

# Greens create spectacle to increase awareness

By Anastasia Goodstein

The Youth Greens have come together as a chapter of the national Youth Greens in a response to the lack of radical, creative actions in local Earth Week events.

Earth Day was becoming a corporate Disneyland with Du-

## Commentary

point and the United States Forest Service advertising as environmentalists. George Bush and Margaret Thatcher wore their "hello, I'm an environmentalist" name tags and led the parade riding the flying Dumbos.

So the Youth Greens decided to kick off this weeklong event by injecting a dose of reality into the veins of the University campus. The composting of the Earth Week Eldorado and the unrecyclable consumer trash inside was supposed to symbolize the waste involved in our current patterns of consumption and technology.

This stuff simply was not compostable or recyclable. Our act was intended as a constant reminder of the growth and

economic exploitation that has brought us to this ecological crisis — a system which we are all not equally responsible for. The burying and replanting were attempts at a symbolic regeneration and a re-greening of the planet, or at least a small part of it.

The rally was composed of a variety of different groups and actions. Oregon Student Public Interest Research Group led off with a recycling demonstration, dumping the non-recyclable, non-biodegradable waste in the car. There were speakers on the meaning of April 16 being Tax Day, the introduction of an environmental graduation pledge, the meaning of an "environmentalism" quite distinct from the continued cutting, mining and pollution our so-called representatives envision, and our own speakers discussing the relation of rampant consumerism, greed, and unwieldy technology to the destruction of the planet.

In addition to our replanting of the Cadillac, an effigy of George Bush and an American flag were burned by some to get people's attention — to have them look at the reality of what our country is as opposed to the

unrealized ideals either the flag or our president supposedly stand for.

The media pounced on the flag burning, and immediately portrayed it as the focus of our rally. They did not give an adequate description of our action, or the motives behind burning the flag. The American flag is a symbol of equal opportunity and freedom and justice for all. The flag was burned by a woman of color in order to show burning through the lie that these ideals are being actualized.

The fact that a woman of color burned the flag may have sparked racist feelings which most Euro-Americans have internalized, but this woman, just as all oppressed people in our country, is not going away.

The Burning Bush was also a symbolic gesture, and not an attack on his humanity. George Bush claims to be the "Education President," yet he has cut financial aid. George Bush claims to be the "Environmental President," yet he denies global warming in fear of losing big business and supports the timber industries which rape our land.

George Bush has been the

leader of a war on drugs which has ended up being a war on inner-city residents and people of color. By burning his cardboard effigy, we burned his hypocrisy and lies which have seduced the entire country into denial.

The torching of the Cadillac was a reaction against the rally and actions. The fire put people's safety and health in danger, and spewed some quite toxic smoke into the air and lungs of fire fighters. It also, sadly, destroyed a number of plants and trees, and the soil in the car. But after the fire, the Youth Greens and Survival Center participated in a second painting and planting of the car.

If anyone saw our display as ugly or garbage — that's great! That is what we intended. The ugliness we portrayed is the

ugliness of an environment nearly all of us put ourselves into every day — the monster of consumption, waste and isolation: the private vehicle.

And the "ugliness" of that symbolic car, once torched to a shell in a rather unintelligent act, is the ugliness of toxic waste dumps, overcrowded prisons, clear cuts and crack babies that we lucky ones here in clean, green Eugene don't want to see.

The "ugly garbage" has been removed, but we hope we've demonstrated that a little human creative expression (our art) and a little natural beauty (a small garden) can begin to transform and re-green the real garbage which is strangling the planet.

Anastasia Goodstein is a member of the Youth Greens.

## Letters

### Protest

I am disturbed by the recent published responses (ODE, Gretchen Wendt, April 24; and Pat Anolfo, April 26) concerning the burning of the American flag April 16. It appears to me both Anolfo and Wendt do not completely understand or appreciate the freedom we possess here in the U.S.

As Americans, we are given the freedom to protest the government's actions and policies without the threat of imprisonment or the fear of being shot. Our prerogative to burn the American flag is the personification of what this country stands for and what it guarantees for its citizens.

To ban the burning of a piece of material which represents the U.S. is to make a mockery of our freedom. If certain objects are placed out of the reach of the average citizen and are allowed to be touched only at the discretion of governmental regulation, then we certainly do not possess the freedom the East Germans and the Chinese are supposedly yearning to obtain. For if that is our freedom, then it is remarkably close to the repression Chinese students were protesting against a year ago.

As a matter of fact, they died because they were burning their flag and were protesting against their government. If these recent letters are any in-

dication, then we are also amazingly close to instituting "the death penalty" for flag burning. Please tell me that that is not the kind of freedom America is coming to represent.

As for "the American dream being burned at the stake," it is hardly a result of a few people burning an American flag in protest of governmental policies. Rather, I would suggest it is a result of some governmental policies, of an apathetic public, and of a few well-meaning, but misguided individuals who seek to take away our freedoms.

Patricia Deem  
English

### Not naive

I would like to respond to the editorial concerning Ballot Measure 6 (ODE, April 25). Although the Emerald endorsed the measure, it was also called naive.

Encouraging students to take seriously their job choices by considering the social and environmental consequences of those choices is anything but naive. Rather, it is a crucial part of education that is not being addressed nearly enough on campus.

I believe that most people would not purposefully use their education to harm the environment or others. However,

most of the world's social and environmental problems are not the result of international malice. Rather, people just aren't educated about the potential effects of their actions and unintentional tragedy results.

The pledge is only a piece of paper, but my hope is that it will make people think and motivate them to investigate any potential employer.

Kathy Taylor  
Pledge co-organizer

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