

OCA's hate petition results in violence

They did it.

Last Tuesday in Portland, the Oregon Citizens Alliance turned in more than 23,000 signatures in its effort to overturn a city ordinance banning discrimination based on sexual preference.

Should the Multnomah County Elections Division verify just 17,542 of those signatures, nothing will stop the OCA initiative from going on the May 19 primary ballot.

The Portland ordinance is just one of the cities the OCA has targeted. Closer to home, the OCA has set its sight on a similar initiative. In addition, OCA has sponsored a statewide measure that would pretty much strip away rights from everybody who doesn't fall into the narrow category the group has deemed "normal."

Enough is enough.

One cannot say enough against the OCA. Its initiatives are pure, unadulterated hate — blanketed in the American flag and distorted Bible-thumping. The OCA's movement, like

anytime there is a small group dictating its own morals on the entire population, is nothing short of fascism. But in one thing, the anti-OCA backlash has gone too far. The right-wing group claims — and there's sufficient evidence to believe — anti-OCA people have ripped up petitions and assaulted not only signature collectors, but vandalized businesses supporting the OCA as well.

Again, enough is enough.

The OCA should have expected something like this; after all, its members are trying to take away rights from a segment of the population, and it is illogical for the group to think the people it has targeted would give up those rights without a fight.

But nothing excuses violence. A brick through the window of an OCA-supporting business does nothing to change viewpoints — if anything, it hardens them. Members of the organized anti-OCA groups have denied any part of the attacks.

Head-bashing and stone-throwing are not the ways to defeat the OCA. Fight fire with fire, petition with petition. Don't attack somebody because you don't agree with what they are saying. That compounds the problem and solves nothing.

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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.

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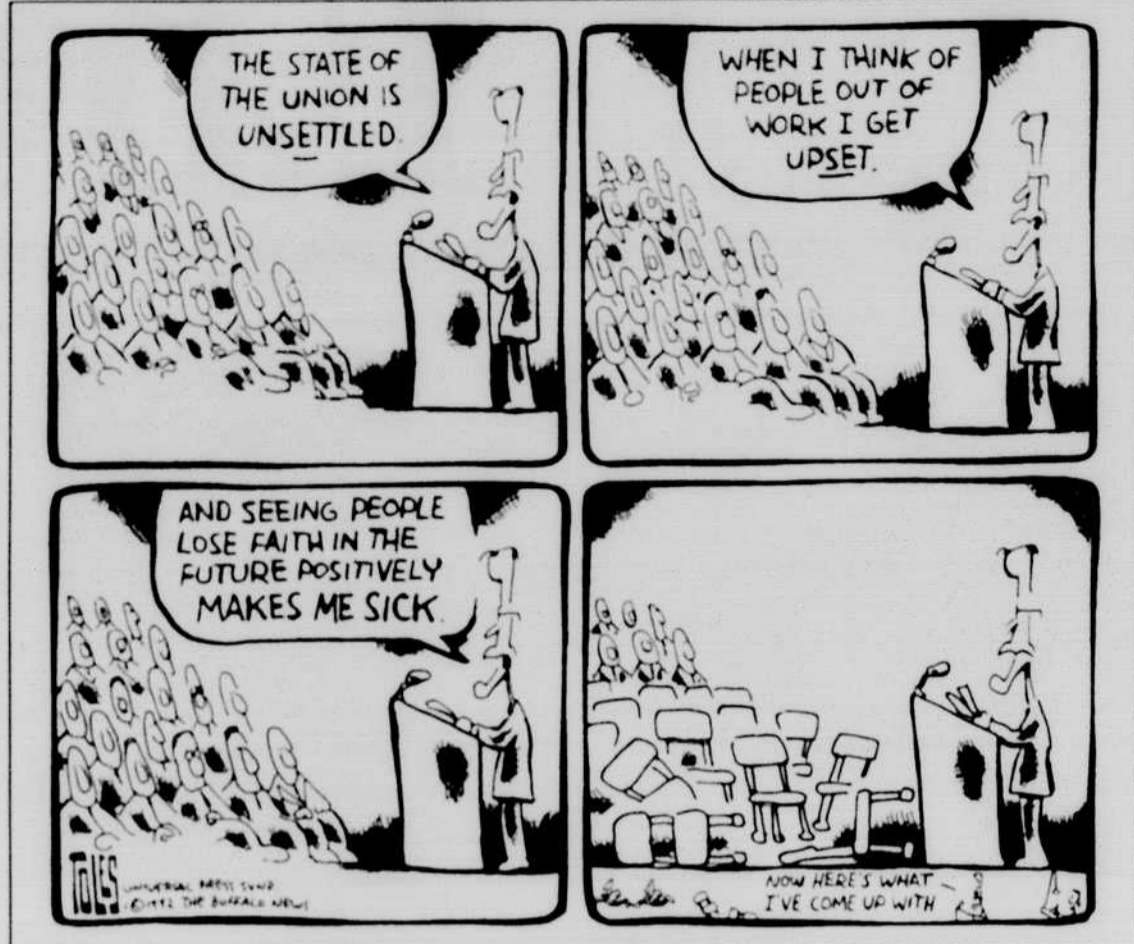
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OPINION

