

Police already have powers they need

The Oregon House passed a bill last week allowing police officers to stop, question and detain people they believe are about to commit a crime.

Rep. Kevin Mannix, D-Salem, said he sponsored the bill because Oregon is the only state that won't allow police officers to approach and question a person who is about to commit a crime.

According to Mannix, under current law, if a police officer sees someone in a dark alley at 2 a.m., the officer cannot stop that person and ask what they're doing.

Wrong! Police officers already have the right to stop and question suspicious individuals if there is reasonable cause. Instead of enacting more legislation to increase police powers, the state should better define the word "suspicious" as it applies to behavior. They should also increase the training and education of police officers as to police rights and limits when stopping and questioning people.

Of course, for the entire system to work, citizens must better educate themselves as to their own rights if stopped by a police officer for "suspicious activity" or for appearing to be "about to commit a crime."

Everyone agrees police should be allowed to fight crime and criminals as effectively as possible. And if all policemen were perfect crime fighting "robocops" without human flaws such as racism or personal biases, this law would be fine. But as the beating of Rodney King in Los Angeles proved, the police department is made up human beings just like the rest of society.

Giving police the right to pull over anyone they think might be about to commit a crime is just too much power. Will suspicion mean the cop doesn't think people of color should be in particular neighborhoods after hours? Will people driving less expensive automobiles be free to roam through the "good side of town"?

Why open up the laws so police could more easily justify such cases?

The large majority of policeman are honest, up-standing citizens. But in the interest of civil rights and fair treatment for everyone, they do not need more power. House Bill 2921 just increases the ambiguity surrounding the policy of what constitutes suspicion.

More importantly, in light of the terrifying, yet enlightening, incident in Los Angeles, citizens should have some role in overseeing claims of police harassment and abuse. Instead of giving police more power, local governments should create a police review board — an independent commission made up of citizens and police officers who would review police actions and policies.

Unfortunately, HB 2921 does not address review boards, just police powers. Some legislators have said the bill has a fair chance of becoming law, but the bill still has to get through the Senate for approval. Two years ago the Oregon Senate defeated a similar bill, and it should be defeated again. The more power one group receives, the greater chance it has to abuse it.



LETTERS

What'd we do

As responsible citizens of a country which has just "won" a war, I think we need to know what we did to this defeated country of people. Unfortunately, this requires the exertion of some effort, concern and sacrificing some personal time. I know it's a bother, but trust me, it's important.

It's important to know that the U.S. was not as accurate as they had hoped with their "surgical" bombing of Iraq. High schools, marketplaces, neighborhoods and Iraqi civilians were the targets of many of our allied bombs.

Why was this information not on the news? For some reason the U.S. government did not think that the American people would like to hear about these atrocities. Nevertheless, they are a reality for the survivors.

We know about the tortured Kuwaitis, but most Americans don't know about the charred Iraqis. The entire Gulf War is a tragedy and for Americans to treat it as a victory is blood-thirsty and ignorant.

There is evidence of what we did to Iraq. The journalist and former U.S. Attorney General, Ramsey Clark, made a video showing much of the destroyed civilian life in Iraq. This video is called "Nowhere to Hide," but has not been allowed on the major television networks.

Call your local news stations and demand the airing of this shocking documentary. The film will also be shown on campus, so look for announcements.

You owe it to humanity.

Andrea Abrell
English

Doesn't mix

In response to the article "Americans friendly, not friends" (ODE, Apr. 4):

Look around this campus and you will find many different ethnic groups representing many nationalities: Dutch, German, African, Norwegian, Japanese, French, Chinese and Mexican. This campus is a veritable nest of ethnic and national diversity.

During my experiences here in the United States as a Japanese exchange student, I have attempted to enhance my understanding of American culture. I have found American culture to be fascinating, offering one unique experience after another.

I have appreciated observing the liberated spirit of Americans and so have other foreigners. Foreigners are eager to integrate liberating principles with their own cultural values.

However, in opposition to our intercultural attitudes, many American students have ethnocentric attitudes. The U.S. has been heralded as a "great melting pot": diverse ethnic groups integrating with each other.

Unfortunately, it has been my experience that Americans, when given an opportunity to expand their knowledge of other countries, simply turn their cheeks the other way.

The purpose for exchange students is not only to broaden the mind of the foreigner, but also to open up new opportunities for the natives to meet internationals.

Instead of a melting pot, America is actually stew, vegetables and meat, using space in the same bowl, but always distinct and never one.

Kaz Negishi
Psychology

Rocked system

The recent findings regarding IFC Chair and ASUO presidential candidate Mike Colson add further turmoil to a system rocked with strife.

Our student government faces diverse problems, the least of which being the severe budget difficulties brought on by Measure 5. An ASUO executive placed in doubt by allegations of unethical conduct will be ineffective in dealing with such problems. An effective student administration must provide a united front rather than factionalized political controversy.

Thus, we feel that Colson should do the right thing and withdraw from the ASUO presidential race. Placing greater pressure on an already tenuous situation, Colson will be unable

to provide the leadership required to steer the University through these troubled times.

Colson should show the students of the University that he really cares. By withdrawing, he will place the future of the University above his own personal interests.

Frances Stern
Dennis Westlund
Students

Prescription

Someone altered a residence hall restroom sign to read "womyn" instead of women, and Teresa Knezek is upset (ODE, Apr. 3). She can't understand why many womyn choose to change the traditional spelling to show that we are independent beings in our own right, and not mere appendages of men.

Knezek resorts to sarcasm unsupported by logic to make her point. She suggests that to be a feminist is to say, "I am so weak and helpless in the face of the cruel oppression perpetuated by our cruel, patriarchal society that I demand special treatment (and perhaps a heavy dose of prescription tranquilizers) to soothe my inflamed political sensibilities."

Those who believe this parody is simplistic or inaccurate must not try to argue. Knezek claims to have heard it all, and doesn't want to listen to anyone with a different point of view.

I know there's no point in debating with the close-minded Knezek, so I won't try. But I do have one suggestion for her. She should consider changing her major to something besides psychology. Or failing that, she should stay out of the mental health professions once she graduates.

It makes me really nervous to think that someone with the attitudes she professes might someday have the power to force prescription tranquilizers (or worse treatments?) on those whose politics she disagrees with.

If she finds the existence of graffiti so profoundly upsetting, she might consider that being a janitor is an honorable job.

Betsy Brown
Eugene

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P.O. Box 3159, Eugene, Oregon 97403 • (503) 346-5511

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