

## Time for negative flag symbol to go

The "Stars and Bars" flag of the Confederacy has stood for different things in the 150 years since the Civil War ended. But it has always had one underlying meaning — the repression of African Americans.

The flag, used frequently as a KKK symbol, is still present on four state flags today — Georgia, Mississippi, Alabama and South Carolina. In Georgia's case, that Civil War symbol was incorporated on the state flag in 1956 by the legislature as a sign of resistance against the integration of blacks into traditionally white schools.

Georgia's governor, Zell Miller, announced Thursday he plans to introduce a bill in January that would remove that symbol from his state's flag and restore it to its pre-1956 appearance. It is an effort, he says, to lay the days of segregation to rest once and for all and admit that it symbolizes a past the state has no right to be proud of.

Some may see this more as a public relations move than anything. Miller admitted that with the 1992 Summer Olympics and the 1994 Super Bowl both set to take place in Atlanta, it is important to convey the right image to the rest of the country and the world.

Some may dismiss it as simply an unimportant move that really means nothing. In a year that has seen racial tensions peak to the point that a city burned, what difference does a flag really make?

Ask the people who tore down a banner here at the University recently. That banner, an ad for summer session, showed historic figures — mostly male and all white. Big deal? What does it really matter? Isn't it just a meaningless symbol, like the flag?

Symbols, yes. Meaningless, no. Everything has to start somewhere. We all have to learn that messages — subtle and otherwise — are important. They play a part in allowing us to accept racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination.

Whatever the motives of Georgia's governor, he must be applauded for taking a step forward; for taking a step to change his state's image; for taking a step to send the message that symbols from the horrific days of slavery, segregation and denied human rights are not something to be accepted today in any form.

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## LETTERS POLICY

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.

# Oregon Daily Emerald

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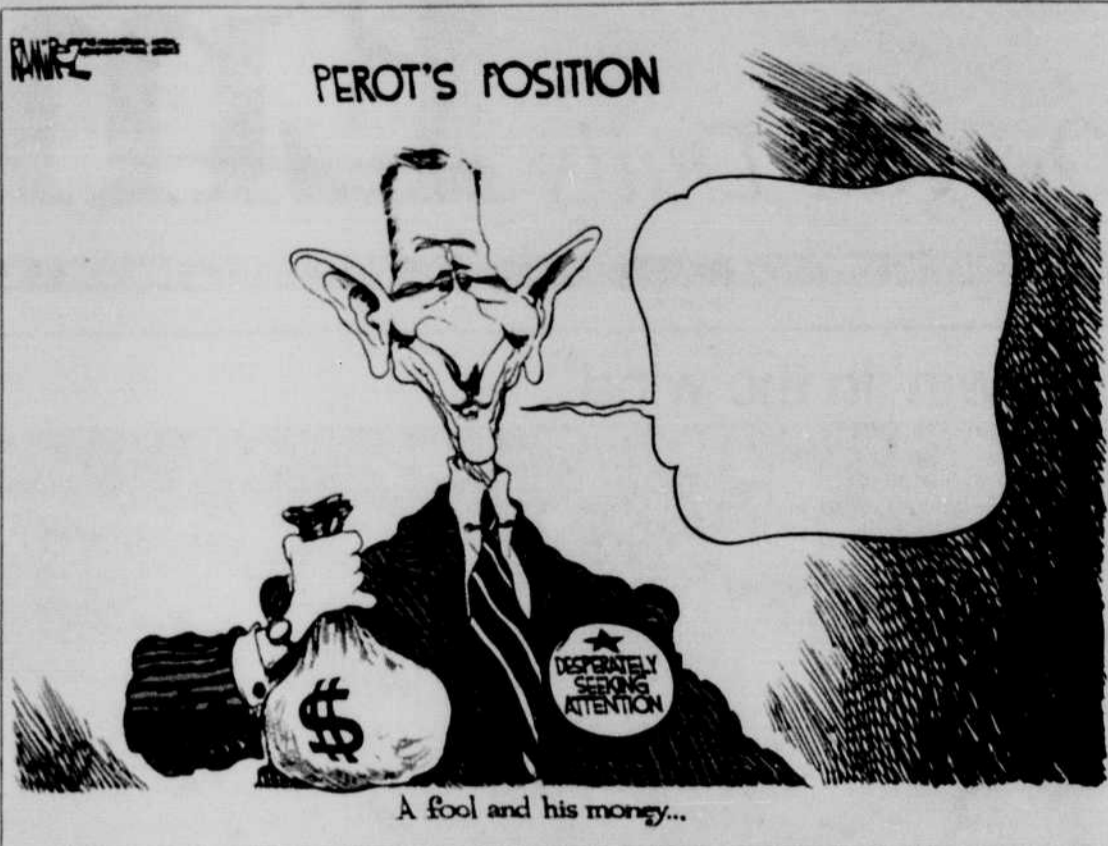
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## LETTERS

### Earth bash

In regards to Pat Malach's Fine Print column about the people who ripped down the banner (*ODE*, April 30). He also decided to bash Earth Week while disregarding the facts. He said we forgot the real issues of global destruction and just had a celebration in the courtyard all week.

