

Rise in hate crimes everyone's concern

The rise of Eugene hate crimes isn't just a concern of targeted groups — it's something that affects everyone, either directly or indirectly.

Oregon saw a 46 percent increase in hate crimes during the first six months of this year, with assault and vandalism making up the majority of the crimes.

Lane County ranked second after Multnomah in percentile increases, going from seven reported offenses last year to 32; Eugene claimed 30 of that number.

Considering that more than half the state's crimes involved racial prejudice, it's obvious one of this country's oldest and ugliest problems continues to haunt us.

The question of prejudice isn't an easy one to answer. It stems from the unfathomable human condition, of which fear, ignorance and intolerance are a part, each feeding off the other.

Fear is a natural species response, keeping that which is unknown and potentially harmful at a safe distance. It's when this instinct is warped by ignorance that we become afraid of things undeserving of our fear.

We learn early from our parents, peers and immediate culture which things to label "frightening" or "bad," which walls to put up and where. In this way, we often inherit the ignorance of those around and preceding us, making it our own.

Few people dare to challenge these familiar boundaries, never learning what lies beyond them. Here, ignorance breeds fear, which often leads to prejudice. The smaller the knowledge of the unknown, the more impending its doom; the scarier it becomes, the greater the fear; the larger the fear, the bigger the distance between the victim and that which is feared.

And so the racial walls that continue to separate the people of this country are built.

But the dividing forces didn't appear out of nowhere.

They come from early wrongs such as the European infiltration of a land that wasn't, contrary to popular belief, free for the taking, and from the same group's subjection of fellow human beings, based on color, to years of slavery.

They come from elitist laws forbidding the collaboration and mixing of colonial-era white indentured and black slaves to dilute the possibility of rebellion.

They come from increased territorial competition due to a growing number of people vying for a shrinking amount of land.

And they come from the continued oppression of America's "minority" groups by the "dominant" race.

White American history reeks of supremacy. Those buying into its twisted views justify their actions by keeping the white race "pure" via "inferior" race suppression.

What emotions, other than outright fear and insecurity, could motivate such thinking? It's only when one feels afraid that threatening forces must be held at bay.

There must be lots of scared people out there. Oregon now contains the highest number of white supremacists per capita outside the South, according to a three-year study by the Coalition for Human Dignity.

Program coordinator Scot Nakagawa said his group found about 50 active supremacist groups in the state.

Something is very wrong with this picture. The fact that America's racial groups are siding up against each other is something every single person should be concerned about; guaranteed, the effects won't stay inside the lines.

It's time to step across the chasm of fear and ignorance to bridge this enlarging gap. Our hate must be unarmed; perceiving each other as the enemy will only work for as long as it takes to kill each other off.

We learned our fear, ignorance and intolerance; we can unlearn it as well. The time has come to begin.

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LETTERS

Decriminalize it

Yes, there are more important issues to address.

Yes, smoking is an uncool, irrational, self-destructive, and just plain stupid behavior.

Yes, non-smokers are fully entitled to their right to live and work and play in a smoke-free place.

No, I do not want an amendment to the Constitution granting, establishing, clarifying, or even hinting at a "right" to smoke.

But, as a tobacco addict who is focusing on recovery issues of greater importance than those of my current tobacco use, I would like (and I do not demand, but rather request) just a little slack.

Is there no indoor spot on the entire University campus where smokers can study and smoke in quiet without infringing on the rights of non-smokers?

Five small tables at the University recreation center — with music blaring, TV going, and folks playing pool and ping-pong — is better than nothing. (And I do not suggest that we rob the recreation center of its recreation or its accompanying noise — these folks need their space, too.)

However, I would like a quiet place, out of the rain, on-campus, where other smokers and I can study and smoke without infringing upon the valid rights of non-smokers.

I respect the people who do not smoke and I respect their right to remain free of my smoke. Can't you make room (literally and figuratively) for me too?

Georgine Apple
English

Department OK

Kirsten Lucas in the article "ESCAPE program survives cutbacks" (ODE, Sept. 27) laments the effects of Measure 5 on the ESCAPE program.

More lamentable is the article's seemingly factual statement that the School (meaning College?) of Education will be eliminated.

The fact is that the College of

Education, while losing some quality programs, will remain in existence.

As with the ESCAPE program, the College is retrenching.

Reports that the College of Education is out of existence are not only completely untrue but unfair to the quality programs remaining and misleading to present and future students who plan to pursue careers in education at the University.

Ned Jay Christensen, Ph.D.
Professor, Director
Communication Disorders and
Sciences

Different face

So what's up with the derogatory and inaccurate (albeit interesting) portrayal of the black person in the *Emerald's* editorial cartoon of Oct. 2?

I thought we had moved past that about a half a century ago. It wasn't funny at all, or did I just miss the joke?

Laila Macharia
Student

The wolf

This letter is written in regards to the cartoon that appeared on the editorial page of the *Emerald* on Oct. 2. I am an African-American female who is outraged at the blatant showing of racism in this cartoon.

How can anyone seriously see this as funny when it just reeks with the stench of racism? For those of you out there who don't see this when you look at the cartoon, I am referring to the little caricature at the bottom of the picture.

This image is one that was seen during a time when racist attitudes and ideas were highly accepted and encouraged. But to see this in a daily, public newspaper today, myself, along with other fellow African-American students are just reminded that racism still prevails and that we have to fight a little bit more and a little more often than our fellow classmates.

Yes, there's definitely a wolf in sheep's clothing out there,

but it's not just Clarence Thomas.

Tonya Menefee
Student

Natural law

U.S. Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas' praise for the implicit use of natural law in judicial decisions gives legal standing to Catholic theological complaints about "unnatural" sex.

Using the pretext of natural law, the Catholic hierarchy opposes birth control, sex hygiene items such as condoms, sex education in schools, abortion, masturbation, and homosexuality. Their real motive is to make people suffer for having sex.

They still believe virginity is best and that all sexual intercourse, even within marriage, is somehow impure and regrettable. Yet celibacy practiced by the Catholic hierarchy is just as unnatural as birth control.

In Asia 2,400 years ago the Chinese philosopher Lao-tse objected to roads, carriages, and boats as unnatural. Clothes are contrary to nature yet make man healthier than those who went without clothing.

Today we support the idea of inherent human rights but these are quite different from natural law. Since Judeo-Christianity's basic cosmological model is essentially monarchical, only acquired, and more specifically, bestowed rights — which are revocable — can be found in the Bible and many rights therein are ethnic group or gender based.

Let's not return to the Dark Ages under the rubric of natural law.

Jim Senyszyn
Naugatuck, Ct.

Hard look

There are those on this campus who dismiss our complaints of racism as nothing but yet another hyper-sensitive group crying "wolf." I would ask these people to take a good, hard look at the ODE Oct. 2 editorial cartoon.

Leyla Farah
Psychology/Business