I'm transferring to a school where people generally have learned the basics and moved on to deal with issues bigger than them or their wallets.

The death of this planet is no longer on our parents' heads, but on ours. Until we learn to love and respect ourselves, our treatment of the Earth will continue to reflect that lack of compassion.

Julie Crist
Journalism

Get noticed

Yes, Jonah Bookstein (ODE, June 1), graffiti gets noticed! I've noticed the graffiti as well as several of my acquaintances. It did not force me to think. I simply pondered the message upon my own discretion.

In a nation that allows you to rally, assemble, speak freely, and publish your concerns openly, I cannot see how you can justify an illegal action under the mechanism of "suppression of truth" when the legal system will allow you to ex-

press your concerns with reason and rational maturity.

Thaddeus J. Hain
TCF

Catchwords

"Bigot," "homophobic," "intolerant," "gay-bashing," "prejudice," "discrimination" — all highly charged emotional catchwords. These vicious words are increasingly used by many liberals to paint a deceptive image of those folks who accurately find serious flaws with taking pride in a chosen unnatural and unhealthy human behavior.

University President Paul Olum (ODE, May 30) is the latest to join the bandwagon flinging out ill-defined labels like "gay-bashing" and a favorite liberal hate word: "intolerance." In a fanatical case of liberease double-speak, he declares that the University absolutely will not tolerate intolerance.

Quoting Olum's willful distortion of morality: "(W)e can-

not enforce morality ... (however) certain kinds of behavior are not acceptable on campus." All too predictably, he doesn't apply this conviction to the homosexual's behavior, but rather to those that would dare to dispute homosexual behavior.

Homosexual promoters favor ambiguous words like "gay-bashing." They hope to gain public support by confusing the reprehensible cases of physical harm and verbal threats (condemned by responsible conservatives and liberals alike) with the very appropriate questioning of aberrant behavior.

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It is simply unfair to equate objection of an acquired deviant behavior on the same level as racism or physical assault. It is wrong to brand a person a "homophobic bigot" because they dare to question lock-step "tolerant" acceptance of an abnormal behavior. Indeed, there is a standard of behavior below which it is acceptable and appropriate for society to question, to discriminate against, and to seek to restrain.

Jon Wollander
Eugene

Letters Policy

The Emerald will attempt to print all letters containing comments on topics of interest to the University community. Comments must be factually accurate and refrain from personal attacks on the character of others.

Letters to the editor must be limited to no more than 250 words, legible, signed and the identification of the writer must be verified when the letter is submitted.

The Emerald reserves the right to edit any letter for length or style.