Busing first step to bust barriers



THE FINE PRINT
 BY CATHIE DANIELS

Well, well. It looks like someone is finally cutting into our problematic American pie.

The La Crosse, Wis., School District will begin busing elementary students next fall on the basis of family income, the first in the nation to do so.

I find this especially interesting because I was bused as part of the racial-desegregation busing program initiated in the early '70s. Living in Boston, I spent 5th, 6th and part of 7th grade riding from my mostly white neighborhood to predominantly black schools.

Like the earlier program, the La Crosse plan is meeting with all kinds of resistance primarily from parents who don't want their kids going to school with those kids. We can all guess who the "their" and "those" labels belong to.

Too bad. Now instead of black and white, it's rich and poor. Some people never grow up.

La Crosse school administrators want to break up the concentration of poor students now located in two of the district's nine schools via the busing.

The idea is right. By assigning children to schools using income instead of address, each student will get an equal chance at a good education. We all know because tax monies go to support area school systems, neighborhoods filing the highest incomes usually have the best-supported schools.

Nice for those families' kids, but what about the children of those parents falling near or under the poverty line? Should children's chances at education be dictated by what their parents make?

Another plus of busing derives from breaking down the

confines of going to school with "one's own kind," so that kids are exposed to all kinds — perfect preparation for the "real" world they will all ultimately face.

But that's too much for some parents. The arguments against the plan are the same ones that plagued the desegregation plan 20 years ago; it again boils down to "us" vs. "them."

Sad. Painful. Scary. Nothing could be more dangerous than those lines, whether they be racial or economic. Nothing could divide this country faster; nothing could kill us quicker — both as a nation and as humans.

People tend to huddle together in their various groups — it's our genetic route to safety. As easily as I can remember hearing downright ugly objections from white parents to the racial busing, I can recall black mothers, babies on hips, throwing stones at us as we ran into school.

Everyone wanted their safe boundaries intact, no matter the pain they caused. And so it is now.

Rich parents don't want their children tainted by poor folk, so they're just saying no. Wanting to feel safe, the lines are drawn with hopes of keeping "them" out. They don't understand the damage they're doing.

America has problems, that's a fact. And many boil down to the problems we the people — the most important link in the chain — are experiencing. Yes, us — humans.

We have all kinds of boundaries drawn around us and our respective groups; lines to keep out those of different races, of different economic brackets, of different beliefs and philosophies. Lines. Fences. Fear. Ignorance.

The lines we draw around ourselves don't keep us safe in the end; they cut us off and isolate. It's only by reaching across these lines that divide, to the "other," that we will ultimately find our peace and secu-

rity. Without doing so, the fences will only have to get higher and thicker to keep us "safe."

These children to be bused will someday be adults. The parents who rage against their mixing with the "enemy" only have their blinders to pass on; no other legacy.

To this day, I'm glad I was bused. It broke open a world I would have grown used to, never having known anything different. I found out how it feels to be judged and often hated because of my color; or what it was like to walk around with fear in my stomach because I was the outsider — I was the minority.

Few whites in America experience life or prejudice as the minority — unfortunate, since this could be a most valuable lesson for most. One can never know how this experience feels until one lives it, and I only got three year's worth.

I also learned how meaningless the divisions between myself and my classmates were. Racial lines some of their parents had taught them to draw were as detrimental as the boundaries being passed on to me. As I spent years with these friends I might have otherwise never known, the lines melted away. In this way I was able to grow past the limited view of my elders; as a child I learned the transparency of the lines of prejudice.

The more we open to each other's life experiences, the more we understand. We can't afford the expensive room our fences of fear occupy; they must come down.

One final note: Granted, riding a bus from one part of town to the other makes for a long journey, but believe me, it's well worth the trip.

Cathie Daniels is an editorial editor for the Emerald.