

Violence option to end apartheid

The summer's biggest tour so far came to an end on Saturday and it didn't involve the Rolling Stones, the Who, or any other rock group. But Nelson Mandela packed them in during his 11-day, eight-city visit to solicit money and support for the African National Congress.

President Bush has criticized the ANC leader, who spent 27 years in prison, because of his refusal to denounce violence in his country as a method of eradicating apartheid. But Bush didn't rule out violence when it came to disposing Manuel Noriega from Panama. Nor did he, as vice president, question then-President Reagan when U.S. troops were sent to Grenada and then to the Middle East in order to solidify U.S. interests. If we read Bush's lips correctly, they say that violence is alright as long it benefits U.S. prerogatives.

While violence is never a favorable first-choice for conflict resolution, history shows that it is a formidable response to feuding among nations or peoples. The American Revolution was won by armed struggle, not talks at a bargaining table. Native Americans did not relinquish their land through generosity, but as a result of armed invasion. Treaties and charters between nations, more often than not, come after some form of violent confrontation, not before.

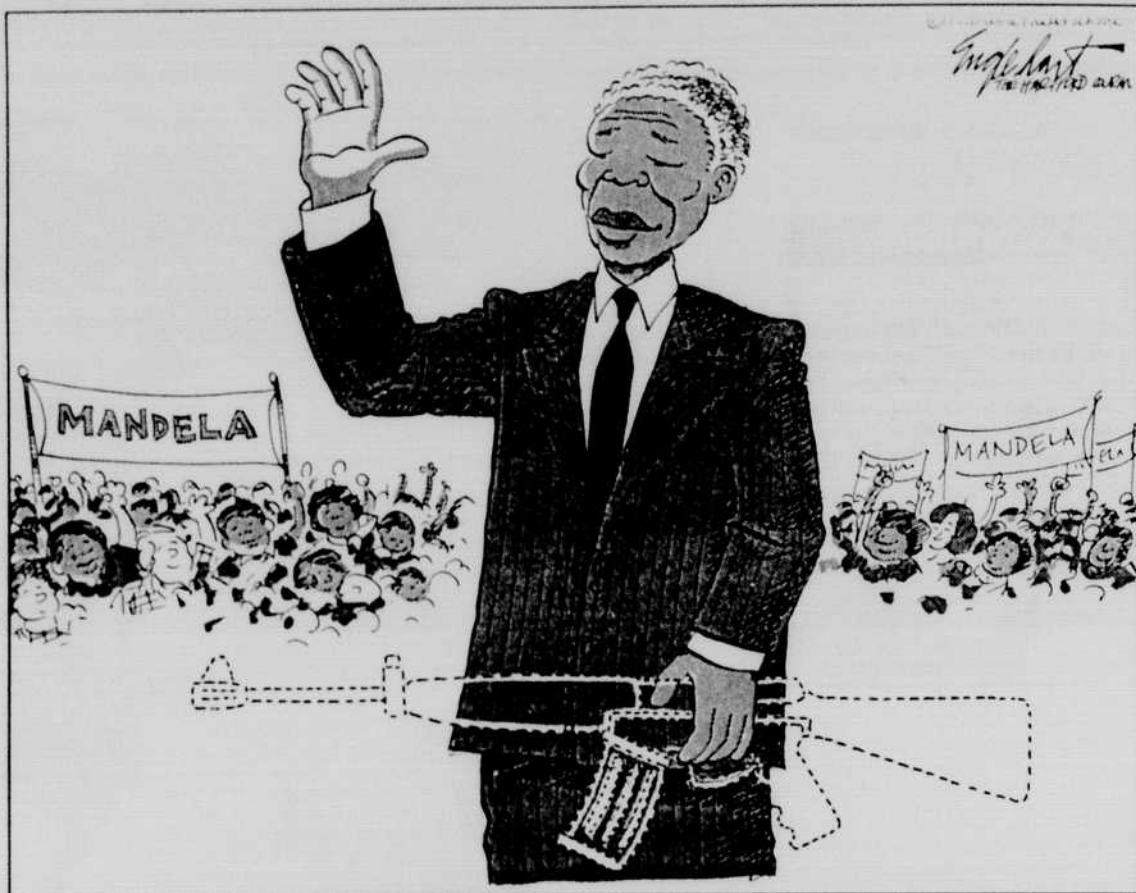
The United States cannot renounce its history of violence in achieving its goals. Nor can South Africa deny its use of violence to maintain the apartheid system. Television has brought U.S. audiences nightly viewings of South African police beating up black protesters.

While negotiations to end the racial strife in South Africa continue, the black majority continue to survive without the right to vote or the right to live where it pleases. There is only so much talking to be done. Unless talk begets action, pent-up frustration can lead to violence. Therefore, the United States should cease all economic trade with racist South Africa until blacks are afforded full citizenship rights.

