

Jury verdict sends disturbing message

Here was something that seemed clear cut. Four white Los Angeles Police Department officers savagely beat black motorist Rodney King, and they got caught. Even worse, they were captured on video for the whole world to see over and over again.

For 81 seconds, the officers delivered blow after blow — 56 to be specific — to King's body. King's leg and facial bones were broken in the beating, but for these officers, it was just another black man subjected to LAPD policy. In fact, several of the officers joked afterwards about the beating King took. One even taunted him at the emergency room, saying, "We had a pretty good hardball game tonight ... you lost and we won."

Officers Laurence Powell, Stacey Koon, Timothy Wind and Theodore Briseno thought, at the time, they would get away with the beating, and although a videotape showed otherwise, they were right.

Reason dictates that no jury in America, given the tape, could find these officers acted justifiably.

After nearly a year of controversy over the beating, after a lengthy three-month trial, and after seven days of deliberation, a six-man and six-woman jury (one Hispanic, one Asian and no blacks) found that 56 blows to a disabled suspect's prone body do not constitute excessive force.

The verdict itself would not generate much controversy nationwide if it was just King's word against the officers' accounts. But we all saw the condemning piece of evidence — the videotape of the beating. It was clearly excessive force. It was clearly an assault.

Powell, who was accused of delivering the most blows, said, "I was completely in fear for my life, scared to death" of King because he believed King was on PCP. The videotape, however, clearly shows an incapacitated King, in no condition to challenge officers, still being brutally beaten.

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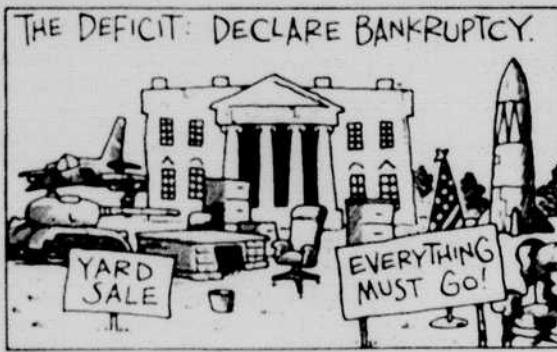
In addition, Briseno told the jury that he thought "the whole thing was out of control," and even the most naive jury should have found these men guilty. The officers obviously used excessive force, they obviously filed false reports, and they obviously thought they could get away with it because King was a black man.

The incident was clear cut.

But the system failed.

In essence, by entering a not-guilty verdict, the Ventura County jury sanctioned unnecessary violence against the citizens of Los Angeles and said that these same citizens will allow themselves to live in the kind of disgusting society where such injustices are allowed.

HOW PRESIDENT PEROT MIGHT "RUN THE GOV'T LIKE A BUSINESS..."



OPINION

Banner-rippers show me the light



THE FINE PRINT

BY PAT MALACH

The word is in. Is there something on campus you don't like or don't agree with? Destroy it!

That's the lesson we can learn from the actions of some of our more progressive and "open-minded" students on campus Tuesday. A mob of these righteous do-gooders stormed the summer school advertising banner hanging above 13th Avenue, tore it down, painted their (political) corrections on it and dropped it on the steps of Johnson Hall.

What could one little banner have done to rile the ire of the enlightened? There were images of 11 historical figures on the banner — all of them were white. True, a University that pays extensive lip service to diversity should be more aware of the subtle messages such a banner can put out, but destroying something because you disagree with it is a much more heinous crime against our society than one ill-conceived banner.

There are better ways to accomplish things. During the winter holiday season (formerly known as Christmas), the University Bookstore decorated its windows with a mural comprised of several white characters. A group of properly concerned students took the issue to the bookstore manager, who had the artist come back in the next day to add some color to the painting. It was activism with a point, and it made a difference.

So what steps did these guardians of banner diversity take before deciding to remove the advertising from the view of the rest of campus? Well, there was one letter to the editor of this paper. But summer session Director Ron Trebon said he received no complaints about the banner. So after one letter to an entity that has no control over the situation, the activists decided they had exhausted all of their options to have the problem dealt with. And in a moment of unplanned mob vio-

lence, they righted something they saw as wrong.

Well, I see that as wrong. And there are a lot of things on campus I don't like. But after Tuesday's civics lesson I have seen the light. My mission has become clear. One thing I don't like is that this Earth Week celebration we've been enduring for the past few days has lost sight of the big picture. Instead of an event to educate the masses about environmental concerns, what we've got is a week that's been co-opted by the same old activist faces we normally see at Saturday Market. Earth Week has become an excuse to bring in bad folk musicians who sing to the choir.

So when I walk by the groovy granola gathering that turns off the very people who need to learn the most, I'm going to run up on stage, disable the poor folkies who happen to be there, and smash all their instruments. I've been taught that's the way to deal with things you don't like.

And the next time the Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Alliance puts up a photo montage on its door of group members engaged in fellatio and other sexual activities, I'm going to tear it down because I personally find it inappropriate, as I would for any other student group.

In case my attempt at using satire to highlight this issue has eluded you, let me put it in clearer language. The people who decided they had the authority to tear down the banner are hypocrites. Extreme hypocrites. For all the cow flop we hear about being diverse, being an individual, and allowing everyone the right to form and express independent beliefs, the unstated truth is that you are expected to express only pre-approved beliefs. What happened Tuesday was a group of people deciding their personal judgments are the only correct ones. They decided the banner was wrong and that no one else at the University should be able to see it and form their own opinion about it.

The traditionally oppressed became as bad as what they say they are fighting against. Oppression from the left is on no

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higher moral ground than oppression from the right, and it is not the way to create healthy, long-lasting (not reactionary) change. Of course, this statement is not "correct" and will be dismissed as the ramblings of another culturally insensitive white male, unenlightened, bigot, cracker, patsy, pawn of The Man, etc., etc., ad infinitum.

The only interesting thing to be seen is how thoroughly the Office of Public Safety investigates the destruction of University property. During spring term of last year, four students were prosecuted under the Student Conduct Code for their roles in painting the sidewalk near Knight Library to protest the removal of several fir trees.

And those of us concerned with equal rights (and equal responsibilities) can only hope OPS launches as tenacious an investigation into this incident as it did into last year's hate-flier boondoggle. In an effort to find the person responsible for posted fliers that were interpreted as misogynist and homophobic, OPS rounded up all known lesbians named Kirsten and put them through intimidating interrogations. Of course, it was later discovered the fliers were made and posted by a lesbian student who was attempting to use satire to address the military's misogynist and homophobic practices.

This banner incident is no different than the cases mentioned above. The Student Conduct Code has been broken, University property has been destroyed (\$380 worth to be exact), and the students responsible for it have the right to be prosecuted just as harshly.

Pat Malach is the managing editor of the Emerald.

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