Well if he would only open his eyes, or even get the facts straight (something the *Emerald* evidently has not been able to do, and probably continue to fail at under his guidance), he would have noticed that we had more than 100 speakers, workshops and displays trying to educate people about environmental destruction.

The music was only a small part of the whole week, but it was obviously the only thing that caught Malach's closed eyes. Earth Week is meant to educate people for one week out of the year in the hopes they will take that knowledge and put it into use throughout the rest of the year.

In response to his disaffection with the folk singers, we are truly sorry we did not consult Malach before contracting them. However they enjoyed his criticism and they also did not know he was such a renowned music critic. The folk singers and I were also certainly scared by the threat of Malach running on stage and smashing their instruments.

**Tom Ragland  
Eugene**

### Radical, dude

In "Students speak out on arrests" (*ODE*, May 15), *Emerald* reporter Daralyn Trappe writes, "A few of the students who attended, one of whom addressed the crowd at the microphone, said the window-breakers are getting what they deserve and should take responsibility for their actions. 'You radicals are afraid of democracy,' one of them said." This garbled account associates a comment that I made with sentiments that are not mine.

What actually happened? During the rally, a student approached the microphone to condemn the window-breakers

and support legal recrimination. When it appeared that the organizers and crowd were not going to let him speak, I called out, "Real radicals aren't afraid of democracy!"

As a radical, I support free speech rights for all, including those with whom I disagree. In the end, rally organizers gave the dissenter time at the microphone, allaying my concern.

My stance did not in any way entail support for the speaker's position. In fact, I disagreed with it. I do not consider window-breaking to be violence, and I believe that the severe penalties pursued by federal authorities are part of a repressive political agenda that should be resisted.

The assumption that I was a reactionary would have been dispelled had your reporter taken the trouble to talk to me. I am not a red-baiter who associates radicalism with fear of democracy, as your erroneous report implies. Rather, I associate radicalism with the deepest democracy. That is why I spoke out in its defense.

**Christopher Phelps  
GTF**

### Wrong side

This is a letter in response to the highly inaccurate account written by Terrain McComb about her experience at Pedal Power Bicycle Shop (*ODE*, May 19).

I happened to be shopping at the mentioned store at the same time this exchange took place. I don't know what side of the bed McComb got up on that day, but it was not the one that fosters rational behavior or communication. The sales person tried to be patient with this customer and used several suggestions and avenues of compromise in attempts to create agreement. I would praise the skill level of the salesperson in this case. He showed restraint and balance in the face of an extremely rude and verbally abusive person.

I have had my bicycle serviced at Pedal Power for the past three years. Their entire staff has always shown me

nothing but professional quality and technical support. I have had wheels trued, flats fixed and new gears installed within a few hours. The crew at this store is friendly and knowledgeable about the products they sell and the super service they offer.

It takes years to build a name and reputation in the world of small business.

In my book, it is not appropriate to publicly slam a neighborhood business before you gather all the facts.

**David Gibson  
Eugene**

### Boycott

I am shocked and outraged at the passage of the anti-gay initiative in Springfield. To see how really reprehensible this is, imagine if such a law were directed against Jewish people, rather than homosexuals.

In Springfield, books about Jews and the Jewish faith would be banned from the libraries. Jews would be barred from employment as with the city, and they would lack police protection from hate crimes. If such a thing were to occur, I would opt that the rest of us, the non-Jews, would respond strongly in every way possible to repeal the law, educate people about the reality of what Jewish people are like and see that such laws — that such an institutionalization of bigotry could never be made again.

Well, it has happened in Springfield, only in this case it is gay people who are targeted. It is up to all of us, even straight Eugene residents like myself, to do all we can against this law. I propose an immediate boycott of Springfield businesses by everyone until this law is repealed. Businesses that oppose the OCA, or wish to avoid the boycott should publicly denounce the newly passed initiative, and declare themselves gay safe zones by placing large, highly visible signs in their places of business.

**Ben Iglauer  
Eugene**