As one of South Africa's biggest trading partners, the United States has the economic, political, and social clout to demand the abolition of the apartheid system. It took the United States almost 400 years to admit that blacks should have the same citizenship rights as whites. As South Africa enters its fifth decade of officially-sanctioned racism, hasn't the United States learned anything in its dealings with racial problems?

Nelson Mandela was jailed in 1962 in South Africa because he refused to renounce violence as a means to liberate black South Africans. He was freed earlier this year without disavowing the possibility of using armed struggle to fulfill the prophecy of a truly free South Africa.

Desperate people demand desperate solutions. Enough people have been killed in South African violence. Nelson Mandela has expressed the need for increased U.S. sanctions to end South Africa's repressive practices. President Bush — read Nelson Mandela's lips. Sever ties with apartheid before violence escalates beyond control.



Forum

Homosexuality not a moral issue

By Deborah Frisch

In the *Emerald* May 17, William Moore explained why he, as a Christian, is opposed to homosexuality. In his closing statement, Moore encourages an open discussion of the different ideas and issues involved in the controversy about sexual orientation. I would like to contribute to this discussion by addressing the question, "How can we tell whether something is a moral issue?" I would first like to suggest that we often confuse "different" with "wrong" and then explain why I don't think sexual orientation is a moral issue.

Commentary

People (myself included) seem to have difficulty making the distinction between behaviors that are merely different from conventional ones and those that are wrong.

For example, when my grandmother, who is left-handed, was in elementary school, her teachers forced her to write with her right hand, presumably because it was "wrong" to be left-handed. As a second example, many linguists (and other people) used to think that blacks had poorer grammar than whites until one researcher showed that "black English" is perfectly grammatical — it just has a different grammar than "white English."

There are lots of examples that make the same point, namely, we have a tendency to assume that just because something is different, it's wrong. Of course some things are different or unconventional *are* wrong, for example, child abuse — so the question is "If something is different, how can we decide if it is wrong?" Since questions of right and wrong boil down to questions of morality, another way of saying this is, "How can we de-

cide if something is a moral issue?"

Moore believes homosexuality is wrong because it "violates the design of our bodies and the intent of our sexuality." I assume that what he means is that God designed our bodies and intended for sexuality to be used solely for reproduction. Other Christians may disapprove because they believe that the Bible says homosexuality is wrong. Both of these views depend on the assumption that morality is defined in terms of God's will. If something is different from what the Bible condones, then it is wrong.

In order to reply to Moore's arguments, you have to accept his assumption that the Bible is the ultimate authority about moral issues. Several people have done this in letters to the *Emerald*, by presenting alternative interpretations of quotes from the Bible. I don't subscribe to Moore's view of morality, and so I really don't have any response to his commentary. My comments are addressed to those people who are open to the possibility that questions of morality can be addressed without making reference to "God's will" or the Bible.

I would like to suggest a different way of deciding whether something is a moral issue. Morality only applies to situations where one's actions have an effect on someone else. I am using the phrase "someone else" very broadly, to include other people, animals, or even the environment. When a person's actions have an effect on others, then it's a moral question. This means that homosexuality isn't the sort of thing that can be right or wrong, because it doesn't affect other people.

Moore is afraid that if we give up the belief that morality is defined in terms of what the Bible says, we are left with total subjectivity and chaos. He says that if sexual orientation is

seen as a matter of personal taste that doesn't have anything to do with right or wrong, then "not only can homosexuality be defined as 'normal,' but so can any acts, including brutal and destructive ones." This isn't true at all. Since a person's sexual orientation has no effect on other people, it isn't a moral issue. In contrast, child abuse involves one person imposing his or her will on someone else, and therefore is a moral issue.

Some of you may be thinking, "Yeah, well, I'll buy what you're saying — but when two men or two women start touching or holding hands in public, that does affect me — it makes me sick, and so by you're definition, now it's a moral issue — because it's affecting other people." Well, it's hard to know where we draw the line between behaviors that affect other people, and behaviors that don't.

The bottom line is, homosexuality is not a moral issue. Animal research and the logging debate are moral issues because they involve conflicting interests between different people or animals. The cancer patients' interests are in conflict with the research animals' interests. What's good for the timber industry is not necessarily what's good for future generations of inhabitants of the earth.

In sum, if a person's behavior doesn't affect anyone else then it isn't a moral issue. It doesn't make sense to ask whether homosexuality is right or wrong. Of course, you personally may find it offensive, unappealing, or whatever. That part is a matter of personal taste. No one can convince you to like it, but whether you like it or not, it isn't right or wrong. It just is.

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Oregon Daily Emerald

P.O. Box 3159, Eugene, Oregon 97403

The Oregon Daily Emerald is published Tuesday and Thursday during the summer by the Oregon Daily Emerald Publishing Co., at the University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon. Daily publication begins with the fall.

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

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